Diary Film in America and in Taiwan:
Narrative, Temporality, and Changing Technology

Ming-Yu Lee

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Department of Theatre Film and Television Studies

School of Culture and Creative Arts

College of Arts

University of Glasgow

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Abstract

The diary film as a unique, personal, and private cinematic genre for a long time has not received its fair share of attention in academic research. This thesis therefore focuses mainly on the historical development, characteristics, and aesthetics of the diary film per se, conducting a critical dialogue between them in order to explore a field of study that should be clarified instead of staying ambiguous.

The discussion of this thesis can be divided into two parts: first, I pay specially attention to the historical context of the diary film in the 1950s to 1960s in America. Combing through different film theories regarding amateurism and different personal filmmaking approaches proposed by Marie Menken, Maya Deren, and Jonas Mekas, the first part of the thesis aims to locate the origins of the diary film. Moreover, with the discovering of the early historic material of the avant-garde film movement and the diary film in Taiwan, a transnational connection of the diary film between America and Taiwan has been established.

The second part of the thesis focuses on the analyses of the diary film texts from various filmmakers in America and in Taiwan across different periods of time: they include Jonas Mekas, Hollis Frampton, Saul Levine, George Kuchar, Shine Lin, and myself. By the close reading of these films, I provide concepts from different perspectives as analytic tools in the diary film research: the parenthetical structure of the voice-over and the image in the diary film, and the different modes of diary filmmaking (perceptive, retrospective, and access) in terms of temporality and technology.

To conclude, this thesis not only wishes to suggest forward-looking views on this marginal field, but also to reconstruct and reinvent the research of the diary film in Taiwan.

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Introduction

> 'When I began the diary (film), I bought five rolls of film. I thought I'd film myself, one scene every day, moving around my apartment. And I would go on a strict diet…Every day I'd do one more scene…I didn't really have a story to tell, except to expand more on my day-to-day life inside my apartment'.[1]

When interviewed by Scott MacDonald, the American diary filmmaker Anne Charlotte Robertson (1949-2012) gave the description above to illustrate the initiation of her diary film practice. This quotation seems ordinary, but, in fact, in my opinion, it points out the essential qualities of the diary film: the diarist ('I'), the intention (a diet plan), the temporal structure ('one scene every day'), and the fragmentary and non-narrative nature ('didn't have a story to tell'). Anne Charlotte Robertson was a student of Saul Levine at the Massachusetts College of Art in 1981. She started her diary film on 3 November 1981, which happens to be Saul Levine's birthday. Levine, after Robertson passed away from cancer in 2012, made the film *Falling Notes Unleaving* (2013) dedicated to her. It is in this sense that Robertson, to a certain degree, inherited the diary film tradition derived from the merging of amateur cinema, home movie, and personal filmmaking in North America in the 1960s. By choosing the quotation above as the beginning of my thesis, I not only wish to emphasize that the origins of the diary films I discuss in this thesis emerged from a specific point in cinema history, but also that I aim to establish the ground rules for the diary film, which include the importance of subjective ('I'), non-narrative quality ('didn't have a story to tell'), the periodical/continuous ('one scene every day') and the significance of a fragmentary/discontinuous structure. These qualities lie at the core of my study of the diary film and recur throughout this thesis. With the establishment of these essential qualities, I believe that the uniqueness of the diary film as a cinematic genre can be built.

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[1] Scott MacDonald, *A Critical Cinema 2: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.208.

The discussion of the diary film so far revolves around its neighbouring cinematic genres: the diary film and the autobiographical film, the diary film and the essay film, the diary film and documentary, and the diary film and experimental film. These discussions indeed provide innovation and insight to the field of study. However, in my thesis, I consider that while other neighbouring cinematic genres focus on narrative aspects, such as revealing truth, entertaining, and resistance, the diary film appears as rather simple and austere. It often starts with a simple plan or a goal ('diet'), a very trivial thing in life, and it moves along with the plan in a manner that is not so different from the written diary. As Philippe Lejeune says, 'keeping a diary is surfing on time... He (the diarist) is himself caught up by the moment he is sculpting, moving along with it…'[2] Therefore, we can understand the behaviour of keeping a diary film and its relationship with the diary filmmaker as: the diary filmmaker and the diary film move along, heading towards the future, which is unknown to anyone. No one will know how it will turn out, not even the diary filmmaker him/herself. The essential qualities of the diary film from the previous discussion derived from this behaviour: the subjective mode of filmmaking, the non-narrative quality, and the unique temporal and narrative structure. Whilst interviews and descriptions from filmmakers are important, I also base my argument on close textual analysis placed within a historical context.

Audience

Due to the manifestation of its independent and strong personal expression and its freedom in both form and in content, the diary film seems not care for its readability to any audience other than its maker. It is usually, as is the written diary, filled with secrets, symbols, fragments, discontinuities, boredom, and tediousness. Frequently, the diary film

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[2] Philippe Lejeune, *On Diary*, Katherine Durnin (trans.) (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 2009), p.182.

presents a collection of footage of frankly terrifying duration. Anne Charlotte Robertson's *Five Year Diary* (1981-1997) consists of eighty-five rolls of super 8 films and video footage, which equals approximately thirty-six hours screening time. Jonas Mekas's *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2000) is almost five hours, and his *365 Day Project* (2007), a project of making a diary film each day for a year, is nearly thirty-eight hours. All these characteristics may seem to make the diary film unapproachable, possibly not even viewable. There are examples of filmmakers who do not screen their diary films in public,[3] but in general, even though their work is not commercially screened in movie theatres, the diary filmmakers are given opportunities to screen their films for audiences in museums and art galleries. However, a question should always be asked – who is it made for, if not primarily for an audience? David E. James, in his discussion of Jonas Mekas's diary films, distinguishes the diary film as 'film diary' and 'diary film'. He argues that, from the perspective of consumption, the 'film diary' is 'a private event where consumption, especially consumption by others, is illicit: a pure use value'.[4] And the 'diary film', on the contrary, 'finds itself in an economy of *films*, an economy that privileges the completed artefact as a whole, the moment of projection, the spectating public, and, in some form or other, exchange value'.[5] James's argument effectively divides diary filmmaking into two phases: the raw footage and edited film, and private and public reception. However, as a diary filmmaker myself, I wonder if these two phases work for me? It is true, for me at least, that in the 'film diary' phase, it is always for personal use, but in the 'diary film' phase is it really for the public? In Anna Jackson's discussion of the notion of an audience for the literary diary, she argues that one of the defining qualities of the diary is 'the absence of an addressee'.[6] If this is true, then who is

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[3] For examples, Man Ray (see Chapter One), Anne Charlotte Robertson (see Chapter Two), and Joseph Morder.

[4] David E. James, *To Free the Cinema: Jonas Mekas & The New York Underground* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p.147.

[5] Ibid. (italics in original).

[6] Anna Jackson, *Diary Poetics: Form and Style in Writers' Diaries, 1915-1965* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p.141.

the diarist speaking to in both the 'film diary' and the 'diary film' phases? I think this question can be answered on two levels: first, who is it made for, after it has been published/finished/screened? Strictly speaking, it is for anyone. Lejeune says that one of the ways the diary ends is in its publication, which is 'a transformation that assumes some sort of closure'.[7] The closure not only puts a definite ending to the diary but also drives the diarist away from it – it is no longer in process but an objective that he or she has accomplished. Following the same logic, is the author, or the presence of author, who appears in the screening of the diary film speaking to us? Or are we – as the audience – actually listening to his/her monologue? Hence, I propose, in answering the question of audience of the diary film, one should go back to the intention of the diarist when he/she initiates the project – the second level: when he/she is *filming*, who is he/she addressing? For many diary filmmakers, this question can simply be answered by 'I make it for myself'. This aspect of self-address is particularly obvious in the two films I discuss in Chapter Five: George Kuchar's *Weather Diary 5* (1989) and Shine Lin's *Blues Biyori* (2007), when they turn the camera on themselves. Behind this simplified answer 'I make it for myself', if we consider the notion of audience as a 'motivation' for keeping a diary film, we might gain a better understanding of the concept that the 'diary has no addressee'. Jackson states that 'the diary is addressed not to a specific figure but to a certain kind of responsiveness'.[8] This responsiveness does not come from others, but from the split 'I' – the past 'I' and the present 'I' – during the process of filming. This mode of filming invented by Marie Menken in the 1950s and developed by Jonas Mekas in the 1960s is a process of negotiation and an acting/responding between the filmmaker and his/her surroundings, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter Two, with examples from Marie Menken's *Notebook* (1940-1962). The 'act/re-act' mode is crucial in the diary film, for it generates a responsiveness which appears in the process of *filming* rather than in *screening* and it also

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[7] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.188.
[8] Jackson, *Diary Poetics*, p.142.

sets up communication between aspects of the self (a monologue) rather than with any prospective audience.

Temporality, Voice-Over, and Trace

Another characteristic of the diary film raised by Robertson's quotation is its temporal structure, which is caused by filming 'every day'. Researchers have discussed this issue in relation to both the written diary and the diary film. Margo Culley, in distinguishing the written diary from the novel and autobiography, argues that a diary is 'created in and represents a continuous present'.[9] Jackson continues Culley's argument and elaborates on the 'continuous present' structure as referring to 'an overall narrative tense'.[10] Both of them consider the notion of a continuous present as the distinct characteristic of the written diary. In the study of the diary film, the same concept is also raised by researchers: P. Adams Sitney suggests of the temporal characteristic in the diary film that it 'has next to no reference to the past. It would offer, instead, a series of discontinuous presents'.[11] However, even though the issue of temporality is raised, current studies of the diary film seem mainly to focus on the subjective expressions of the diary filmmaker, and ignore the different possibilities that the 'entry structure' might bring to the diary film. The diary film is inevitably an inscribing on two temporal levels: an inscribing in the moment of filming and again during editing, a process which every film has to go through. Two common approaches to the making of the diary film can also be identified based on these two levels: some diary filmmakers value highly the filming process and present the raw material as it was taken; others re-arrange the order of sequences, adding voice-over to the image track

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[9] Margo Culley, *A Day at a Time: The Diary Literature of American Women from 1764 to the Present* (New York: City University of New York, 1985), p.20.

[10] Jackson, *Diary Poetics*, p.19.

[11] P. Adams Sitney, *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1978), p.248.

during editing. Whichever approach the diary filmmaker adopts, it has a different effect on the diary film in relation to its narrative and temporal structure.

The first approach – the focus on the filming process – can find its origin in Pierre-Hyacinthe Azaïs's 'writing while walking'[12] in the early 1800s. Azaïs's written diary was rediscovered in the 1970s. Lejeune praises his achievement in the invention of mobile diary writing. The concept of Azaïs's 'writing while walking' plays an important role in diary filmmaking, especially in the first approach. It first liberates the diary writing situation from its confined, stable, and indoor status. And moreover, it takes the diary from retrospection to an instantaneous sketch of reality, although in Azaïs's diary writing, there is still an unbridgeable gap between perception and inscription. However, as technology advances, with the replacement of the pen with film camera, this gap appears bridgeable in the diary film. In keeping a diary, the camera has a greater capacity than then pen when facing fleeting reality as it can record more effectively the events, the thoughts and the reflections of the diary filmmaker as they occur. In Chapter Four, by analysing Saul Levine's *Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2* (1976), we can see how the notion of 'writing while walking' is adopted and transformed into a mode of diary filmmaking which emphasizes the moment of filming and perception of the diary filmmaker.

The second approach toward diary filmmaking is a multilevel retrospection. It is characterised not only in the reviewing of the shot footage, but also in the editing process which adopts the voice-over as a narrative strategy. The study of the voice-over has primarily focused on feature film and documentary practice. In the feature film it is often defined according to characters in the story or by diegetic space. In documentary it is the place where the filmmakers impose ideas, comments, and subjectivities. In the diary film, the term 'voice-over' has a different implication. Many diary filmmakers use their written

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[12] For the discussion of Azaïs and his 'writing while walking', please see *On Diary* (Lejeune 2009, 122-128) and also Chapter Four of this thesis.

diary text as the script for the voice-over in their diary films. These written texts can exist independently, and at the same time, function as a part of narrative in the diary film. The interaction between the written diary and the visual diary also touches on an issue much discussed in the study of cinema – the entanglement of words and images in film. In the history of cinema, the discussion of filming as *writing* began with Astruc's caméra-stylo. Astruc considers cinema as a means of personal expression, which can be expressed through the use of language, as writers do in an essay or novel. It was his dream that 'it would soon be possible to write ideas directly on film'.[13] Astruc's idea emphasizes the relationship between cinema and writing, and at the same time highlights the notion of author, shifting the focus from cinema as a collective creation to a personal means of expression. More importantly, Astruc's comparison of the film camera to a pen can be considered as a continuation of Azaïs's notion of 'writing while walking'. The relationship between writing and images in the diary film, and the notion of caméra-stylo, is reflected in the use of the written diary in the diary film as voice-over. In Chapter Three, I will introduce two diary films, Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)* (1971) and Jonas Mekas's *The Song of Avila* (2006), which adopt the use of voice-over as a narrative strategy, in which the diary filmmakers shuttle between the image and the written words through the voice-over. This narrative strategy, in my opinion, should not be treated with conventional audiovisual analytic theory. The key to understanding the use of voice-over in the diary film can find inspiration from Bazin's discussion of Chris Marker's *Lettre de Sibérie* (*Letter from Siberia*, 1958). Bazin sees the innovation in Marker's use of voice-over comes from his 'intelligence', [14] that is, Marker's subjectivity as a filmmaker when acting/responding to the events and footage he has filmed. Therefore, it is under this premise that the diary filmmaker's intelligence integrates two different forms of the diary, setting up a dialectical relationship between words and images in the diary film. The voice-

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[13] Alexandre Astruc, 'The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: *La Caméra-Stylo*', in Peter Graham (ed.) *The French New Wave: Critical Landmarks* (London: British Film Institute, 2009), p.32.

[14] André Bazin, 'Bazin on Marker', *Film Comment* (July/Aug, 2003), p.44.

over functions as a vehicle that allows the diary filmmaker to shuttle between the written

diary and the visual diary, and at the same time the voice-over enables the diary filmmaker

to travel between the past and the present – between filmed images and the recording of the

voice-over. It creates a distinct temporal structure which belongs to the diary film alone.

Time has always been a core issue in cinema, from Bazin's 'embalming time'[15] to

Barthes's 'that-has-been'[16] to more recent interventions by Laura Mulvey and Mary Ann

Doane whose discussions[17] of time in cinema are related to death. Interestingly, in

Lejeune's discussion of the written diary, there is a similar notion in relation to temporality.

Despite the fact that the diary is often considered as being 'written without knowledge of

the ending',[18] the diary as an act of writing that can also be understood as a resistance to

death. As long as the writing continues, as long as the diary does not end, the ending – the

metaphor for death – will always be deferred. In this aspect, the diary and cinema walk the

same path. In fact, Lejeune defines the diary as 'a series of dated traces'.[19] A diary begins

when 'traces in a series attempt to capture the moment of time…'[20] This act of writing a

diary, the notion of dated traces, somehow resonates with Bazin and Barthes's conceptions

of the ontology of cinematic image as a 'fingerprint'[21] and 'that has been'.[22] In Chapter

Four, by analysing Jonas Mekas's *Zefiro Torna or Scenes from the Life of George

Maciunas* (1992), the notion of traces and the significance of death in relation to the diary

film will be further explored.

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[15] See André Bazin, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', in Hugh Gray (trans.) *What is Cinema? Vol. 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp.9-16.

[16] See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Richard Howard (trans.) (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux Inc., 1999), pp.76-77.

[17] See Laura Mulvey's *Death 24x a Second* and Mary Ann Doane's *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive.*

[18] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.170.

[19] Ibid., p.179.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, p.15.

[22] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p.77.

The Route

In addition to the explorations of the formal characteristics of the diary film related to narrative and temporality, more importantly, the contribution of this thesis is the result of embarking on three specific routes: first, the historical route of the diary film responding to changes in technology. The diary film first appeared in North America in the 1960s with the wide-scale introduction of amateur film equipment. It then found its heyday in the rapid expansion of video technology ('video diary-film' – George Kuchar's *Weather Diary 5* in Chapter Five), and is now embraced within the digital age ('digital video diary-film' – Shine Lin's *Blues Biyori* and Ming-Yu Lee's *Going Home* [2008] in Chapter Five). The second route belongs to the geographical and transnational heritage of the diary film between North America and Taiwan. The diary films I examine and discuss in this thesis emerged from a specific point in cinema history, which is in the 1960s North America. In addition to the historical development and the central characteristics of the diary film genre, I, as a Taiwanese diary filmmaker myself, am deeply concerned about where my diary filmmaking practice originates from and how the American tradition influenced me and other Taiwanese diary filmmakers. Through the evidence I provide in Chapter Two, a connection and a path of diary filmmaking practice from the 1960s North America to contemporary Taiwan will be clearly mapped out. Moreover, by close reading of the diary film texts in Chapter Two and Chapter Five, I will demonstrate how the North American diary film tradition has influenced Taiwanese diary filmmakers, and how it was re-introduced to the young Taiwanese diary filmmakers in the 21st Century by the academic education. By rediscovering the films and manuscripts of Na'Ou Liu, the historic development of the diary film in Taiwan can be relocated back to the early 1930s. As the earliest avant-garde filmmaker in Taiwan, Na'Ou Liu appropriated Vertov's Kino-Eye theory and transformed it into his own diary film practice in *Man with a Camera* (1933). Later in the 1960s, the emergence of the *Theatre Quarterly* (1965-1968) introduced the

first wave of the avant-garde film as a movement in Taiwan. In this first avant-garde movement, Mr. Lin Chuang plays an important role in connecting different countries and generations. His diary film *My New Born Baby* (1967), on the one hand, inherited the legacy of American avant-garde film in the 1960s, and on the other hand, it had a great influence on the later generations including Mr. Chung-li Kao and other filmmakers from the Golden Harvest Awards in the 1980s, as well as the young Taiwanese filmmakers in the 21st Century. Finally, besides the historical and geographical routes, this thesis is ultimately about a personal journey, which is perhaps fitting, as the diary is always a monologue to oneself. It is about why I make diary film. And it is also about how this approach to my filmmaking comes from a specific route. I emphasize more than once the importance of the 'route' and 'journey' in this thesis, for they play very well as the metaphor for the diary writing as well as its historical and geographical developments. Therefore, this thesis is first and foremost, a journey of the diary, both historically and geographically. As these two routes merge and proceed, this thesis aims to draw an outline of the historical route of the diary film which originated from 1960s America, 1960s Taiwan, and ends in 21st Century Taiwan. The development of this route and the connections within it also constitute the organisation of the chapters in this thesis. The first two chapters centre on the origins and the initiations of the diary film in American avant-garde film movement, following in the second section of Chapter Two the discovery of the connection between the diary film practice in North America and in Taiwan will also be introduced. Chapter Three and Chapter Four shift the focus to the examining of the North American diary films through filmic textual analysis, in order to establish the unique characteristics of the diary film in this tradition. Chapter Five marks as a transition between technology from diary film to video diary, as well as a transition across generations from North American to the young Taiwanese diary filmmakers. Apart from historical and geographical journey of the diary film, this thesis is also a journey of my filmmaking practice and of my writing process through this thesis. It is a journey of self-

reflection and self-discovery. Following these routes and the chapters of this thesis which I am going to take you, secrets will be revealed and puzzles will be solved, as we proceed to our destination.

Chapter 1 –

What is Diary Film? Literature Review and Context

As the first chapter of this thesis, I'd like to start it with the following steps: first, defining the framework of my research questions. Second, explaining the research method I adopt in this thesis, and finally, introducing the goals I aim to achieve. As for the definition of my research framework, this thesis, first and foremost, is centred on the study of the 'diary film' as a cinematic genre and its aesthetic. However, without further refining, this presupposition soon faces challenges. The history of the diary film is longer than often imagined, even though it is usually considered as a minor or marginal genre. The series of Lumière brothers' films, including *La sortie des usines Lumière* (*Leaving the Lumière Factory*, 1895) and *Repas de bébé* (*Baby's Meal*, 1895), might be seen as the earliest diaristic filmmaking practice in the history of cinema, for they focused on daily ordinary life and domestic details. Man Ray also finished his diary film *Home Movies* series (1923-1937 and 1938) with Ady Fidelin, which he didn't screen in public but only to his close friends. There were many artists and filmmakers around the world in the early days of cinema who adopted the diary filmmaking approach, depicting the life of ordinary people. Oskar Fischinger's short film *München-Berlin Wanderung* (*Walking from Munich to Berlin,* 1927) documented his walk from Munich to Berlin through a single-frame technique. This film is not as popular as his other abstract films and is often ignored, but it does have certain diaristic characteristics and would seem to have inspired Werner Herzog's book *Vom Gehen im Eis* (*Of Walking In Ice: Munich – Paris: 23 November – 14 December, 1974*, 2014). Contemporary to Vertov in 1933 in Taiwan, Mr. Na'Ou Liu finished his *Man with a Camera* series (with five parts in total), which is one of the few diaristic films that have been preserved in Taiwan. There are more filmmakers across the 20th Century including Stan Brakhage, Michel Nedjar, Joseph Morder, Jan Peters, Rose Lowder, Boris Lehman, whose works range across time periods, countries and thematic concerns. These

examples of diary films not only show that the diary film as a genre is not as minor as imagined, but also prove that it is necessary to narrow down the discussion of the diary film in my thesis – when I say 'diary film', what kind of diary film am I referring to? What aspect of the diary film am I talking about? And what similarities do they share? These questions will be answered in the following discussion.

Another question, which is perhaps the most crucial one, is also raised from the above-mentioned examples; they suggest the fact that the diary film is often included or discussed in relation to other neighbouring genres. The films of Lumière brothers are mostly considered as home movies[1] or documentary,[2] and the fact that the workers walking out of the factory was staged and rehearsed many times[3] suggesting a blurring of fictional and documentary modes within the film. Man Ray insisted on keeping his *Home Movies* private making it closer to the tradition of home movie practice.[4] As for Na'Ou Liu's *Man with a Camera*, it is often seen as the pioneer of the documentary movement in Taiwan, although at the same time, its amateurism is often emphasized. In addition, other scholars such as Jim Lane, use the term 'Journal Entry Documentary'[5] in his discussion of Ed Pincus's *Diaries* (1971-1976) and Tom Joslin and Peter Friedman's *Silverlake Life: The View from Here* (1993) to describe the process of filming on a daily basis and to emphasize the importance of the chronological narrative construction during the post-production process. While Lane emphasizes the documentary aspect, P. Adams Sitney includes the diary film into his research of autobiographical film, 'Autobiography in Avant-Garde

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[1] Roger Odin considers the Lumière's *Repas de bébé* as home movie which is the same source of cinema ('le film de famille n'est-il pas à la source même du cinema (cf. *Le Repas de Bébé*)?'). Odin, 'Du film de famille au journal filmé', in Yann Beauvais (ed.) *Le je filmé* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1995), p.1950.
[2] Paul Arthur, 'No Longer Absolute: Portraiture in American Avant-Garde and Documentary Films of the Sixties', in Ivone Margulies (ed.) *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema* (London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp.93-94.
[3] Betsy A. McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film* (New York: Continuum International, 2012), p.301.
[4] Beauvais, *Le je filmé*, p.1986. According to Yann Beauvais, Man Ray refuses to claim as the author of this film which was shot in La Garoupe in Mediterranean in the 1930s; he also refuses to screen it in public.
[5] See Jim Lane, *The Autobiographical Documentary in America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), Chapter Three, 'The Journal Entry Approach: Narrative, Chronology, and Autobiographical Claims', pp.48-93.

Film'.[6] In this discussion, Sitney insightfully distinguishes the diary film from the autobiographical film according to its characteristic temporality of filming and editing. Sitney's discussion makes a clear distinction between autobiographical film and the diary film, but fails to go further, as in the end of his discussion, this distinction seems to blur again when he concludes '[h]owever [the diary film] is the autobiographical cinema *per se…*'[7] Therefore, a further analysis and discussion of the characteristics of the diary film is needed, in order to let the diary film speaks for itself, to provide a coherent and useful definition. This task will be my main concern throughout this thesis. Overall, in this thesis, two main issues will be discussed: first, establishing and defining the diary film as a proper cinematic genre. Second, I am not just talking about the diary film in general, but about the diary film that emerged from a specific cultural and historical background and from certain period of time. Therefore, here I'd like to refine the research question again by reflecting on what Jonas Mekas suggests in his lecture on the diary film in 1972, that he 'became conscious of the form of a diary film and,…this began to affect [his] way of filming, [his] style'[8] during the editing of his *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* around 1961. As a filmmaker from Taiwan who is also fascinated by the diary film, when did I first become conscious of this form in my films and when did it start to become my style? My filmmaking is directly influenced by the American avant-garde filmmakers (such as Marie Menken, Jonas Mekas, George Kuchar, and others). This interest emerged from my academic education in Shih Hsin University in Taipei from 2004 to 2008, which I will discuss more in the historical development of the diary film in Taiwan in Chapter Two and the films of the young Taiwanese diary filmmakers in Chapter Five. These diary filmmakers from America in the 1960s inspired not only contemporary filmmakers in Taiwan but also had great influence on me. Hence, in this thesis, I'd like to place myself at the centre of discussion. It all starts

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[6] Sitney, *The Avant-Garde Film*, pp.244-246.
[7] Ibid., p.246.
[8] Jonas Mekas, 'The Diary Film', in P. Adams Sitney (ed.) *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1978), p.191.

from me (diarists love this). How did these American diary filmmakers influence me? And how did they, at the same time, have influence on other diary filmmakers in Taiwan at a different period of time? The research question is therefore no longer just about the diary film, but maps a route of development and the aesthetic of diary filmmaking which started from 1960s America to 1960s Taiwan, and that was then passed on to me and other young filmmakers in the 21st Century.

To answer these research questions, I will combine literature reviews from both literary diary and the diary film, historical retrospection and contextual material including interviews with diary filmmakers and film scholars, filmic textual analysis, and narratology as research methods to discuss the progressive development and potential characteristics of the diary films that follow this specific route. In Chapter Two, I focus on the origin of the diary filmmaking from Marie Menken to Jonas Mekas in 1960s in America, along with the shift from conventional filmmaking to personal cinema that was proposed by Maya Deren and Stan Brakhage, in which the emphasis on amateurism also played an important role. In the second section of Chapter Two, I move the discussion to Taiwan in the 1960s. It was at this time when the first wave of the avant-garde film movement took place in Taiwan,[9] with the launching of the *Theatre Quarterly* magazine in 1965. Members of the *Theatre Quarterly* were directly influenced by the American avant-garde film movement, for most of the articles in the issues were not originally written by members but were translations of Maya Deren, Jonas Mekas, Andrew Sarris, Ernest Callenbach, and others. In Chapter Two, I mark the locations of theses treasures on the map and connect them to illustrate the route of the transnational migration of the diary film. From Chapter Three to Chapter Five I start to use films as case studies for close readings and discussions of the characteristics of the

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[9] The earliest diary film in Taiwan, in my opinion, should be Na'Ou Liu's *Man with a Camera* series in 1933, which I will have more discussion in Chapter Two. However, the fact that Liu had only five short films from the *Man with a Camera* series and few manuscripts left makes it difficult to be called as a movement. After Liu's death in 1940, the development of the avant-garde film and the diary film in Taiwan was soon suspended. It was not until the launching of *Theatre Quarterly* in 1965 that the avant-garde film and the diary film started to flourish in Taiwan.

diary films along this route. In Chapter Three, the issue of narration in the diary film is the main focus. Some questions were inspired by the interview I conducted with Prof. Roger Odin in 2012:[10] is the voice-over narration necessary for the diary film? Where is the narrative? Is it in the images or in the voice-over? What is the relationship between the image and the voice-over in the diary film? In *(nostalgia)* (1971), Hollis Frampton makes the audiovisual relationship prominent by deliberately delaying the voice-over narration with images. In the second section of Chapter Three, I discuss Jonas Mekas's online short film *The Song of Avila* (2006). In the film, Mekas uses both the visual diary and the written diary (as voice-over) to present his day spent in the town Avila in 1967. Between the visual diary and the written diary, between the images and the voice-over, do we need a new method, a new montage theory, to understand this intertextual relationship? In this chapter, instead of employing conventional voice-over theory, I propose using the notion of parenthetical structure to understand the audiovisual relationship in the diary film, in which one supplements the other and, at the same time, stays independent.

In Chapter Four, focusing on temporality, I use Saul Levine's *Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2* (1976) and Jonas Mekas's *Zefiro Torna or Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas* (1992) as examples to discuss the unique temporality of the diary film. The temporality issue in the diary film was mentioned in P. Adams Sitney's discussion of the autobiography and the diary film, in which he claims that the autobiography occupies a 'fictive vantage point to reflect upon the past', whereas the diary film 'has next to no reference to the past. It would offer, instead, a series of discontinuous presents'.[11] David E. James also discusses the dual temporality in Jonas Mekas's diary film, which is the moment of filming (the 'film diary') and the moment of editing (the 'diary film'). It is this dual temporality that turns Mekas's film diaries (the diary footage, the 'pure use value')

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[10] Roger Odin, Interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 12 December 2012 (unpublished material).
[11] Sitney, *The Avant-Garde Film*, p.245.

into diary film (the oeuvre, the 'exchange value').[12] However, in my analysis I establish two different modes of the diary film that deal with different temporalities for the diary filmmaker and which also emphasize the *intention* of the diary filmmaker, which Sitney and James seem to ignore: the first mode is a more direct and immediate reception that focuses on the moment of filming, as Saul Levine does in *Notes of an Early Fall*, while the other is a reflective construction of the material, a process very similar to autobiography writing of 'shifting, picking and choosing, shaping and cutting, and then putting the material into orderly chapters, finished portraits, and polished phrases',[13] as Mekas does in *Zefiro Torna*, revisiting and reorganizing the film footage he shot over twenty years ago.[14]

In the last chapter of the thesis, I change the focus of materiality from the diary film to the video diary-film. The case studies include George Kuchar, one of the most representative figures of the video diary-film in America, and the young diary filmmakers from Taiwan in the 21st Century, including Shine Lin and myself. This chapter focuses on how changes to media and new technology bring new aspects and aesthetics to diary filmmaking, and most importantly, at the end of the thesis I situate my own work within this body of work, meaning that the route is not only historical, geographical, but also personal. In order to do so, the notion of auto-ethnography proposed by Catherine Russell should be applied. The auto-ethnographic approach in autobiographical narrative and in personal cinema focuses on how the interpretation of culture can be expressed through personal narrative, and how the position of the author shifts from an outsider to an insider, 'at a point where the film-or videomaker understands his or her personal history to be implicated in larger social formations and historical processes.'[15] In the final chapter, as I examine my own diary film, *Going Home*, a splitting of the self occurs between the diary

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[12] James, *To Free the Cinema*, p.147.
[13] Rebecca Hogan, 'Diarists On Diaries', *Auto/Biography Studies*, Vol. II, No. 2 (Summer, 1986), p.12.
[14] Most of the images in *Zefiro Torna* were shot during 1970s, but they were not edited until 1992.
[15] Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: the Work of Film in the Age of Video* (Duke University Press, 1999), p.276.

filmmaker in 2008 (when my film *Going Home* finished) and the researcher in 2015 (when I write this thesis). I become both outsider and insider of my own works (the film and the thesis). On the one hand, the self represented in the film is private and personal, on the other hand, as Russell states from auto-ethnographic perspective, it is a 'dispersal of representation, subjectivity, experience, and cultural history.' [16] And by inscribing my splitting self in the discussion of the diary film genre, which follows a specific route, the personal experience renders into cultural and technological developments, and the memory becomes history. It is through situating myself in the context that the historical development of the diary film, the culture, and the personal experience can be established, connected, and understood in this thesis.

1.1 Literature Review

For the study on the diary film, the main challenge arises from the need to define the diary film as a genre. How is it different from the other neighbouring genres (such as autobiography, home movie, essay film, and the first-person documentary)? What is its connection with the literary diary? Do they share similarities? What are their differences? The diary film, literally speaking, is a diary made in film, through images rather than words. Hence, as a preliminary, first I suggest focusing on the word that the written diary and the diary film both share – the 'diary'. The word 'diary' literally means keeping 'daily activities'. Therefore, 'daily' becomes its form, and daily activities become its contents. However, a seemingly contradictory principle provided by Philippe Lejeune on the literary diary is: 'There is no set form, no required content. You have a free hand'. [17] He thereby highlights one of the essential qualities of the literary diary besides its dailiness, which is a freedom in writing, in form and in content. You can write down anything you want in your diary, perhaps with your favourite pen, specific colours, starting from the top of the page,

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[16] Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, p.xv.
[17] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.168.

carefully arranging words and sentences in order, or not. Whatever makes you comfortable. Some people attach stickers in the page, or bus tickets, movie tickets, a leaf from the park, or photos. The freedom in both form and content is one of the characteristics of the diary. Also, the diary is often discussed with other genres, for it shares similarities with them. Rachel Langford and Russell West suggest that the literary diary is a marginal phenomenon, it is 'an uncertain genre uneasily balanced between literary and historical writing, […] The diary is a misfit form of writing, inhabiting the frontiers between many neighbouring or opposed domains, often belonging simultaneously to several "genres" or "species"…'[18] The boundary between the diary and the autobiography is often blurred. Lejeune has already verified that in both the autobiography and the diary, the author, the character, and the narrator are identical.[19] The authors in both genres deal with life experience through different methods and perspectives. This is perhaps why a diary is usually an autobiographical text as well. However, Lejeune still tries to differentiate the autobiography and the diary as two distinct literary genres. According to Lejeune, an autobiography is 'turned towards the past',[20] whereas the diary is moving along time towards the future. They are two different movements, one moves from the past to the already known ending (autobiography), when the other simply moves forwards without an ending (diary). It is clear that in these movements, autobiography is a work of retrospection, and the diary is, as Margo Culley suggests, a series of 'continuous presents'.[21] So now we have two basic principles that could identify diary: the freedom and limitlessness in both form and content, and a special temporal daily structure. But, how can these principles be applied to the diary film?

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[18] Rachel Langford and Russell West (eds.), *Marginal Voices, Marginal Forms: Diaries in European Literature and History* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), p.8.

[19] In Lejeune's discussion, autobiography and the diary share the same categories. They include: the situation of the author (the author and the narrator are identical) and the position of the narrator (the narrator and the principal character are identical). See Philippe Lejeune, 'The Autobiographical Pact', in Paul John Eakin (ed.), Katherine Leary (trans.) *On Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p.4.

[20] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.191.

[21] Culley, *A Day at a Time*, p.20.

First of all, the freedom in both form and content cause problems for categorization, that is, the diary film is considered and studied in relation to its neighboring and similar genres, such as the home movie, the personal documentary, the autobiographical film and the essay film. In these misplaced discussions of the diary film, some characteristics are over or under-stressed, while others are ignored. Among them, the home movie is probably the closest to the diary film, for they both share the same characteristic of using unconventional cinematic language; they both consist of jump cuts, over and under exposure, inconsistency of lighting and shaky camera movement. These similarities confirm the difficulty in distinguishing between these two genres. The 'bad' cinematic language of the diary film and the home movie, their technical inadequacies, make them distinct from the norms of conventional cinema, the feature film, and the traditional narrative. Their marginal position also allows them to produce, relatively speaking, a less-mediated view of reality, that is more private, personal and seemingly authentic. Roger Odin notes that it is because of this 'particular emotional relation that home movie images weave with their spectator…gives home movie images their specific power'.[22] However, despite the fact that, in the 1960s American avant-garde film movement, the diary filmmakers did borrow the form and style of home movie as new way of expression (notably in the films of Stan Brakhage, Marie Menken and Jonas Mekas), it is still inappropriate to put the diary film and home movie together in discussion judging only by 'appearances' (images, cinematic language and camera movements). Referring to the new American cinema filmmakers, Richard Chalfen points out that 'their [the new American cinema filmmakers] films are home movies only in the sense of something being shot at home with simple and comparatively inexpensive filmmaking technology'.[23] His argument suggests that although they both involve 'shooting at home', the diary film and home

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[22] Roger Odin, 'Reflections on the Family Home Movie as Document: A Semio-Pragmatic Approach', in Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann (eds.) *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p.264.

[23] Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987), pp.143-144.

movie are two different things. In Roger Odin's article 'Reflections on the Family Home Movies as Document: A Semio-Pragmatic Approach', he distinguishes the difference between 'to film' and 'to make a film' in relation to the production of home movies. He argues that 'in family cinema, the production of the film is not a primary goal…He/she films for the pleasure of gathering the members of the family'.[24] Therefore, the home movie maker does not film to make a film; the value of the home movie lies *not* in the final product of the film, but in the *screening* of the home movie. The situation here is what Chalfen calls the 'Home Mode Communication' which is described as 'a pattern of interpersonal and small group communication centered around the home'.[25] In fact, the home movie is not such a free genre as the diary film. The choice of themes in home movie includes birthdays, family meetings and children playing; these recurrent themes suggest that the filming of the home movie is closer to a family ritual than a personal choice. There are numerous taboos in the home movie and 'only a narrow spectrum of everyday life is selected for recording on film'.[26] Moreover, in the home movie, the cinematic grammar (the shaky camera, jump cuts between locations and inaccurate exposure) happens because the camera operator does not possess professional technical knowledge. The results of technical inaccuracy are not 'intentional'. In these aspects, the diary film seems heading towards the opposite direction to the home movie. In terms of subject, diary films feature funerals and disease (Mekas's *Zefiro Torna*), body exposure (George Kuchar's *Weather Diary 5*), and blood (Shine Lin's *Blues Biyori*).

Besides home movies, the diary film is often enough overlapped with first person documentary and the essay film. In his article 'The Immigrant Experience in Jonas Mekas's Diary Film: A Chronotopic Analysis of *Lost, Lost, Lost*', Efrén Cuevas, borrowed the notion of journal entry approach from Jim Lane, considers the diary film as a 'netherworld between experimental cinema and documentaries…that involves the shooting

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[24] Odin, 'Reflections on the Family Home Movie as Document', p.256.
[25] Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, p.8.
[26] Ibid., p.61.

of everyday events for a sustained period of time and the subsequent editing of these events into a chronological autobiographical narrative'.[27] Timothy Corrigan, in *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker*, categories the diary film as the essayistic diaries, focusing on the diaristic tendency which recalls the autobiographical dimensions in essay films, and at the same time 'reconfigures temporality as a form of public thinking, as a kind of public diary'.[28] Although situated under different categories, both Cuevas and Corrigan's discussions highlight the importance of temporality in the diary filmmaking process. Cuevas notices the similarities between literary diary and the diary film that they are both made 'with no evident conflict or closure in the structure'.[29] And in order to maintain the chronological narrative, the editing process of the diary film becomes simply 'elimination, cutting out the parts that [don't] work'.[30] Corrigan also emphasizes the temporal structure in his so-called essayistic diaries, that it 'consist of numerous starts and stops, pauses and accelerations'[31] during the process of filming, and it is the reflective times of the filmmaker in the editing that 'punctuate the different temporal zones of the film'.[32]

   Under the restraints of the calendar, the literary diary generates its own unique temporal structure, which is emphasized and constructed by the notion of 'entries'. An entry represents the things, feelings and thoughts as recorded on a specific day in a diary. Usually it takes form in a single page, but sometimes it occupies more or less than a page. The diary writer marks dates and times, or references to time (age: 'I am thirty two years old now' or a special event: 'London Olympics opens tonight'); and then the different entries together, constitute the whole diary. However, the notion of the entry becomes problematic when the medium of diary writing changes from diary notebook to film. Here

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[27] Efrén Cuevas, 'The Immigrant Experience in Jonas Mekas's Diary Film: A Chronotopic Analysis of *Lost, Lost, Lost*', *Biography*, 29.1 (Winter 2006), p.55.
[28] Timothy Corrigan, *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.132.
[29] Cuevas, 'The Immigrant Experience in Jonas Mekas's Diary Film', p.55.
[30] Ibid., p.57.
[31] Corrigan, *The Essay Film*, p.134.
[32] Ibid.

we can identify our first problem: how to distinguish the diary's 'temporal structure' from different scenes and the changing of scenes in the diary film. Does – or could – a scene/sequence in a film equal an entry in a diary? These two problems are the primary difficulties when trying to define the diary film in terms of its periodic temporal structure. In order to provide a more accurate definition to the diary film, we might go back to the study of the literary diary. From there we would be able to examine, and moreover, to establish the definition of the diary film. In this chapter, I will start with the study of the literary diary, establishing the differences between the diary and other literary genres and the unique characteristics of the literary diary. Then I will use one of Jonas Mekas's early works, *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* (1969),[33] Saul Levine's *Note to Pati* (1969)[34] and Peter Hutton's *July '71 in San Francisco* (1971)[35] as examples to examine and support my analysis and argument, and moreover, to establish some normative rules of the diary film which will be applied in the discussions in the following chapters.

   Apart from the issue of temporality, as a mode of first-person filmmaking, the diary film inevitably has to deal with the issue of filmmaker's subjectivity, as well as how the subjective voice of the filmmaker can be expressed under the diaristic structure. Hamid Naficy, from his study of Jonas Mekas's *Lost, Lost, Lost*, discovers that there is a unique epistolary structure in the diary film (he calls it 'letter-films'[36]). Based on the epistolary structure, the filmmaker carries out a 'dialogue' with the self 'by means of voice-over narration'.[37] Catherine Russell, from the autoethnographical perspective, also concludes

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[33] *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* also known as *Walden.* It was filmed in 1964-1968 and edited in 1968-1969. *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* has six reels (chapters). *Walden* [diary film, DVD] Dir. Jonas Mekas. USA, 1969. 180 mins. [Potemkine Films, Angnés B. DVD, M0078599, 2012].

[34] Saul Levine (American, b.1943) is an experimental filmmaker. The 'Pati' in the film title could be a titular name or one of the family members appears in the film. *Note to Pati,* [diary film, online] Dir. Saul Levine. USA, 1969. 8 mins. https://vimeo.com/99569792 [accessed 13 July 2014].

[35] Peter Hutton (b.1944) is an experimental filmmaker and a professional cinematographer. The complete title of *July '71* is *July '71 in San Francisco, Living at Beach Street, Working at Canyon Cinema, Swimming in the Valley of the Moon. July '71 in San Francisco* [diary film, online] Dir. Peter Hutton. USA, 1971. 35 mins. http://0xdb.org/1829688/info [accessed 13 June 2012].

[36] According to Naficy, 'letter-films' refers to the films made 'in the form of epistles addressed to someone either inside or outside the diegesis'. Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.101.

[37] Ibid., p.141.

that the diary film has a common feature in terms of incorporating the 'I' of the author into the film, which is the use of 'the first-person voice-over'.[38] Meanwhile, Russell does not ignore the double temporality of the diary film. She argues that the central issue of the diary form filmmaking is how the filmmaker 'writes' an identity in temporal structure, and it 'involves a journey between the time of shooting and editing'[39], a process which requires both the inscription of the present moment (of shooting) and the revision of the footage, as the filmmaker revisits and recounts the past. From the discussions above, we might pay special attention not only to the subjective and first-person narrative approach used in the diary filmmaking, but also how this self-narration is applied through the unique temporal structure in the diary film, which, in my opinion, is the key to distinguish the diary film from other neighboring genres and should be established in the first place. These key issues, the self-narration and the temporality, will be discussed in Chapter Three (the voice-over) and Chapter Four (the temporality), in order to contribute to the study of the diary film as a first-person cinema practice, and most importantly, separate it from other neighboring cinematic genres.

1.1.1 Structure in the Written Diary

Laura Rascaroli adopts Béatrice Didier's study of the diary and suggests that it is 'a type of writing exempt from all rules, from any effective limit, the diary can accommodate anything and everything'.[40] This generalized principle of the diary does point out a central characteristic of diary writing. Because it is a personal writing, you can say things you want and no one will tell you otherwise. But there is something more than freedom and limitlessness in the diary. In his article 'The Diaries of Josep Pla: Reflection on the Personal Diary, Draft Diary and Elaborated Diary', Xavier Pla points out that the diary is

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[38] Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, p.277.
[39] Ibid., p.279.
[40] Laura Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film* (London: Wallflowers Press, 2009), p.115. A quotation from Béatrice Didier's *Le Journal intime* (Didier 1976, p.187).

first of all personal, and it is a 'form without form'.[41] It is a form because it obeys the order

of the calendar, that is, a diary is composed by different entries which follow the order of

the calendar (this is its form). Yet it is also a 'form without form' because the diary overall

comprises of arbitrary writing (the diarist's random choice of theme and style), which is

'produced haphazardly by the writer's caprice, and come close to discontinuity'.[42] Yet as

Pla quotes from Jean Rousset to illustrate his argument: 'The private diary, which appears

so free of form […] is bound by one apparently light-weight, but momentous rule: it must

respect the calendar. That is the pact which it signs'.[43] When analysing the development of

the diary, Christina Sjöblad also brings up the characteristic of 'chronological order'. In

her article, Sjöblad traces the development of the diary from the 16th Century, when the

diary took form as records of family events (births, weddings and deaths). In the late 17th

Century, women took notes of household duties and accounts. She concludes from the 18th

Century diary writings by women that the diary is 'written in the first person, with dated

passages in chronological order, where the subject speaks not only of events in her

surroundings, but also about her feelings and thoughts concerning these events'.[44] Some

might suggest that the notion of the authorship in the published diary should be

challenged – since the role of the editor plays an important role. However, as Jackson

argues, 'much of the authority comes from the location of each diary in a "moment of

writing" belonging at once to the diarist and the diary entry'.[45] The authorship is already

inscribed beforehand in the 'moment of writing', and the later adjustment from the editor

does not affect that. So now there are at least four rules in the diary writing: the diary is

written in first person (subject); the diary is about private life (family events, personal

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[41] Xavier Pla, 'The Diaries of Josep Pla: Reflections on the Personal Diary, Draft Diary and Elaborated Diary', in Rachel Langford and Russell West (eds.) *Marginal Voices, Marginal Forms* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), p.126.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., p.128. A quotation from Jean Rousset, 'Le journal intime, texte sans destinataire?', *Poétique* 56 (1983), p.435.
[44] Christina Sjöblad, 'From Family Notes to Diary: The Development of A Genre', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4, The Mind/Body Problem (Summer, 1998), p.517.
[45] Jackson, *Diary Poetics*, p.8.

feelings); the diary is written in chronological order (the dated passages); and the content and form of the diary are free and limitless. As I mentioned at the beginning, the literary diary follows the particular temporal structure of the calendar, which is always heading forward, as the direction of time passes. After today there is tomorrow, and after the 1st there is the 2nd, and this principle is irreversible. The diary is therefore the fine combination of sequential entries, which constitutes its unique structure.

1.1.2 Continuity in the Written Diary

The entries which follow the calendric structure bring the diary two consequences: the continuous, chronological unity of the diary as an oeuvre and the continuity of the *act* of diary writing. The entries follow the calendric order: yesterday, today and tomorrow; Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and so on. A diary is a progressive act: the writer notes down what happened that day. There are maybe some exceptions that some writers write down their plans for tomorrow, or their wishes and expectations for the future, but these 'ideas' still belong to today, they appear during the act of writing at the moment. Anna Jackson extends the notion of 'continuous present' from Margo Culley, stating that it refers 'not so much to the grammatical tense of each sentence but to an overall "narrative" tense; that is, it is a structural quality of the text'.[46] That is to say, if reminiscences 'dating back' occur, they are still 'anchored' in the present tense as the time of writing. The notion of 'continuous present' is crucial and is perhaps what differentiates the diary from autobiography. As Lejeune describes that '[a]utobiography in the singular leaves me cold. How could I have wished for that unifying Utopia? My life has to resonate and expand, it has to go on changing…I might possibly – even probably – write autobiographical texts, in the plural. But to free them of all hegemonic intent, it is best to write several, and to date them. That means returning to a new form of…diary!'[47] Lejeune's description explains the

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[46] Jackson, *Diary Poetics*, p.19.
[47] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.168.

quality of plurality in the diary, which is caused by the act of writing everyday. It is, perhaps, the main difference between autobiography and the diary; where autobiography reflects from a single vantage point and tries to tell *a story*, on the contrary, the diary is woven together by different 'continuous presents' and it tells *stories*.

The other consequence comes from the act of writing itself. As Lejeune states, 'keeping a journal is, first and foremost, a way of life'.[48] Writing a diary is a life practice. Ordinarily, a diary cannot consist of only one entry (we wouldn't call it an 'entry' if there is just one page of recorded events. An entry exists only when there is a diary). Diary writing must be a daily activity, or at least a continuous, consequential or periodic activity. Pla follows Pierre Hébert's article, 'Jalons pour une narratologie du journal intime' ('Milestones for a Narratology of the Diary'),[49] and gives a definition to the diary that a 'personal diary is basically a daily or periodical report (or at least 'adequately' periodical) of external events, actions, experiences or personal impressions'.[50] One writes down today's thoughts, finishes writing, and starts the same act tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow. The diary is a continuous repetitive act of the beginning and ending of writing.

1.1.3 Discontinuity in the Written Diary

From a structural perspective, despite the requirement that the diary keeper writes continuously, a diary is composed of numerous entries. Each entry is different from another; and between entries, there are always gaps. The discontinuity of the diary lies in two aspects: the materiality of the diary notebook and the fragmentary style and nature of the written content. The basic material form of the diary is a blank page. The page marks out the boundaries of writing space. No matter how many things you write down in an entry or how many pages you need to complete an entry, eventually it has to end within the

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[48] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.187.
[49] Pierre Hébert, 'Jalons pour une narratologie du journal intime', *Voix & Images*, 37 (1987), p.141.
[50] Pla, 'The Diaries of Josep Pla', p.128.

boundary of a page. By starting a new entry, which is marked by turning to a new page or by a new dating on the page, the old entry becomes the past. This is how the discontinuity functions in the diary under the structure of entries: an entry follows an entry, and then together they transform into a diary notebook, which according to Lejeune, 'will scar everything over, linking it all up and melting it together'.[51] During the process, 'the diary's discontinuities are organized in series and rewoven into continuities'.[52] However, when a notebook is full, the diary soon returns to discontinuity and repeats the previous procedure. Structurally speaking, the diary is continuous because each entry follows one another as a series and together they constitute the unity of the diary. At the same time, the diary is discontinuous because an entry has to end at some point, and the new entry always begins after a temporal gap between itself and the former one. For example, in Jonas Mekas's 1944 written diary (19 July), he describes his journey to Vienna. The 19 July entry ends with 'The train is moving across the countryside, we are looking at the clean, neat rows of houses. In a few days they'll be nothing but rubble'.[53] The next entry, 21 July 1944, begins with 'Goodbye, Vienna! At least, for now'.[54] Obviously a day, 20 July, is missing between two entries. Besides dates, the contents in the two entries are also discontinuous: they were on the train crossing the Nemunas river (the end of the 19 July entry), and then the journey ends (the beginning of 21 July entry). Between sitting on the train and the leaving, there is an omission, an interruption.

The other discontinuity of the diary is the fragmentary style of written content, or to put it in other words, diary writing is a writing of fragments and interrupted narratives. As we all know, one simply cannot write down everything that happens in a day, nor can one write twenty-four hours a day. One can only write *in* a certain period of time (and as the diary typically reflects on the day just past, this period of time is usually at night before

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[51] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.176.
[52] Ibid., p.179.
[53] Jonas Mekas, 'Diary', *BOMB*, No. 26 (Winter, 1988/1989), p.60.
[54] Ibid.

going to bed); and one can only write *about* a certain period of time. It is inevitable, to omit, select, or simply write down what you can remember. The omission usually occurs in a sentence with the ellipses of the pronouns, not only for finishing the entry within time, but also as the pronouns are 'unnecessary because the identity of the diarist as the protagonist is understood'.[55] Examples are provided from Joe Orton's diary, in which he starts with 'Met Miss Boyne on the stairs…' and 'Spend the morning writing…'[56] Kafka also starts his entry with ellipses of pronouns, for example in his 1913 diary (1 July) he starts with 'The wish for an unthinking, reckless solitude. To be face to face only with myself…'; also in 3 July he writes 'The broadening and heightening of existence through marriage. Sermon text. But I almost sense it'.[57] Therefore, while sentences in an entry are, often enough, fragmentary, they appear in a context where the author is 'understood', and the omission of the pronoun does not create difficulty for understanding the diary. The other omission caused by the diary writing appears in the choice of written content. Within the limit of time and space of writing, the diarist only writes about the most representative or the most unforgettable event during the day. An obvious example can be seen in Mekas's 1978 written diary (9 May), in the entry he writes: 'I came home from work and found a sheet of paper on my table: "Jonas, George died this afternoon. Nijole will call you. We are on the ninth floor."—Hollis and Oona'.[58] This is the whole entry of 9 May 1979, which consists of only one thing: Mekas found a note from his wife (Hollis) and his daughter (Oona) about George's death. Lejeune provides a useful metaphor that encapsulates the continuity and discontinuity of the diary as 'a piece of lacework or a spider web. It is apparently made up of more empty space than filled space'[59] – a web that consists of omission and is continuously woven by discontinuous entries. The written

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[55] Jackson, *Diary Poetics*, p.127.

[56] Joe Orton, *The Orton Diaries*, John Lahr (ed.) (London: Minerva, 1989), p.87 and p.136.

[57] Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910-1923*, Max Brod (ed.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p.222 and p.223.

[58] Jonas Mekas, *Letters from Nowhere* (Paris: Paris Expérimental, 2003), p.149. The George here is George Maciunas, who was a founding member of Fluxus in the 1960s and also a good friend of Mekas's; the Nijole here is the Lithuania poet Nijole Miliauskaite (1950-2002).

[59] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.181.

down words are the lace or spider silk, and the omitted events are the gaps between them. One shall not forget about the famous example of weaving by Penelope, Odysseus's wife, who weaves and unweaves everyday before her husband's return. Perhaps the weaving of Penelope is the earliest example of the diary writing? An act that continues and, repeats, everyday?

1.1.4 Repetition in the Written Diary

The diary is repetitive. The most obvious example of the repetition in the diary is the act of writing, as in the weaving of Penelope. Repetition also emerges in the writing style and theme. In writing, every entry requires a new dating, and every dating not only serves as recording the date of writing, but most importantly, it 'verifies the time of enunciation'.[60] The style of dating might vary from writer to writer, but it can be seen as a manifestation of the authorship from the start of every new entry. There are many factors that would affect or direct a diarist's writing style: their educational background, cultural background, language, age, personal preference, books the author likes to read, their personality, and habits. All of these form and shape an author's specific way of writing and his/her style. Some diary authors use the form of lists to document what happened during their day, seeing the diary as a place for documentation rather than of emotional expression, this kind of writing usually appears as an account book or ship's log. Mary Vial Holyoke, a traditional housewife writing in the 18th Century in Boston, kept her diary as part of her duties in the family. She recorded family events with short notes, which usually contain only one or two sentences ('Jan. 8, 1764. First wore my new Cloth riding hood.'; '[Jan.] 9. My Daughter Polly first confined with the quinsy. Took a vomit.'; '[Jan.] 10. Very ill. Molly Molton watched.').[61] Elizabeth Fuller, who was an unmarried daughter of a colonial household in Princeton, Massachusetts, also kept a diary of the tasks she performed as her

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[60] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.77.
[61] Culley, *A Day at a Time*, p.30.

contribution to the family economy. She also used short sentences and lists in her diary, as Mary did ('1791 May. 1—Sabbath I went to Meeting to-day.'; '2—I spun five skeins to-day.'; '3—I spun five skeins to-day.'; '4—I spun two skeins to-day finished the Warp for this Piece.—Nathan Perry worked here this P.M.').[62] Some diary authors see their diaries as their friends; they adopt an epistolary style to write their diaries. They start an entry with direct address such as 'Dear Diary' or 'Dear Friend', and end an entry with 'I will see you tomorrow.' Their diaries are like a conversation with friends. They choose simple words and phrases. For example, in Helen Ward Brandreth's 1876 diary (2 January), she starts with 'I have determined to keep a journal. I shall call it Fannie Fern'.[63] And in her 27 June entry, for instance, she starts it with 'Dear Fannie' and ends it with 'Your own. Nell'.[64] Here the presence of an addressee does not mean that the diary is written for or to someone. On the contrary, because of the absence of addressee's response, it implies that the addressee is just a figment of the writer's imagination. Rebecca Hogan notes on the function of the diary as dear companion and also highlights its '"non-responsiveness"…its inability to "converse" or "answer"'.[65] In her opinion, the dialogue between the diarist and the 'silent interlocutor' is actually a dialogue between the past self and the present self. Lejeune also defines the diary as a 'new posture of self-address' between the 'monologic system' and the 'dialogic system' by asserting that 'the personal diary occupies a space between these two [systems]. On the one hand, it is "more than" the monologic situation (someone is being "spoken to"), and on the other hand, it is "less than" the dialogic situation (that someone is not someone else, but myself)'.[66] Evidence can be found in Helen's 1882 diary (22 February), in the entry she begins not with 'Dear Fannie', but 'Dear me'.[67] Therefore, this putative reader of the diary is actually a persona for the diarist

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[62] Culley, *A Day at a Time*, p.71.
[63] Ibid., p.149.
[64] Ibid., pp.150-151.
[65] Hogan, 'Diarists On Diaries', p.10.
[66] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.94.
[67] Culley, *A Day at a Time*, p.155.

him or herself. Some authors insist or prefer certain kinds or colours of pen when writing; some use particular kinds of page layout; some use pseudonyms or repeated codes (Helen's 'Nell' and Kafka's 'Bl.', 'F.' and 'E.' in his diary[68]). Virginia Woolf describes her entries in the diary as 'hurried notes'[69] which not only suggests the speed of her writing but also implies the nature of the diary entry as fragmentary and discontinuous notes. These all refer to the repetitive character of diary writing.

Another repetition is in relation to theme. After analysing a great number of diaries, Lejeune comes to the conclusion that surprisingly in these discontinuous and fragmentary diary writings, there are repetitive occurrences of the same or similar themes in different diaries. In his reading on Eugénie de Guérin's May diary (Lejeune does not provide more details about the year of the diary) written at Cayla, Lejeune discovers that there were two main themes in her diary: springtime and death.[70] The repetition in theme can also be found in Jonas Mekas 1977 written diary. In 1977, Mekas's good friend George Maciunas was very sick (he died of cancer in Boston in 1978). In Mekas's 1977 diary, George and death became the main themes. In 6 April 1977 entry, Mekas writes: 'his [George] body is only holding [out] thanks to his own sheer stubbornness. The only thing he has left is his laugh. Here he is king. A king in a kingdom he has created himself'.[71] In the 6 July 1977 entry, Mekas writes: 'We were going down Wooster Street, me and Hollis, my wife. Wooster is in the center of SoHo. This is where George started his cooperative building project, or rather, invasion'.[72] And then in the 17 November 1977 diary, Mekas writes: 'We were talking. He said that he will have to take morphine every day, that the doctors prescribed it. He can't take the pain anymore. It's his stomach. It had been four months already and he'd

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[68] In Kafka's 1914 diary (21 October, 1 November, and 3 November). Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka*, p.316.
[69] Jackson, *Diary Poetics*, p.114.
[70] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.180.
[71] Mekas, *Letters from Nowhere*, p.140.
[72] Ibid., p.141.

tried everything; he doesn't know what else to try'.[73] The year before George's death, the recurrent theme of Mekas's diary was George.

As mentioned earlier, writing a diary seems to be totally free—you can write everything you like, there's no limitation. Yet in fact, during the process of writing, the diarist very often 'settles into a small number of forms of language that become "molds" for all of his entries, and never deviates from them'[74]. This repetition in diary and thematic obsessions (which the author him or herself might not even be aware of), is more of a general tendency or phase than a rule. As writing a diary is a progressive act, it is normal to have different phases during the progression. Repetitive style and theme may just be a temporary stage. As one ages, one becomes mature. The diary you wrote when you were young is different from the diary you write when you are older. Hence, Lejeune's 'never deviates' should be replaced as 'hardly deviates', because the style and theme indeed can change over time. Even so, it is still worth considering repetition as a temporal characteristic in the diary as a crucial aspect.

So far, I have now identified four characteristics in the literary diary: the *calendric structure of entries*, *continuity* (continuous entries as a unity and the act of writing), *discontinuity* (in structure and in content) and *repetition* (stylistic and thematic). Now I will take Jonas Mekas's *Diaries, Notes and Sketches,* Saul Levine's *Note to Pati* (1969) and Peter Hutton's *July '71 in San Francisco* (1971) as examples, to examine and analyse whether the four characteristics still apply, when the literary diary takes on the form and materiality of film.

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[73] Mekas, *Letters from Nowhere*, p.141..
[74] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.180.

1.2 Primary Characteristics of the Diary Film

1.2.1 The Identification of Author in the Diary Film

In the literary diary, as Lejeune states, the identity of the diarist as the author and the protagonist is understood (the author, the narrator and the principal character are identical). Anna Jackson also points out that the first aspect of the definition of the diary: 'the reference of the diary "I" to the author of the diary is, in fact, axiomatic'.[75] In the diary film, this is also the presumption one has to make before analysis. It is the primary task to identify some clues from the film which can guarantee that the person who carries the camera and the author of the film are the same. Therefore, I suggest that, in order to make a clear distinction between the diary film and mere documentations of events (traditional documentary and news-reported images), the author of the diary film has to be identified in the first place through different cinematic expressions.[76] One common approach is that the diarist shows him or herself in front of the camera, which can be achieved by either pointing the lens at him- or herself, or filming their reflection in the mirror. Examples and more discussions can be found in George Kuchar's 'to-camera piece' approach and Shine Lin's self-portrait in Chapter Five. By showing the self in the film, the author-narrator-character relation becomes clear; it is the 'I' who is filming 'my' diary. Other means could include identifying a personal, idiosyncratic style as a signature in the film, as well as noting characteristic kinds of filming (Jonas Mekas's single-frame, Peter Hutton's pan), editing (Saul Levine's juxtaposition editing technique) or narrating (Mekas's voice-over).

In Mekas's *Diaries, Notes and Sketches*, the author can be identified through several aspects: the single-frame filming style (Mekas's trademark), the accented voice-over narration (Mekas's voice), and self-portrait shots (as found in 'SUNDAY AT STONES' [00:01:35], 'Morbid days of New York & gloom' [00:06:21], 'BREAKFAST IN

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[75] Jackson, *Diary Poetics*, p.142.
[76] This is also the reason why I choose these three diary films in the discussion, for the identification of the diary film author in these films are evident for their styles in filming, editing, and narrative.

MARSEILLES' [00:12:16] and 'Breakfast at Stones' [00:17:54][77]). In *Note to Pati,* even though Levine himself does not appear directly on screen, the self-evident authorship of Levine can be suggested from the signature of his unique juxtaposition techniques (the scenes of children playing, the birds on trees and the city are juxtaposed on the screen at the same time), the traces of the splice tape as part of the film texture, and an intensive rhythm provided by the editing process. In *July '71 in San Francisco,* Peter Hutton shows himself in front of the camera three times: the tumbling scene (18:46), the filming in front of the window scene (20:21) and the swing scene (shows only his feet, 22:07). The bike-riding scenes, which appear five times (00:56, 02:31, 09:14, 10:04 and 18:34), can also be considered as self-portraits, since they are obviously filmed by Hutton himself while riding a bike around the city [**Figure 1-1**].

The Bike Riding scene (00:56)   The Tumbling scene (18:46)

The Swing scene (22:07)

Figure 1-1: Stills from *July '71 in San Francisco*

1.2.2 The Notion of Entry in the Diary Film

As discussed the notion of entry is important in the literary diary, as it differentiates it from other literary genres. The entry can be identified by two aspects: the dates and the pages.

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[77] The mixed uses of capital and lowercase letters here are according to what Mekas does in the film as intertitle cards.

They both mark the boundaries between different entries. Yet film, unlike a written diary, does not have the material limitations of paper to mark out the boundaries of writing (filming). This aspect of filmmaking makes it difficult to pin down the notion of what constitutes an entry in the diary film. Here I will start with the notion of interrupted narrative caused by the discontinuity in the literary diary to find the trace of the entry, or the borders between entries, in the diary film. In conventional cinematic language, a narrative sequence consists of shots and scenes that have the similar settings, characters, and plots. Together they form a continuum which operates as a narrative within this sequence. This continuous unity of narrative is only interrupted when the next sequence appears. The diary film, in contrast, is always filled with jump cuts and arbitrary changing of locations, of people and of events. This 'unconventional' use of cinematic language constantly interrupts the narrative and makes it difficult for the scenes to form a sequence. For the narrative is always interrupted every time the film shutter closes and opens again. Therefore, every jump cut could be considered as a potential space that marks the entry in the diary film. However, an entry could consist of many jump cuts, for example the 'SUNDAY AT STONES' scene in Mekas's *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* and the bike-riding scene in Hutton's *July '71 in San Francisco*. They are fragmentary in images but still consistent in terms of narrative, for all the jump cuts happen within the same event. Therefore, it would be better if we understood interruption in relation to events rather than jump cuts. For example, in *Diaries, Notes and Sketches,* reel six is a combination of different events: Wendy's wedding, Central Park, meeting with Marie Menken, Bleecker Street snow fight, a flashback of Beck's protest, Yoko Ono and John Lennon in bed, and September in the park with a girl. In *Note to Pati,* profilmic events include children playing with snow near the house, birds on trees, children skiing, snowball fighting and traveling on train (or in a car). In *July '71 in San Francisco*, different events include showering in a public bath house, people dancing naked, a man and a woman kissing indoors, clothes drying in the backyard, filming and riding a bike (from 14:43 to 18:43). These events can

be identified by the change of subject, theme, or location. In fact, the sequence is perhaps irrelevant to the diary film, for a sequence always suggests that there is a plot, and this contradicts the intention of the diary filmmaker. However, in order to facilitate the discussion and the analysis of the film, I will still use 'sequence' or 'scene' to refer to a certain section in a film. The diary filmmaker does not try to tell 'a story', but 'little stories' with entries. From the examples in reel six of *Diaries, Notes and Sketches*, the successive events share no similarities in terms of location or event or narrative. Reel six is the combination of many events, but these events do not make reel six a sequence, for it is, like the other five reels in the film, not a plot unit. The same is true of *Note to Pati* and *July '71 in San Francisco*, since they are both composed of different events rather than sequences. In *Note to Pati*, there are only three events: children playing with snow, birds on trees and travel by train (or a car, there is no evidence showing that whether Levine is shooting from the window of a train or a car) [**Figure 1-2**].

Snow Playing scene.   Birds scene.   Travel scene.

Figure 1-2: Stills from *Note to Pati*

These three events are inter-cut or juxtaposed together at random without a unified plot. In *July '71 in San Francisco,* the only thing those different events share is that they were all filmed in July '71 in San Francisco, as the title suggests. The successive events follow not the order of narrative, but appear random: Hutton is filming on a boat, then the film shifts to indoors, then there is a long-take of city landscape, and then back to the boat (08:48 to 10:03). It may be possible that these events were filmed in exactly the same chronological order as shown in the film, or it is also possible that Hutton edited them, and

then re-arranged them in post-production. However, the film, the arrangement of different events, is not a narrative with a unified theme, but an apparently casual documentation of daily life Hutton spent in San Francisco in 1971. We might pay attention to the fact that the different events do not necessarily mean that they were taken on different dates. In the examples from the three films mentioned above, it is possible that they were all taken/happened in the same day. So how can one identify an 'entry' in a diary film by the notion of event? Do different entries have to be taken on different dates? Or, is an entry, as is the notion of jump cut, best understood as defined by a sudden ending and an interrupted narrative, which creates a gap, a kind of ellipsis, between two cuts? The question, then, becomes what causes gaps to appear in the diary film? In these three films, filmmakers use certain means and techniques which could then be considered as references to identify the notion of entry. In *Diaries, Notes and Sketches,* Jonas Mekas uses title cards to separate different events and, furthermore, mark out distinct entries. Title cards are used here to set up a temporal marker and therefore act as a boundary within diary filming. Some title cards have clear temporal references, such as 'NEW YEAR'S EVE IN TIME SQUARE' (00:50:40), 'CHINESE NEW YEAR' (01:08:37) and 'CHRISTMAS EVE' (01:21:25); some title cards are describing events, such as 'A FIRE ON 87th STREET' (00:16:05), 'Sitney's Wedding' (00:49:50) and 'Peter's Wedding' (01:51:47). This is one of the ways for the diary film to represent the concept of time. Between two title cards, between the ending of an event and the beginning of the next one, we can identify a diary film entry.

In some cases, however, there are no title cards in the diary film. For example in reel one of *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* there are two scenes, Mekas films himself (00:19:19) and the boat rowing on the lake (00:19:22), which change without title cards. However, we can still consider these two scenes as two different entries, for there are apparent changes of location (from Mekas's apartment [indoor] to the lake [outdoor]) and time (from night to daytime), as well as a closure and an interruption, which can be considered as evidence of

taking (filming) two different entries. In *Note to Pati,* the apparent changes happen only when the 'travel' scene appears (first appears in 03:12). The other two scenes, the 'children playing with snow' and 'birds on trees', were both filmed in daytime, in snow, and near the house. But the travel scene, which is clearly a digression, was filmed in a moving vehicle on a day without snow; it was obviously filmed at a different time and location, therefore it can be seen as a different entry. In *July '71 in San Francisco*, there are nearly forty different scenes/events in a thirty four minutes film, with most of them filmed in different locations (some of them were in the same location, but Hutton separates them in the different sections of the film). The apparent change of time occurs twice in the film: the first time is the long-take of a mall at night (13:11) followed by the public bath house scene in daytime, a jump cut from night to day (14:32); the second time is the scene where Hutton films from a car window at night (19:41) followed by the scene where Hutton films his own reflection on a window in front of a house in daytime, a jump cut from night to day (20:21). To conclude here, in order to mark out an entry in the diary film, we not only need to locate both the referential indexes of space and time, but also need to find out where the gap is between events. This is crucial in the diary film, for it not only suggests the specific period of filming activity, but also differentiates the diary film from other cinematic genres.

1.2.3 Continuity in the Diary Film

The continuity of the diary film, as in the written diary, lies in the continuous act of filming. The diary filmmaker considers filming as a daily practice, as in Mekas's famous saying: 'I thought I should do whatever I can today, because if I don't, I may not find any other free time for weeks. If I can film one minute—I film one minute. If I can film ten seconds—I film ten seconds…'[78] This suggests that Mekas is always filming, and sees filming as a part

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[78] Mekas, 'The Diary Film', p.190.

of his life.[79] In the literary diary, the continuous act of writing can be identified by author dating the entry. However, in the diary film, title cards are not always available. Therefore, one of the ways in identifying the continuous act of filming can be through the title of the film. In these films, the film titles all suggest the collection of entries from a certain period of time (Hutton's *July '71 in San Francisco*) or a unified theme (Levine's *Note to Pati*). The other way of identifying the continuous act can be through the content of the film which suggests that the diarist is indeed always filming. The key concept here is that it is not important what has been filmed, but through what has been filmed the act of continuous filming can be suggested, even though they are often insignificant daily trivia. We can find examples of filming as daily practice in *Diaries, Notes and Sketches*. In reel one, there are three scenes when Mekas films himself eating: 'SUNDAY AT STONES' (00:01:35), 'Morbid days of New York & gloom' (00:06:21) and 'BREAKFAST IN MARSEILLES' (00:12:16). In the first scene, Mekas is eating with the Stone family at their house. Instead of chatting with his friends, Mekas places his camera on the dining table and facing himself, filming and eating. In the second scene, Mekas is eating eggs alone in a bar. He sits on the bar counter chair, in front of him there is a big mirror. So Mekas takes out his camera again and films himself eating from the mirror. In the third scene, Mekas is having breakfast and coffee alone in Marseilles. The camera is placed on the table and controlled by his left hand while he's eating with his right hand. There are no 'incidents' in these three scenes. There is just Mekas himself, and doing the simple daily activity, eating. Hutton also incorporates daily trivia in his film. In *July '71 in San Francisco,* Hutton presents this continuity by filming daily activities, such as filming while riding a bike (appears five times), pissing (04:58), preparing dough (06:02), cooking

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[79] In fact, Mekas does consider filming as his life. In his *365 Day Project*, *December 12th* entry, Mekas is at the New Museum in New York filming the exhibition. A security guard comes to him and asks him to stop filming. Mekas replies: 'But this is my life!' See Tom Smith, 'Moment by Moment by Moment: Reflections on Jonas Mekas' 365 films', *Vertigo*, Vol. 4, Issue 1 (Autumn-Winter, 2008). https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/volume-4-issue-1-autumn-winter-2008/moment-by-moment-by-moment-reflections-on-jonas-mekas-365-films/ [accessed 2 October 2014].

(10:23), showering (14:42), driving (18:57) and swimming (21:14). From the examples mentioned above, one can see that notion of 'continuous present' created by the act of filming periodically is crucial in the diary film as well as in literary diary. It not only constitutes the continuity of the diary film, but also, at the same time, creates numerous entries from its very continuity.

1.2.4 Discontinuity in the Diary Film

As in the literary diary, the diary film is composed of different entries, which can be identified through events and ellipses between events. The film itself as a collective whole proceeds in chronological order, from the beginning of the film to its end, and it is a continuous movement. However, the entries are discontinuous. There are always gaps between different entries. Therefore they are, as in the written diary, both discontinuous and fragmentary. As in the literary diary, the entries in the diary film create numerous *stories*, and each of them is 'discreet and self-sufficient'.[80] The unique structure caused by entries also differentiates the diary film from other cinematic genres. The little *stories*, which are woven together by the continuous act of filming, make the diary film fragmentary in structure, narrative, and in temporality. In reel one of *Diaries, Notes and Sketches,* for example, the scene of Adolfas (Mekas's younger brother) moving out (00:12:01), is followed by Mekas filming of the empty apartment they used to share in New York, and then the next scene is 'BREAKFAST IN MARSEILLES' (00:12:16), where Mekas is eating by himself in France. The two scenes have no similarity in theme (his brother moving out and Mekas eating) and were shot at different time and places (New York and France), but are joined together by editing. Another example also appears in reel one, when Mekas films an accidental fire ('A FIRE ON 87th STREET', 00:16:05), and the next scene is Mekas on the train ('Coming Home from St. Vincent College', 00:16:57).

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[80] Hogan, 'Diarists of Diaries', p.9.

The two scenes also have nothing in common (fire accident and travel) and are also shot at different times and places (New York and on the moving train). The fire accident is suddenly interrupted and followed by a scene shot in different time and place. In *July '71 in San Francisco,* an obvious example of discontinuity comes in around the beginning of the film (08:48), when Hutton films on a boat, followed by a scene of Hutton filming his own shadow from a bike (09:14), and then jumping to an indoor scene (09:19). These are three successive scenes, clearly filmed at different times and locations, which have no similarity in theme, but edited together whilst remaining fragmentary. In *Note to Pati,* the example comes from the successive scenes of snowball fighting, view from a train window, and birds on trees (from 02:26 to 04:01). Levine merges three different entries together in random order, and creates a continuous discontinuity through his editing.

In comparing the filmed diary with the written diary in *Diaries, Notes and Sketches,* there is one interesting example, which resonates with Lejeune's metaphor of the spider web. In reel six, the Central Park scene (02:22:21), Mekas gets bored with filming for other people (Gideon's German movie) so he decides to film just for himself. In this scene, Mekas films images in Central Park: people skiing, children running in the woods, with his famous rapid single frame filming style. On the sound track is Mekas's voice-over: 'That is what cinema is, single frames. Frames. Cinema is between frames. Cinema is, light, movement, sun, light, heartbeating, breathing, light, frames'. What interests me most is the notion of 'cinema is between frames'. Normally, film is shot as twenty four frames per second (24 fps), which means a frame is only one twenty-fourth of a second. And a second in film (under 24 fps shooting mode) is the combination of twenty four still images. But that's not how real time goes; time is a continuum. Film extracts certain slices of time and makes it move as if it were in continuous movement, and this is the illusion of the reality of cinema. Hence, whether shooting at any kind of frame rate per second, film is always a discontinuous representation of time. The logic seems familiar – the process of continuity

made from discontinuities. This mirrors the way in which the discontinuous entries become continuous in a diary film. A diary entry is also a certain slice of time. The continuous movement of the film is created by the assembly of discontinuous frames, whereas the diary film (and the written diary) is also the assembly of discontinuous entries. This is perhaps why Mekas, as the most representative figure in diary filmmaking, is so fascinated by the notion that 'cinema is between frames'.

1.2.5 Repetition in the Diary Film

Style

The single-frame technique is one of the most famous trademarks of Mekas's diary films. It is closely related to the filming approach Mekas adopts (the reflective mode, which will be further discussed in Chapter Two) and the filming equipment he chooses (Bolex 16mm spring-wound film camera). Starting from *Diaries, Notes and Sketches*, it has rapidly become one of Mekas's signature effects, and moreover, his style. However, style is outside a single film context, for one cannot acclaim a 'style' from just one film. As in the written diary, the filming style in the diary film is a process of development, and can only be examined and identified through a certain quantity of works over time. Saul Levine's use of small gauges (8mm and Super 8mm formats) and his editing style became a recognizable signature of his style since 1965. The same technique appears in his other films such as *New Left Note* (1968), *Note to Colleen* (1974) and *Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2* (1976), which will be discussed in Chapter Four. His images are always intensively edited using juxtaposition; and the traces of splice tapes are intentionally revealed between images. Peter Hutton, on the contrary, shows a completely opposite style from Mekas and Levine. In *July '71 in San Francisco*, *Boston Fire* (1979), and *New York Portrait: Chapter I* to *III* (1979-1990), Hutton uses an observational style distinguished by the use of long takes of people and landscapes.

The repetitive style of Jonas Mekas is easier to identify than the style of the other two filmmakers. It is obvious that Mekas repeatedly uses his rapid single-frame shooting style with his Bolex 16mm film camera. The style appears in his major works such as *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* (1969), *Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania* (1972), *Lost, Lost, Lost* (1976), *Paradise Not Yet Lost (aka Oona's Third Year)* (1979) and *He Stands in a Desert Counting the Seconds of His Life* (1985). It is so distinctive and idiosyncratic that, as Roger Odin comments: 'He is the only one who do[es] that. When you see a movie by Mekas, immediately you know, ah! it's Mekas, even only for 15 seconds. You can say that's Mekas'.[81] However, as in the written diary, a personal style may change over time. As Mekas began using video in the late 90s, the so-called 'Mekas style' disappeared. In *Cinema is Not 100 Years Old* (1996), there is a two-minute long take of Mekas dancing in his studio. *A Few Notes on the Factory* (1999) also contains several continuous long takes of Mekas's revisiting Andy Warhol's studios, the Factorie(s),[82] in New York. Even though the medium itself has changed, elements of personal style remain in his video works, such as his uniquely accented voice-over, which I will discuss in Chapter Three.

Theme

In addition to the filming style, the repetition in the diary film also shows in relation to its theme. The diary film, as a collection of visual entries from a period of time, also tends to return to certain repeated themes and motifs. Here, I will list the repetitive themes in the three films under discussion here:

Repeated Themes in *Diaries, Notes and Sketches*

There are several repeated themes in *Diaries, Notes and Sketches*: seasons, wedding, eating, winter, and visiting friends. They are as follows **[Table 1]**:

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[81] Roger Odin, Interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 12 December 2012 (unpublished material).
[82] In the film, Mekas visits three different buildings where Andy Warhol's Factory was located from the 1960s to 1980s.

Table 1: Repeated Themes in *Diaries, Notes and Sketches*

6 Seasons	'September' (01:44:18), 'Autumn Came with wind & gold' (01:47:42), 'GULF COAST UNDERGROUND IN SPRING FEVER' (01:40:16), 'SOON AFTER THAT CAME AUTUMN' (02:04:41), 'One Spring day in Central Park' (02:35:41) and 'September' (02:45:11).
6 Winters	'IN NEW YORK WAS STILL WINTER' (00:00:20), 'Deep of Winter' (00:57:19), 'Winter Scene' (01:01:51), 'Winter Scene' (01:02:09), 'Winter Scene' (02:26:25) and 'Deep of Winter' (02:28:58).
4 Weddings	'A Wedding' (00:08:11), 'Sitney's Wedding' (00:49:50), 'Peter's Wedding' (01:51:47) and 'WENDY'S WEDDING' (02:13:16).
4 Eatings	'SUNDAY AT STONES' (00:01:35), 'Morbid days of New York & gloom' (00:06:21), 'BREAKFAST IN MARSEILLES' (00:12:16) and 'Breakfast at Stones' (00:17:54).
2 Visitings	'A VISIT TO BRAKHAGES' (01:23:05) and 'A VISIT TO HANS RICHTER' (01:44:31).

Repeated Title Cards in *Diaries, Notes and Sketches*:

'I THOUGHT OF HOME' appears twice in the beginning (00:03:02) and near the ending (02:44:36).

'Walden' appears seven times[83] (00:03:05), (00:07:02), (00:19:18), (00:28:39), (00:57:07), (01:42:24) and (02:47:15).

Repeated Themes in *Note to Pati*:

Animals: Birds on trees (00:40, 00:56, 01:57, 03:12 and 06:34).

Snow/Winter: throughout the film

Kids playing in snow: Kid in red beanie (00:48, 01:16), Kid in red coat (04:02, 06:08).

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[83] In an interview with Jon Lanthier, Jonas Mekas explains his relation with Thoreau's *Walden.* He says, 'I have a preoccupation with nature, and due to that I feel very close to Thoreau. I grew up in nature. Even in New York I'm always in Central Park. I see the trees, and I see the snow. There is very little snow in New York, but there's a lot of snow in my New York films!'. See Jon Lanthier, 'Film and Film and Film: An Interview with Jonas Mekas', *Bright Lights Film Journal,* Issue 66, 31 October 2009. http://brightlightsfilm.com/66/66mekasiv.php [accessed 6 November 2014]. The key word here is the 'nature'. As in the film, the 'Walden' title cards always appear before or after a Pond scene.

Repeated Themes in *July '71 in San Francisco*:

Riding on a bike: 00:56, 02:31, 09:14, 10:04 and 18:34.

Friends gathering: 03:05, 07:58, 10:24, 11:10, 16:51, 17:43 and 23:59.

Boat: 08:48 and 09:53.

People naked: 16:51 and 20:52.

In Mekas's case, the film *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* was finished in 1969, and the materials were from his 1964-1968 footage. That was the time when Mekas felt lonely in New York, and in this film he presents this repeated theme, his loneliness, through several metaphors, such as winters and the memories of home and through title cards, such as 'I THOUGHT OF HOME' appears twice in the beginning and in the end of the film. In Hutton's case, the film title clearly states that this is a film about the daily life in July 1971 in San Francisco. So the footage Hutton collects naturally was all shot during July 1971, and the theme and style were inevitably repetitive.

1.3 Conclusion:

So far I have discussed the traits of the literary diary, the comparisons between the literary diary and the diary film, and how the diary film shows the characteristics of the diary by/on film with reference to three different case studies. This chapter has established some normative rules of the diary film, by examining examples from literary diaries and also from films from the American avant-garde in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This early interpretation will be used to support my following discussion and research. I will now summarize what has been discussed in this chapter and try to give a working taxonomy for the diary film.

To sum up, the diary film has the following characteristics: first, the primary task in the discussion of the diary film should be the identification of its authorship. To borrow from

Laura Rascaroli, it is the textual commitment of the diary film that says 'I am recording events that I have witnessed and impressions and emotions I have experienced'.[84] It is the strong presence of the author, the diarist, which differentiates the diary film from traditional documentary and newsreels. In most cases, authorship can be expressed through point-of-view shots, voice-over (Mekas), self-portrait/selfie (Mekas's eating scenes, Hutton's bike riding scenes), or personal style (Mekas's single-frame technique and Levine's editing). In the following chapters, the notion of authorship in the diary film will be the central issue and discussed throughout the thesis. I will provide evidence of how, in each discussed film, the authorship is manifested by different cinematic means.

Second, the notion of entry is crucial in the diary film and in the written diary. The act of continuously keeping diary creates numerous 'continuous presents' and entries, and then the collection of entries becomes the diary and creates discontinuities in the diary. Therefore, the secondary task in the discussion of the diary film should be the identification of entries and the unique structure which is created by the entries. A visual entry can be identified by the interrupted narrative, and by the gaps between events. Some filmmakers use visual cues and texts (Mekas's title cards) as referential indexes to signal the time and space of filming, which helps to identify specific entries. Others, such as Levine and Hutton, use sudden change of location and time (indoor/outdoor, day/night) to express this discontinuity.

Third, the diary film-making is, as in the written diary, an act of continuous practice: the 'continuous present' created by the act of filming constitutes continuity in the diary film. There is more than one way to determine whether or not the filmmaker is filming continuously in the diary film: by the title of the film as a collection of entries made from a period of time (Hutton's *July '71 in San Francisco*) or from similar themes (Levine's *Note to Pati*), or, by the discontinuous daily trivia the filmmaker documents which suggests that

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[84] Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera*, p.15.

he/she is always filming (Mekas's eating scenes).

Fourth, the diary film is discontinuous in nature. For it consists of discontinuous entries. The discontinuity in the diary film can also be located in its fragmentary and interrupted narrative, its little *stories*. The discontinuity can result in creating a multi-level narrative and unique temporal structure in the diary film between its filming and retrospection (editing), which I will discuss in Chapter Three (voice-over narration), Chapter Four (temporality) and Chapter Five (video diary-film).

And finally, the diary film may be repetitive both in theme and in style. The change of theme and style is possible depending on the author's life experience and technology. However, I should emphasize that this is not about what the diary film should be like or that these definitions encapsulate all diary films. As I mentioned at the beginning, this thesis focuses mainly on a specific route, which runs from America in the 1960s, Taiwan in the 1960s, and ends in the 21st Century in Taiwan. The evidence I provide for the discussion of the diary film should be considered as clues and markers for completing this specific route. In the next chapter, I will show you, step by step, how the route can be mapped out from its origin in 1960s America, its intersection with contemporary Taiwanese avant-garde film movement, and to the new generation of diary filmmakers in Taiwan in the 21st Century.

Chapter 2 – Historical Review of the Diary Film

After defining what the diary film is in the previous chapter, I will, in this chapter, begin my historical routes of the diary film by locating its two origins: first, the origin of the diary film in 1960s America, and second, the origin of the diary film in Taiwan. Furthermore, by close reading of contextual material and film texts, I will provide in detail of how the Taiwanese diary filmmaking practice connected to the American tradition.

2.1 The Diary Film in North America: from 1950s to 1960s

2.1.1 Intersections

From the discussion of the three diary films in the first chapter, some characteristics of the diary film can be drawn, including first-person narrative, continuity, discontinuity and repetition. These characteristics are closely related to the subject matter of the diary film and its formal approach. The act of continuously filming becomes a habit and then turns into a way of living; the structure of entries in the diary film interrupts the narrative, creating a gap and discontinuity; and the focus of the diary film, for it is so close to the life of the diarist, makes the content and the filming style of the diary film prone to repetition. Moreover, I have emphasized in the first chapter that it is the structure of entry and the manifestation of dailiness that make the diary film different from other first person cinema. In this chapter, I will use these characteristics as clues and directions, to retrace the origin of the diary film in America in the 1960s.

Jonas Mekas's *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* (1969) is often considered as the landmark which progresses the form and content of the diary film in America in the 1960s. [1] Therefore, his lecture on the diary film in 1972, soon after he finished *Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania*, can be seen as the manifesto of the diary film. In

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[1] According to David E. James's discussion of the diary film, he considers *Walden* '[…] as the first of the films in the mature mode, it is the place where the film diary was first edited into a diary film'. See James, *To Free the Cinema*, p.147.

the lecture 'The Diary Film', Mekas describes the creative process of his filmmaking approach, and how his continual engagement with the movie camera turned into an 'act/re-act' mode in the moment of filming.[2]

Mekas started filming soon after he arrived in New York in 1949. According to Mekas, he was 'so entangled with the independently made film'[3] that he did not have time to make a 'real film' (feature film). Instead of spending a long time preparing a script and in pre-production, he filmed whatever he could in his spare time. He considered this filming approach as preparation for the future that one day he would make a 'real film'. He continued this preparation until 1961 or 1962, when he checked the footage he shot for the first time that he realized the potential for the diary film. Mekas describes: 'By the time I decided to look at my ten years of early footage…That was a time when the liberation of the independent filmmaker was taking place, when the attitude to filming was changing radically'.[4] The liberation of filmmaking in the 1960s in America provided the premise and the social background for Mekas to realize his filming approach. Mekas explains that in his filming process, he 'had to liberate the camera from the tripod, and embrace all those subjective filming techniques and procedures that were either available, or were just coming into existence'.[5] The 'available techniques' Mekas refers to were the heritage of the early avant-garde film.[6] And the techniques that were 'just coming into existence' were those developed by the new independent filmmakers such as John Cassavetes, Robert

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[2] In 'The Diary Film', some statements are continuously quoted in the studies of the diary film, including 'in filming, in keeping a notebook with the camera, the main challenge became how to react with the camera right now, as it's happening; how to react to it in such a way that the footage would reflect what I feel that very moment' (Mekas, 'The Diary Film', p.191); also '[w]hen I am filming, I am also reflecting' (Mekas, 'The Diary Film', p.191). These statements may not be applied to all the diary films and the diary filmmakers, but they surely can be the fundamental principles in diary filmmaking.

[3] Mekas, 'The Diary Film', p.190.

[4] Ibid., p.192.

[5] Ibid.

[6] When Mekas talks about freeing the camera from the tripod and adopting the subjective filmmaking techniques, he attributes them to the heritage of the early avant-garde film, that '[i]t was an acceptance and recognition of the achievements of the avant-garde film of the last fifty years. It affected my exposures, movements, the pacing, everything'. See Mekas, 'The Diary Film', p.192.

Frank, Richard Leacock, and Robert Drew in the early 1960s,[7] which is also described by

Mekas as Spontaneous Cinema, for 'their use of actual locations and direct lighting; their

disrespect for plots and written scripts; their use of improvisation'.[8] The intersection of the

heritage of the avant-garde film and the new-coming personal cinema thus gave Mekas and

the diary film a rich context in which to take shape. However, one should note that there is

still an essential difference between the personal cinema and the diary film. As David E.

James suggests, 'what is essentially at stake in the film diary lies in the moment of

shooting'.[9] The diary film emphasizes the process of filming rather than the final product.

It is exactly, as Lejeune suggests, the lack of an ending[10] that constitutes the nature of the

diary. And it is in this context that we can understand Mekas's statement: '[i]n reality, all

my film work is one long film which is still continuing…I don't really make films; I only

keep filming. I am a filmer, not a film-maker. And I am not a film director because I direct

nothing. I just keep filming'.[11] The diary film and the other forms of personal cinema might

share similar subjective filming techniques, but their intentions are different. The diary

filmmakers don't consider filming as a way to make a film or as a way of illustrating a

certain idea and unified theme, but as a way of living. Nothing is planned and no one idea

is being followed in the process of filming. Therefore, to 'keep filming' becomes the

essential characteristic in the diary film. And it is in the process of keeping filming that

Mekas developed his 'act/re-act mode'. This reflective mode of filmmaking is crucial in

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[7] The new techniques are described as 'glimpses of daily life became more important than comprehensive narrated fictions; a fragmentary, insubstantial, and imperfect "lyrical" images was preferred over a realistic, full, and self-present image, and rudimentary 16 or 8mm equipment was valorized over studio-quality apparatus'. See James, *To Free the Cinema*, p.156.

[8] Jonas Mekas, 'New York Letter: Towards a Spontaneous Cinema', *Sight and Sound*, 28:3/4 (Summer/Autumn, 1959), p.119.

[9] James, *To Free the Cinema*, p.155.

[10] See Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.170 and pp.187-189.

[11] Genevieve Yue, 'Jonas Mekas', *Senses of Cinema*, Issue 34 (February 2005). http://sensesofcinema.com/2005/great-directors/mekas/ [accessed 18 November 2014]. The same notion of 'filmer' can also be found in the conversation Mekas had with Stan Brakhage in 'A Conversation Between Jonas Mekas and Stan Brakhage': 'I say I am not really a filmmaker; I am only a filmer. I film real life. I never know what will come next'. This conversation took place at Anthology Film Archives in New York on 3 November 2000. It was originally recorded for *Vogue Magazine*, only a small portion of the conversation was actually published in the magazine. See Jonas Mekas and Stan Brakhage, 'A Conversation Between Jonas Mekas and Stan Brakhage', *Logos*, 2.2, Spring 2003, p.126. http://www.logosjournal.com/issue_2.2.pdf [accessed 26 September 2014].

the process of diary filmmaking, which involves the diarist responding to and reacting to events. As Barbara Myerhoff and Deena Metzger point out in 'The Journal as Activity and Genre: Or Listening to the Silent Laughter of Mozart', the journal is 'reflective insofar as the subject contemplates the self, sees it, shapes it, acquires self-knowledge by beholding self at a little distance, differentiated from the phenomenological experience of being'.[12] Therefore, we can understand Mekas's reflective mode as a process of negotiating, selecting, framing and reframing the events in front of the camera in the process of filming. It is in this process that the self of the diarist is inscribed in the diary 'as a referential point that includes one's preference, values, norms and feelings',[13] and the authorial presence is manifested. This is probably why Mekas's friends don't recognize New York as it appears in *Diaries, Notes and Sketches*,[14] for it is not an objective documentation of New York, but a subjective, fragmentary New York which is selected by and reflective through Mekas's vision.

The fragmentary and reflective modes of diary filmmaking, however, were not created by Mekas alone, but inspired by another filmmaker, Marie Menken (1909-1970). Coming from the same background (Lithuanian culture) and sharing the same idea of cinema, Menken was a friend, a mentor, and a 'cinematic maîtresse'[15] to Mekas. In her film *Notebook* (1940-62), Menken reaches out her hand to stir the bushes to create a dialogue between the filmed event and herself, transforming the film from an objective documentation to a subjective meditation; in *Go! Go! Go!* (1962-64), Menken films the city in single-frame technique for two years, cutting up the objective reality into subjective fragments. More than once Mekas has expressed Menken's direct influence on him. In my

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[12] Barbara Myerhoff and Deena Metzger, 'The Journal as Activity and Genre: On Listening to the Silent Laughter of Mozart', *Semiotica*, 30 (1-2, 1980), p.103.

[13] Kan-shing Yip, 'Self-reflection in Reflective Practice: A Note of Caution', *The British Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 36, No. 5 (2006), p.780.

[14] After saw *Diaries, Notes and Sketches*, Mekas's friend told him that '…this is not my New York! My New York is different'. See Mekas, 'The Diary Film', p.192.

[15] Marjorie Keller, 'The Apron Strings of Jonas Mekas', in David E. James (ed.) *To Free the Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p.86.

interview with Mekas he claimed that Menken 'confirmed that I was right on my direction. It was [not just] influence, but [more] like a confirmation…more or less going to the same direction. She confirmed that I was right'.[16] Therefore, besides the influence of the avant-garde film and the personal cinema, Menken becomes another piece that might complete the puzzle. In this chapter, I will retrace the origin of the diary film from the following three aspects: the heritage of the early avant-garde film and how it affected the development of the diary film in the 1960s in America; the background of the personal filmmaking in the 1960s and how it integrated the use of amateur film equipment; and the cinematic inspiration and the influence of Marie Menken.

2.1.2 From Conventional, Personal, to the Reflective Mode: from Europe to America

According to film scholar Jan-Christopher Horak, the history of avant-garde film can be divided essentially into the following succeeding periods[17]: avant-garde film (1920s-1930s), experimental film (1940s-1950s) and underground – independent film (1960s-1970s). This simplified and yet useful categorization does help to understand each specific period's aesthetics and characteristics, and more importantly, it helps us to see how these different periods connect to each other, or what the latter movement inherited from the former. Avant-garde filmmakers in the 1920s started to explore the essential quality of cinema itself. They explicitly focused on rhythm, light, and movement. As a pioneer of avant-garde film, Germaine Dulac very clearly stated in her 1928 article 'Visual and Anti-visual Films' that 'the cinema *must* be visual and not literary'[18] (my italics), and also that the cinema 'should not consist of a story…the power of the image alone should be the active principle and take precedence over every other quality'.[19] Her cinematic manifesto is often

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[16] Jonas Mekas, Interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 14 December 2012 (unpublished material).
[17] Jan-Christopher Horak, *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde 1919-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), p.3.
[18] Sitney, *The Avant-Garde Film*, p.31.
[19] Ibid., p.34.

considered as suggesting that the cinema should be a purely visual expression and should be freed from literature, theatre, and other existing arts (except for music, which I will discuss later). Yet, it is also worth noting that, aside from proposing that cinema must be entirely visual, there is a total resistance towards verbal and written narration. Cinema can be, as Dulac suggests, not just about telling a story. The 1920s avant-garde filmmakers realized their visual idea of cinema in the creation, for instance, of abstract visual symphony films, such as Man Ray's *Le Retour à la Raison* (1923), Fernand Léger's *Ballet Mécanique* (1924), Viking Eggeling's *Diagonal Symphony* (1924) and Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927). The other obvious analogy made from these films is the comparison between cinema and music. The concept that cinema should be freed from all existing arts except for music might be explained by Dulac's assertion in which she compares the process of creating music with composing a film: 'Music…plays with sounds in movement just as we play with images in movement'.[20] Abel Gance also responds to Dulac through his claim that 'cinema is the music of light'.[21] Moreover, in the creative process, Dulac argues that like music, where 'a composer does not always take his inspiration from a story, but most often from a feeling, a perception',[22] cinema should also 'coordinated and thrown upon the screen exclusively by the perception of an artist'.[23] Two emphases can be spotted here in the 1920s European avant-garde film movement: first is the rejection of the concept of story, which can be seen in all the four films I mention above; second, that the inspiration of filmmaking should only come from filmmaker's own feeling and perception. This period, hence, can be considered as one of the points of origin for the diary film, a turn from conventional story-telling fiction film to a mode of personal expression.

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[20] Sitney, *The Avant-Garde Film*, p.41.
[21] Stephen Dwoskin, *Film is…: International Free Cinema* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 1975), p.26.
[22] Sitney, *The Avant-Garde Film*, p.41.
[23] Ibid.

In the late 1930s and 1940s, the avant-garde film movement started shifting from Europe to North America as several European avant-garde filmmakers escaped from Fascism and migrated to America. Oskar Fischinger came to America in 1936, and started working with John Whitney, Maya Deren, Kenneth Anger and John Cage; Man Ray went back to New York in 1940; Hans Richter also moved from Switzerland to America in 1941. He was then made director of the Institute of Film Techniques at City College, New York, which allowed him to resume his filmmaking.[24] This period could be seen as a transition time for the personal and reflexive mode[25] of filmmaking in avant-garde film movement both geographically (from Europe to America) and intellectually (from European pioneers to an American and younger generation). Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) directly inherited the legacy of the 1920s European avant-garde film and its use of the reflexively personal mode 'can be traced through films like Man Ray's *Etoile de Mer* (1928), Cocteau's *The Blood of a Poet* (1932) and Germaine Dulac's *Seashell and the Clergyman* (1927)'.[26]

Deren transforms the personal mode into her poetic film approach. Deren's films show mysterious, symbolic metaphors of mental and psychological states of mind. She explores what she called 'mental reality' in which the 'reality is first filtered by the selectivity of individual interests and modified by prejudicial perception to become experience'.[27] On 28 October 1953 at the 'Poetry and the Film Symposium', Deren elaborates her idea of poetic film: 'the poetic construct arises from the fact, if you will, that it is a "vertical" investigation of a situation, in that it probes the ramifications of the moment, and is

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[24] On the discussion of avant-garde film movement in America since the World War II, see David Curtis, *Experimental Cinema: A Fifty-year Evolution* (New York: Dell, 1971), p.64.

[25] Different from reflective, the reflexive mode is 'to become an object to itself, and to refer to itself' (Babcock, p.2). If the reflective mode is a process of acting-responding, the reflexive mode can be considered as a process of subject-object transformation, in which the subject tells itself about itself. In filmmaking, the reflexivity can be understood as making films about the making of the film. Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961) is one of the example of the early reflexive documentary. See Barbara A. Babcock, 'Reflexivity: Definitions and discriminations', *Semiotica*, 30 (1-2, 1980), pp.1-14.

[26] Michael O'Pray, *Avant-Garde Film: Forms, Themes and Passions* (London: Wallflowers, 2003), p.51.

[27] Maya Deren, 'Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality', in P. Adams Sitney (ed.) *The Avant-Garde Film* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1978), p.63.

concerned with its qualities and its depth'.[28] The poetic film rejects story and plots (as her predecessors did), which according to Deren's ideas, belong to the 'horizontal' development, and focuses on the exploration of personal feelings at a specific moment in time – for example, the scene of running up stairs in slow motion in *Meshes of the Afternoon,* and the repetition of dance movement in *A Study in Choreography for Camera* (1945). In these moments, by adopting special cinematic effects, Deren stops the horizontal movement that might develop a story and imposes or emphasizes her idea in relation to the images, provoking a conversation between the filmmaker and the world. The attempt to theorize her poetic cinema as a vertical investigation emphasises the exploration of universal human experience of psychological reality. This could be understood as considering the filmmaker's subjectivity to be at the centre of the universe, and while making film, the filmmaker is trying to 'dig deep down' (vertically) to excavate the experience in the moment of making film. Jonas Mekas was also influenced by the early avant-garde filmmaker Hans Richter and Oskar Fischinger. Hans Richter's arrival in New York not only stimulated the independent filmmaking there but also had great influence on the later independent filmmakers due to his teaching at City College of New York. In Scott MacDonald's interview with Jonas Mekas in *A Critical Cinema 2,* Mekas says that 'when I heard that Hans Richter was in New York, running the film department at City College, I wrote him a letter saying that I had no money, but would like to attend some classes. He wrote back, "Sure, come!"'.[29] In my interview with Jonas Mekas, he also mentions the influence of Oskar Fischinger and his early diaristic film *München-Berlin Wanderung*: 'There was an early example of diaristic film by Oskar Fischinger. He made it around 1930, walking from Munich, Germany, to Berlin. And he recorded it for like a single frames film, very condensed, glimpses of Germany. So it's a notebook, kind of, notes of Germany'.[30] It is through the exchange of cinematic ideas that the 1920s European avant-garde film and

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[28] P. Adams Sitney, *Film Culture: An Anthology* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1971), p.174.
[29] MacDonald, *A Critical Cinema 2*, p.90.
[30] Jonas Mekas, Interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 14 December 2012 (unpublished material).

the American avant-garde film were connected, furthermore, with the efforts of Menken, Mekas, Brakhage and others, these ideas could be preserved and then transformed.

2.1.3 Amateurism Reinvented

In addition to the heritage of the 1920s avant-garde film movement, the other key concept of the diary film in the 1950s to 1960s American avant-garde film movement is the use of cheap, small format film equipment, which, according to Patricia R. Zimmermann, is the key aspect of 'amateurism'. As Zimmermann explains, the 'manipulation of technology, higher cost, and technical complexity denoted professionalism, and conversely, ease of operation, lower cost, and simplicity defined amateurism'.[31] In the early 1950s, camera companies such as Kodak and Bell and Howell launched the diversification and the stratification of filming equipment. They differentiated their product lines according to technical classification of skills and price, and targeted specific income groups for amateur movie-making. The diversification and the stratification of equipment made the domestication of film production possible. With the simple operation and lower cost of filmmaking, the amateur filmmaker could make films at *home*. This approach was quickly adopted and reinvented by the avant-garde filmmakers, which as Zimmermann suggests, was 'amateurism reinvented…Since the 1950s, with filmmakers such as Stan Brakhage and Jonas Mekas, the American avant-garde has appropriated home-movie style as a formal manifestation of a spontaneous, untampered form of filmmaking'.[32] The concept of 'amateurism reinvented' suggests a turn both in form (diaristic, home-movie like) and in content (domestic, intimate and more private) in the American avant-garde film movement. Three important figures in American avant-garde film movement, Jonas Mekas, Maya Deren, and Stan Brakhage, one after the other, all propose the idea of amateurism in their

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[31] Patricia R. Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p.118.
[32] Ibid., p.146.

articles. Jonas Mekas first elaborates the importance of the amateur as a gesture of *personal* resistance towards *professional* and commercial films. In his article, 'On Law, Morality and Censorship' (1964),[33] Mekas defines amateur cinema as: first, '"[a]mateur" cinema is almost literally one-man creation, like painting or poetry – as opposed to the complex involvement of a large number of people in a "professional" movie'; second, '"[a]mateur" cinema has no producers: the filmmaker usually is the sole author and sole producer, as opposed to the practice of the "professional" cinema as a big business'; and finally, '"[a]mateur" film screenings are usually one- or two-shot screenings, as opposed to the continuous runs of the professional films'.[34] Mekas finds the thread of amateurism in the history of avant-garde film – from Cocteau, Markopoulos, Parker Tyler, to Stan Brakhage – and it is especially in the films of Brakhage that this mode of amateurism is fully applied. Mekas comments on this particular amateur mode of filmmaking that 'the film-maker himself is now the director, cameraman, and, often, soundman, all in one. The film-maker now can go everywhere, watch the scene unobtrusively and record the drama or the beauty of what he sees, all in perfect sync and color…there is a feeling in the air that cinema is only beginning, that now cinema is available not only to those who possess a high organizational and group-work talent, but also to those poets who are more sensitive, but often uncommunal, who prefer privacy, whose powers of observation and imagination are most active in privacy'.[35] This amateur mode of filmmaking soon turned into the motto for the New American Cinema group,[36] aligned to a disavowal of professionalism and an emphasis on the role of filmmaker as a poet. Similar concepts of amateur, low-budget production, and a personal filmmaking approach were again emphasized in the New

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[33] Jonas Mekas, *Movie Journal: The Rise of A New American Cinema, 1959-1971* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), p.134.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Jonas Mekas, 'Notes On The New American Cinema', in P. Adams Sitney (ed.) *Film Culture* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1971), pp.92-93.

[36] The new American Cinema Group was founded on 28 September 1960. Its members (twenty-three in total) include Lewis Allen, Jonas Mekas, Shirley Clark, Robert Frank, and Gregory Markopoulos. On 28 September, they gathered at 165 West 46th Street, the Producer Theater and bound themselves into a free open organization of the new American cinema: The Group. See Sitney, *Film Culture*, p.79.

American Cinema statement. They are: 'We believe that cinema is indivisibly a personal expression'; 'We reject censorship'; 'the abolishing [of] the Budget Myth'; and 'stand[ing] against the present distribution-exhibition policies'.[37] Despite the fact that the diary film as a category is not obvious in Mekas's 1964 statement, the manifesto and its celebration builds up a mode of personal filmmaking of the amateur that is in opposition to professionalism and paves the way for his successors.

Maya Deren, in her article 'Amateur Versus Professional' (1965), also provides a similarly aggressive position when she considers the professional form of filmmaking 'not innovative'. She first defines the amateur filmmaker as 'one who does something for the love of the thing rather than for economic reasons or necessity',[38] and also elevates the amateur filmmaker as an artist, for whom the most important part of the equipment of filmmaking is not the camera, but the filmmaker him/herself, and '[their] mobile body, [their] imaginative mind, and [their] freedom to use them both'.[39] Deren's emphasis on individuality and creativity set a tone for the amateur filmmaking practice in the realm of the avant-garde film that it should prioritize the artistic freedom and the physical freedom over conventional and professional restrictions. In relation to her poetic film approach, Deren furthermore states that 'instead of trying to invent a plot that moves, use the movement of wind, or water, children, people, elevators, balls, etc. as a poem might celebrate these'.[40] There are therefore several clues or hints as to the origins of the diaristic mode of filmmaking that appear in her article: first, the rejection of professionalism and the story, which is in accordance with her later poetic film approach; and second, the shift of focus toward a more detailed and intimate expression. This shift is obvious in Deren's *The Private Life of a Cat* (1946), Deren's second collaboration with her husband

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[37] Sitney, *Film Culture*, pp.81-82.
[38] Maya Deren, 'Amateur Versus Professional', *Film Culture*, 39 (1965), p.45.
[39] Ibid., p.46.
[40] Ibid., pp.45-46.

Alexander Hammid (aka Sasha Hammid),[41] which Brakhage considered as 'one of the finest films that has ever been made'.[42] *The Private Life of a Cat* depicts the life of cats Deren and her husband have in their apartment. Deren's camera follows the cats walking around and sleeping, and also documents the moments of mother cat having baby cats, and breast feeding them. *The Private Life of a Cat* is a film about domestic trivia and intimacy, which are exactly what Deren proposes in her amateur filmmaking manifesto.

Stan Brakhage, following in Mekas and Deren's footsteps in his 1971 article 'In Defence of Amateur', also emphasizes the aspects of 'love' in amateur that '[a]n amateur works according to his own necessity (a Yankee-enough proclivity) and is, in that sense, "at home" anywhere he works: and if he takes pictures, he photographs what he loves or needs in some-such sense...'[43] Moreover, in comparison with Deren's proposition, Brakhage focuses even more closely on the domestic and private domain: 'For the true amateur, even when in consort with other amateurs, is always working alone, gauging his success according to his care for the work rather according to the accomplishments or recognitions of others'.[44] He defines 'amateur-filmmaking' (the term in his opinion that truly honours him rather than 'professional' and 'artist') as 'the practice of working at home in the environment that is most intimate and familiar, and where the self is most at ease'.[45] Brakhage's formula can be seen as an integration of Mekas's and Deren's amateurism; it not only establishes the mode of amateur filmmaking of the avant-garde film in America as artistic and personal practice (working alone at home), but also, accompanied with his

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[41] According to Brakhage, although *The Private Life of A Cat* is credited to Alexander Hammid (as the opening title card states 'A film by Alexander Hammid'), the real author of this film should be Maya Deren, as most of the 'wondrous' parts are actually Maya's shots. For more detailed discussion of the film, see Stan Brakhage, *Film at Wit's End* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989), pp.95-97.
[42] Brakhage, *Film at Wit's End*, p.96.
[43] Stan Brakhage, *Essential Brakhage* (New York: McPherson, 2001), p.144.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

'untutored eye'[46] approach, suggests a more intimate and private thematic shift (in *Wedlock House: An Intercourse* [1959], Brakhage films himself having sex with his wife, Jane, at home. In *Window Water Baby Moving* [1962], Brakhage films Jane from pregnancy to giving birth in the bathtub in their house).

2.1.4 Marie Menken Reinvented

Marie Menken was born to a Lithuanian family in New York City in 1910. She and her husband, Willard Maas, started making films in the 1940s. They were also two of the founding members of the Gryphon Group, a cooperative organization to further the production and distribution of independent films (members also include Stan Brakhage, Gregory Markopoulos, Ben Moore, and Charles Henri Ford). Menken's famous short films include *Visual Variations on Noguchi* (1945), *Hurry! Hurry!* (1957), *Notebook* (1940-62), *Go! Go! Go!* (1962-1964), and *Andy Warhol* (1965). She was known for making 'little films' (in the above-mentioned films, only *Andy Warhol* is longer than fifteen minutes, the others, *Visual Variations on Nuguchi* is four minutes, *Hurry! Hurry!* is three minutes, *Go! Go! Go!* eleven minutes, and *Notebook* ten minutes). She made a total of eighteen short films but only a few are viewable today, because of the lack of preservation after her death.[47] As Brakhage observes of the preservation of Menken's film: '[s]he never showed much interest in her finished works as works of art to be preserved. She never thought of making a print, but ran the original film on crappy old projectors and thereby destroyed some of them over repeated showing'.[48] Also, like Andrew Noren, Menken seldom made

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[46] Brakhage in 'Metaphors on Vision' opens with 'Imagine an eye unruled by man-made laws of perspective, an eye unprejudiced by compositional logic, an eye which does not respond to the name of everything but which must know each object encountered in life through an adventure of perception'. See Brakhage, *Essential Brakhage*, p.12.

[47] The most serious destruction in terms of preservation of Menken's films and documents happened after her death in 1970, when her flat was flooded and most of her documents were ruined, except for a small fraction which were saved by her sister Adele (Willard was dead four days later after Menken's death), and later obtained in the Anthology Film Archives in 2005. Despite the fact that she was never intended to preserve her 'little films', which have flowered only briefly but remain a perennial, Menken's importance in relation to the development of the diary film cannot be ignored.

[48] Brakhage, *Film at Wit's End*, p.46.

definitive versions of her work. As Sitney explains in 'Marie Menken and the Somatic Camera' that 'Her [Menken] film *Notebook*, first publicly screened in 1961, contained fragments, sketches, and the embryonic versions of films she later expanded into autonomous units. The fragments are undated, but they probably range from her earliest work to her latest, and the film itself underwent changes after the initial screening'.[49] In fact, it is possible that the last section of *Notebook*, 'etcetcetc', was added after its first screening at Charles Theatre in New York in 1961. And many other sections, for example 'moonplay', was also used in her other projects. In 'Notes on Marie Menken (review)', Wheeler W. Dixon concludes that 'Menken kept a[n] epigrammatic film diary, which eventually surfaced in her compilation film *Notebook* (1963), which was comprised of clips of Marie's filmmaking, going back as far back as the late 1940s, and presented life in the city as a series of gently abstract poems'.[50] Since Menken deliberately made her films indefinite and open in structure, it is difficult to date her films. However, it is its openness that brings this kind of filmmaking close to the diary which can be said as essentially always a work-in-progress and resonates with Lejeune's idea of the end of a diary, which is not a feature of planned or intended narrative but signaled by external events, such as the death of the author.

How do Menken's films connect to the concept of the diary film? The answer can be found in some keywords derived from her films: hand-held camera, meticulous, and reflective. Menken adopted the hand-held camera approach as early as in 1943 (long before Maya Deren's proposition of freedom of physical body in 1965), when she was the camera operator for her husband Willard Maas's *Geography of the Body.* In the film we see the hand-held camera wandering over a naked male body (Willard himself) with super close-ups [**Figure 2-1**]. The images are sometimes out-of-focus and shaky, but also show details of

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[49] P. Adams Sitney, *Eyes Upside Down: Visionary Filmmakers and the Heritage of Emerson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.25.

[50] Wheeler W. Dixon, 'Notes on Marie Menken (review)', *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies*, Vol. 37.2 (Fall, 2007), p.79.

hair, wrinkles, and provide a very different perspective from the conventional cinematic gaze on the human body. The hand-held, walking camera movement later became a style from her first film *Visual Variations on Noguchi* (1945), *Glimpse of the Garden* (1957) and throughout her entire film works.

Close-ups in *Geography of the Body*
Figure 2-1: Stills from *Geography of the Body*

Besides free and mobile hand-held camera movement, the other characteristic of Menken's approach is the reflective nature of her filmmaking. In an interview with P. Adams Sitney in his *Filmwise* magazine, Menken describes the experience when shooting *Visual Variations on Noguchi*: 'While I was experimenting around I had the advantage of looking around Isamu's studio with a clear, unobstructed eye'.[51] She later told Brakhage that during the shooting in Isamu's studio, she was trying to capture 'the flying spirit of movement within these solid objects'; and the she 'wanted to get across "how they made me feel"'.[52] More evidence can be found in Menken's famous work *Notebook*, in which she fully makes use of her reflective method. In the first section 'raindrops', she deliberately shakes the brush to make raindrops falling from the leaves. And in the 'moonplay', 'light' and 'night-writing' sections, she directly participates in scenes and incorporates the camera movements and the movements of lights into a frenetic and unstable rhythmic pace [**Figure 2-2**]. The 'moonplay' scene is not the representation of the full-moon, but rather the representation of how the moon 'makes Menken feel' at that moment of filming. Therefore, we see in Menken's hands, the moon becomes a playful

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[51] Brakhage, *Film at Wit's End*, p.37.
[52] Ibid., p.38.

pattern of lights dancing in the sky, and the city lights at night turn into traces of lights. The interference of Menken which continuously and simultaneously shaping/reshaping by her physical movement and unorthodox camera work (single-frame, 360-degress-rotating, spontaneous and rapid swooping) makes us part of the action and actually aware of filmmaking as process. Menken's reflectivity in filmmaking was so revolutionary that it was not until 1972 that Jonas Mekas established his 'act/re-act' mode or of the diary filmmaking.

'raindrops', 'moonplay' and 'night-writing'

Figure 2-2: Stills from *Notebook*

The relationship between Menken and Mekas was more than just friends. They shared the same cultural background (Lithuania), the same idea of cinema, and they understood each other. As indicated, Mekas saw Menken as his cinematic *maîtresse*. And Menken also publicly announced that her major film *Go! Go! Go!* was her dedication to Mekas, because 'he knows more than anyone else what it is not about'.[53] *Go! Go! Go!* was shot from 1962 to 1964 in New York, and entirely by single-frame technique, which is also known later as Mekas's trademark in his diary films. What Menken meant, by 'Mekas knows what it is not about', I presume, is that this film is not about random arrangements of slide-show still images, but a demonstration of how to assemble the diary film footage (which Menken shot from 1962 to 1964) into a film, and how the footage of daily filming practice can be transformed into a work of art. Menken knew that Mekas was doing the same thing (Mekas started filming since he arrived in New York in 1949), and by dedicating *Go! Go! Go!* to

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[53] Sitney, *Eyes Upside Down*, p.32.

Mekas, Menken was trying to impose, or share, this experience with him. In his *Sleepless Nights Stories* (2011), Mekas also dedicates a section to Menken: in the scene where Mekas opens a bottle of red wine and toast old friends, he looks directly at the camera and gives a toast to Menken:

> Marie Menken, Marie Menken. A filmmaker, and a beautiful person…that only now we are beginning to really know and appreciate what she was and what she did for cinema…her films were so small, lyrical, personal, unassuming, almost invisible little poems,…Her influence, her style, her work with single frame, and reality that was very casual – there was nothing important in her films – it's very casual…And when I saw myself her little film *Notebook* – just like a notebook of little scenes from her life – I was so taken by it. Here was somebody who's also doing what I was trying to do, and doing so well, doing so well…The avant-garde film of the 60s became known by some blockbusters like *Dog Star Man* [Stan Brakhage, 1964], or *The Flower Thief* [directed by Ron Rice in 1960], or Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising* – very impressive, sort-of monumental works. And she was making little films that had nothing very important about them.[54]

Mekas's dedication to Menken in a way re-affirms the contribution and influence of Menken to the avant-garde film of the 60s, especially to the diary film. We are familiar with the fact that Mekas became truly conscious of the form of the diary film in 1962, when he started to look back at the footage he shot from 1949. However, what we might have overlooked is that Menken did play an important part in Mekas's awareness of the diary film form. In an interview with Scott MacDonald, Mekas talks about Menken: 'I liked what she did and I thought it worked. She helped me make up my mind about how to structure my films'.[55] It is interesting that Mekas mentions the 'structure', because, in my opinion, what he really means is 'a structure without structure', which Menken had shown him in her *Go! Go! Go!* that the diary film footage could be arranged in a film in a such disorganized, chaotic, scattered, unscripted, and spontaneous way, and yet the film was, still, magical. Menken's exploration proved to Mekas that the diary film approach is

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[54] In Jonas Mekas's *Sleepless Nights Stories*, 36:45-40:15. *Sleepless Nights Stories* [diary film, DVD] Dir. Jonas Mekas. 2011. 114 mins. [Re:Voir, EDV 519, 2013].

[55] MacDonald, *A Critical Cinema 2*, p.91.

possible, and then Mekas realized it by adopting and completing Menken's reflective mode of filming in his diary films.

2.1.5 Conclusion

From the discussion of the given filmmakers and films, I have established a series of related starting points for the diary film, which are closely linked to the development of the avant-garde film and experimental film in North America. It was because of the intersection of these starting points that the emergence of the diary film became possible. However, despite the fact that the diary film inherits from the early European avant-garde film movement and derives from the American avant-garde film in the 1960s, the diary film has its own path and it needs to be differentiated from the avant-garde film. The avant-garde filmmakers considered the professionals as their enemy and their attitudes toward tradition were radical, therefore their filmmaking practice became a way of resistance. The experimental filmmakers of the 1950s were also considered radical. Their films were anti-narrative, anti-representational, and anti-industrial.[56] However, the diary film does not do all that. The diary filmmaking is closer to a documentation of personal life journey in which self-discovery and self-involvement are more important than resistance to the mainstream. With the influence of 'reinvented amateurism' proposed by Mekas, Deren, and Brakhage, the presupposition of the diary filmmaking is 'doing something that you love', and to do it with portable, cheap equipment in the filmmakers' most comfortable and intimate environment. Menken explains her intention in an interview: 'There is no why for my making films. I just liked the twitters of the machine, and since it was an extension of painting for me, I tried and I loved it'.[57] The attitude is very different from the avant-garde and experimental film. For diary filmmaker, the primary ambition is hardly to resist or to

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[56] Film theorist Claudine Eizykman defines experimental film as 'anti-N.R.I' (Narrative, Representative, and Industrial). See Yung-Hao Liu, 'Snorkelling and Dancing in the Dark – Introduction to Scenes of the Experimental Cinema', in Wei-Cheng Yu (ed.) *Notes on Moving Images* (Tainan: Tainan National University of the Arts, 2007), p.82.

[57] Brakhage, *Film at Wit's End*, p.37.

experiment, but, often enough, simply to capture life.[58] Therefore, we might say that in this

sense the avant-garde filmmakers are more reflexive in their way of filmmaking, whereas

the diary filmmakers are reflective. Moreover, diary filmmakers do not look for public

attention or success. They might make other kinds of films during their lives (for example,

Jonas Mekas finished a narrative film, *Guns of the Trees*, in 1961; also the early films of

George Kuchar were melodramas), but in diary filmmaking, the intention is not about

making a film, but about the filmmaker revealing him/herself during the process of diary

keeping. When Menken was asked in 1963 by Leslie Mandell: 'Who is your audience?'

she responded, 'Mostly people I love, for it is to them I address myself. Sometimes the

audience becomes more than I looked for, but in sympathy they must be my friends. There

is no choice, for in making a work of art one holds in spirit those who are receptive, and if

they are, they must be one's friends'.[59] Mekas claimed something similar when I asked him

about the audience of his diary film; 'Everything that has been made on film or painting,

it's seen by somebody, friends, shown in the galleries. I know whatever I'm making, it will

be seen by my friends or by somebody. Though I'm not making it specifically for them,

I'm not making for anybody'.[60] There is always tension between public and private in the

screening of one's diary film. As the holder of all the secrets, the diary filmmaker knows

more than anyone else that some footage can be shown to the public while other footage

simply cannot.[61] I will not show my diary film *Going Home* (2008) to any of my family

members, because I know some images related to the death of my father will upset them.

Yet it could be another reason – that is *my* diary of sorrows, they would not understand, as

I would not understand *theirs*. The sharing of the diary film is therefore possible but

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[58] In some cases, the deliberate manipulation of narrative, structure, or technique may be used as a strategy in the diary film, such as Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)*. However, one should always keep in mind that the manipulation as strategy does not contradict to the intention of keeping diary in the first place.

[59] Scott MacDonald, 'Avant-Gardens', in Jean Petrolle et al. (eds.) *Women & Experimental Filmmaking* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2005), p.212.

[60] Jonas Mekas, Interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 14 December 2012 (unpublished material).

[61] This brings back to what I have mentioned in Chapter One about how Man Ray refuses to show his home movie in public. Another American diary filmmaker, Anne Charlotte Robertson, also claims that 'my films of myself naked – *Talking to Myself* (1987), et cetera – are available only for shows with small, trusted audiences and at legitimate artistic venues.' See MacDonald, *A Critical Cinema 2*, p.209.

conditional: in the process of turning the film diary into the diary film, from private to public, some secrets are already eliminated or coded. The diary filmmaker, on the one hand, gives permission to the audience and invites them to enter (as the word 'entry' suggest, an entrance, for the audience), and on the other hand, he/she shares with the audience rather than communicating with them. As Anna Jackson argues that 'the absence of an addressee' is one of the defining qualities of the diary, for the diary is essentially a private and fragmentary piece of writing which is not driven by a need to communicate with others. The dialogue occurs, as I have discussed in Chapter One, in the process of writing a diary where the diarist communicates with the past self and the present self. As Menken suggested that the diary film is a mode of self-address; it is always about the diary filmmaker him or herself. The communicative structure is already completed at the moment of filming – in the reflective process – between the self in the past and the self at present and the possible future.

2.2 Historical Review of the Diary Film in Taiwan

2.2.1 Five Phases of the Diary Film in Taiwan

As I have discussed in the first section of this chapter, the development of the diary film in America in the 1960s was closely related with the avant-garde film movement (from Marie Menken, Stan Brakhage, to Jonas Mekas). By the same token, in Taiwan, the emergence of the diary film can also be found in the limited and fragmentary history of Taiwanese avant-garde film. However, with the continuous efforts from film scholars, critics, and filmmakers, the landscape of both the avant-garde film movement and that of the diary film have emerged slowly and started to draw attention. In this section, I aim to excavate the rediscovered documents and films of Taiwanese diary film pioneers, and to retrace the origin and the historical development of the diary film in Taiwan.

In his article, 'The Past Developments and Current Situations of the Experimental Film in Taiwan', Tony Chun-hui Wu divides the development of Taiwanese experimental film into six phases:[62]

1. 1965 – the year when *Theatre Quarterly* magazine published its first issue.
2. 1978 – when Government Information Office founded Golden Harvest Awards for Experimental Films.
3. 1978/79 – the establishment of The Film Library under the Motion Picture Development Foundation of R.O.C. (by Government Information Office).
4. 1989 – the return of the overseas students who studied experimental film.
5. 2002 – the establishment of the Image-Movement Cinematheque.
6. 2003 – the colleges and universities in Taiwan started offering courses in experimental film studies and filmmaking.

Some of these phases were short-lived, for example: *Theatre Quarterly* magazine only continued for three years (from 1 January 1965 to 15 January 1968), the Golden Harvest Awards for Experimental Films was reorganized to Golden Harvest Awards for Outstanding Short Films in 1982. Other phases, as Wu emphasizes, 'have many parts that are parallel and overlapping, and most of them are continuously in progress' (my translation).[63] Wu's article made a great contribution to the study of the experimental film movement in Taiwan. However, since the development of the diary film is inseparable with the experimental film movement, it seems more promising to start the discussion on the development of experimental film. Here I'd like to adopt Wu's six phases as starting point for my discussion on the history of the diary film in Taiwan, and at the same time, make some alterations and adjustments to certain phases, in order to put the pieces together and present the full-fledged version of the diary film in Taiwan. I suggest that the development of the diary film in Taiwan can be divided into five phases. They are:

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[62] Tony Chun-hui Wu, *Stranger Than Cinema: A Study of Taiwanese Experimental Film* (Taipei: Le Ganges, 2014), pp.24-29 (my translation).
[63] Wu, *Stranger Than Cinema*, p.23.

1. The films of Na'Ou Liu in the 1930s.
2. The two public film screenings organized by the *Theatre Quarterly* magazine in 1966 and 1967 – Lin Chuang's two films.
3. The filmmakers and films from 1978 Golden Harvest Awards – Chung-li Kao.
4. Colleges and universities start offering experimental film studies and filmmaking courses in 2003 – Yung-Hao Liu, Tony Chun-hui Wu, and Chung-li Kao.
5. The young generation of the diary filmmakers in 2007 and 2008 – Shine Lin and Ming-Yu Lee.

These five phases may not meet directly with those identified by Wu, but their importance in the development of the diary film in Taiwan, as I will demonstrate in the following paragraphs, were crucial and could not be ignored.

2.2.1.1 Phase One: Na'Ou Liu in the 1930s

In 1998 there was a very important event that not only changed the history of Taiwanese avant-garde film and documentary, but also provided important evidence of diary filmmaking in Taiwan. In 1998, the 1st Taiwan International Documentary Festival screened Na'Ou Liu and Nan-Guang Deng's documentaries and home movies made during 1930s in 'About the Island – Taiwan Documentary Retrospective'.[64] This event was probably the first public appearance of the two important figures in the Taiwanese avant-garde film movement in the 1930s. However, with the publication of Liu's articles and scripts in 2010, it was found that Liu and Deng's films had been screened earlier than first thought. In his article 'The Plot of Human Comedy',[65] Mr. Bang-Chen Cheng, the former director of National Museum of Taiwan Literature, describes his first encounter with Liu and Deng's films in 1995 when he was asked to be a 'benshi'[66] during the screenings 65zed by Chinese Taipei Film Archive during the Festival of Culture and Arts in Taichung. The

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[64] Taiwan International Documentary Festival Database: http://www.tidf.org.tw/tidfdb/Default.aspx [accessed 23 November 2014].
[65] Bang-Chen Cheng, 'The Plot of Human Comedy', in Xin-Lai Kang and Chin-Chen Shu (eds.) *Liu Na'Ou Collection – Supplementary* (Tainan: National Museum of Taiwan Literature, 2010), pp.10-13.
[66] A Japanese word for silent film narrator. A benshi is responsible for explaining the story and sometimes narrating the dialogue between characters.

screening programme included documentaries made by the Dutch, Japanese, Chinese and Taiwanese in the 1920s. According to Cheng, he was especially surprised by the footage Liu and Deng shot (of course, at that time he did not know them at all). He describes them as 'making poems, paintings, and essays with a lens' (my translation).[67] From these materials we know that the films of Liu and Deng were discovered and screened quite early, but it was not until the completion of Ms. Chin-Chen Shu's Master thesis, 'Revisiting Taiwanese Liu Na'Ou (1905-1940) – Interactive Studies of History and Culture',[68] in 1999 that Liu and his works started to gain attention from literature, history, and film scholars, especially in the documentary field. In her thesis, Shu rediscovers valuable historical documents such as Liu's theories on avant-garde and feature film studies and film scripts. Liu's works could then finally be treated theoretically and systematically. For a long time, studies on Na'Ou Liu were mainly focused on his achievement in literature, particularly his 'New Sensational' novel writing. 'New Sensational' writing originated from Japanese writers such as Kawabata Yasunari and Riichi Yokomitsu from 1923. After the 1923 Kanto Earthquake, Japanese literature found a way of representing and expressing a new reality through a fictional and purely emotional world. Generally speaking, New Sensational school writing is opposed to realism; they use literary techniques such as metaphor and symbolism to produce a new reality. In 1928, Liu translated Kawabata Yasunari's *Erotic Culture* into Chinese and in 1930 he published his own 'New Sensational' novel *City Landscape*. The novel was composed of five short stories; it combines descriptions of the glamour and ugliness of the modern city Shanghai. Liu's other achievement at that time was his filmmaking. In studies of Taiwanese cinema, Liu's films were usually labelled as documentary. According to Prof. Daw-Ming Lee, Liu's films were close to 'family activities documentations, home movies without thematic

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[67] Cheng, 'The Plot of Human Comedy', p.11.
[68] Chin-Chen Shu, 'Revisiting Taiwanese Liu Na'Ou (1905-1940) – Interactive Studies of History and Culture', Master thesis, Department of Chinese Literature, National Central University, Taiwan, 1999.

and artistic treatment' (my translation).[69] Prof. Weitsy Wang also points out that 'during the development of documentary in Taiwan, there was a tendency toward romantic and personal expression as early as 1930' (my translation).[70] These two film scholars therefore apparently put Liu's films in the context and historical development of documentary in Taiwan. However, by reviewing Liu's writings and films, there might be other ways of exploring his films.

Short Biography of Na'Ou Liu

Liu was born in 1905 to a wealthy family in Tainan city, Taiwan. After finishing middle school (the Presbyterian Middle School), he went to Japan to continue his studies (the Aoyama Gakuin College in Tokyo). In 1926, after finishing his studies in Tokyo, he went to Aurora (Zhen-Dan) University in Shanghai to study French. His route of studying from Taiwan to Tokyo and Shanghai provided a rich context for his multi-lingual abilities. Besides studying, Liu was also very active in arts and cultural events. He owned bookstores (The First Line bookstore in 1926 and The Shuimo bookstore in 1929), published magazines (*Train Without Tracks* in 1928), translated Western film theories and literary works (montage theories from Europe and the Japanese 'New Sensational' novels), wrote film scripts, and made films.

   After 1930, he started to translate and introduce film theories from the West, such as Cinéma Pur from France, Absolute Cinema from Germany, and Soviet Montage theories including Pudovkin and Dziga Vertov's Kino-Eye theory. In his 1928 article in *Train Without Tracks*, Liu discusses the relationship between cinema and poetry. He considers cinema as a pure visual poetry based on light and movement. This concept was clearly

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[69] Daw-Ming Lee, 'The Cinema Aesthetics of Liu Na'Ou – His Documentary *Man with a Camera*', in Weitsy Wang (ed.) *A Retrospective Collection of Documentary Films from Taiwan – with films from the early 1930's to today – ranging from experimental short movies to longer documentaries* (Taipei: TOSEE, 2006), p.35.

[70] Weitsy Wang, 'The Development and Social Changes of Taiwan Documentary 1960-2000', in Weitsy Wang (ed.) *A Retrospective Collection of Documentary Films from Taiwan* (Taipei: TOSEE, 2006), p.10.

influenced by the Western avant-garde film movement in the 1920s, such as Fernand Léger and Walter Ruttmann. Indeed he referred to the films of Cinéma Pur and Absolute Cinema in his article 'On Cinema Art'.[71] From his detailed description of directors and their films (Viking Eggeling's *Diagonal Symphonie* in 1924, Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin-Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* in 1927, Fernand Léger's *Ballet Méchanique* in 1924),[72] we can assume that it is possible that Liu had actually seen these films. Liu's fascination with Vertov is obvious. He considers Kino-eye theory as 'a more completed eye than human eye…there are no so-called actors or artificial story. Its focus, its wishes, would be to express life as a whole' (my translation).[73] More than once he mentions Vertov's Kino-eye theory in his writings. In 1933, Liu completed the film *Man with a Camera*,[74] which was not only a direct tribute to Vertov but is also considered as the beginning of the documentary in Taiwan.

A Few Notes on Vertov's Kino-Eye Theory

Vertov's Kino-Eye theory is extensive and profound, and is often thought to have been best realized in his film *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). In Kino-eye theory, the principle is the 'Film Truth' and the concept is to present 'life as it is'.[75] This is the general understanding of Vertov's Kino-eye theory—it presents, unmediated, the life of society. However, there is one perspective that is often left unmentioned, which is the social mission of the Kino-eye. As Vertov proclaimed, Kino-eye should be understood as a method 'using all cinematic means and possibilities, all cinematic inventions, techniques,

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[71] Xin Lai Kang and Chin-Chen Shu, *Liu Na'Ou Collection-Movies* (Tainan: National Museum of Taiwan Literature, 2001), pp.273-275

[72] There are several misspellings in both the names of directors and the titles of films: Ru**th**mann; *Berlin-**Die**symphonic der Gros**z**stadt*; Fer**u**and Lege**b**; *Ballet Mechanic**s*** (my emphasis in bold). It is difficult to tell whether these mistakes were made by Liu himself or by the editors, Kang and Shu, of Liu's collection.

[73] Xin Lai Kang and Chin-Chen Shu, *Liu Na'Ou Collection-Movies* (Tainan: National Museum of Taiwan Literature, 2001), pp.267-268.

[74] The original footage of the film was held by Liu's grandson Mr. Jiang-xiang Lin and was recovered and stored by Chinese Taipei Film Archive.

[75] Annette Michelson, *Kino-Eye: The Writing of Dziga Vertov* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), p.66.

and methods that might reveal and show the truth'.[76] In other words, the 'Truth' cannot be gained simply by recording life by the movie camera. The truth needs to be revealed by the Kino-eye method, as Vertov states: '[The] Kino-eye as the possibility of making the invisible visible, the unclear clear, the hidden manifest, the disguised overt, the acted non-acted, making falsehood into truth'.[77] It also suggests that the function of the movie camera is not simply recording and offering an apparent copy the reality. In Kino-eye theory, the movie camera has more than one mission; as a tool of recording, it captures life; as a device of approaching the truth, it reveals what has been hidden. The movie camera in the Kino-eye works as an instrument to 'surgically slice open the world, disembowel it, and then engage it'.[78]

However, the ability of the camera is only one aspect of the Kino-eye theory. In order to understand more accurately about the theory of the Kino-eye, one has to grasp the concept that Vertov's Kino-eye is a multi-level method. In his 1929 article 'From Kino-Eye to Radio-Eye',[79] Vertov explains Kino-eye as a method of capturing facts. It includes 'kino-seeing (I see through the camera) + kino-writing (I write on film with the camera) + kino-organization (I edit)'[80]. These could then be identified as three steps: (1) observation, (2) recording, and (3) editing.

The first step of the Kino-eye is observation. Its purpose is to choose good material (Vertov calls it 'life facts') as preparation for future filming and editing. Observation does not mean it is a random and spontaneous act, but an act of preparation. In the principle of Kino-eye, Vertov is against pre-determined scripts (as stated in the opening titles of the film: 'A Film Without Scenario'). The act of observation before filming should be

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[76] Patricia R. Zimmermann, 'Reconstructing Vertov: Soviet Film Theory and American Radical Documentary', *Journal of Film and Video*, Vol. 44, No. 1/2, International Issue (Spring/Summer 1992), p.83.
[77] Michelson, *Kino-Eye*, p.41.
[78] Zimmermann, 'Reconstructing Vertov', p.83.
[79] Michelson, *Kino-Eye*, p.87.
[80] Ibid.

understood as a preparation for the suitable objects and themes, in order to construct a film with a unified purpose. Vertov uses the metaphor of building a house to illustrate the importance of observation: 'Film-Truth is made up of material as a house is made of bricks.…From filmed material, one can construct various films. Just as one needs good bricks to make a solid house, so one needs good film material to organize a good film'.[81] The pre-engaged observation is just like a blueprint before building a house. It envisions how the house is going to be built and what the house is going to look like.

The second step of the Kino-eye is recording. Its purpose is to document 'Life-As-It-Is'. During the recording, the camera should stay as unnoticed as possible, the basic principle is not to intervene in the life of the filmed object, for the sake of capturing 'Life-Caught-Unawares'. This method assures the recorded film material functions as good brick for house building. By good, it means the film material should be authentic, so that it could build up a 'solid house' (a good film). The final step of Kino-eye is editing. The film material is organized by editing into 'film facts', and all the film facts are re-organized again to create a visual equation ('a film-thing/film-object') [**Figure 2-3**].

<div align="center">

Filming → organizing → re-organizing → unity
(life-facts)   (film-facts)   (montage)   (film-thing)
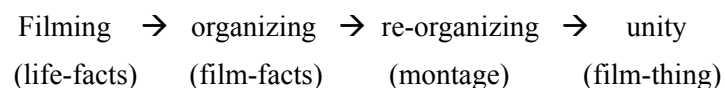
Figure 2-3: Vertov's Kino-Eye

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After briefly discussing Vertov's Kino-eye theory, it is clearer that in *Man with a Movie Camera*, the appearances of the cameraman (observing, revealing) and the editor (re-organizing) exist for a particular reason: they are all parts of the process of revealing the truth. And this truth, from Vertov's perspective, has its own special political agenda. It is more about the society, the collective life, rather than an individual one. As the opening title of *Man with a Movie Camera* states, 'this experimental work aims at creating a truly international absolute language'. What Vertov was trying to do, in *Man with a Movie*

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[81] Michelson, *Kino-Eye*, p.45.

Camera and in his theory of Kino-eye, is to build up international ideals of society, of people, of language, and of the cinema. And it is this strong sense of a wider political purpose that distinguishes Na'Ou Liu from Vertov.

Na'Ou Liu's Interpretation of Vertov's Kino-Eye Theory

Na'Ou Liu wrote three articles about the avant-garde film theories. The first one is 'Film Theories in Russia and France' (1930), the second one is 'On Cinema Art' (1932), and the last one is translated (probably from French) from Karl Freund's 'The Origin of Cinema Montage Theory' (1935). Liu mentions Vertov's Kino-eye theory in all of them. Liu praised very highly Vertov's theory and film. He comments on Vertov's Kino-eye that 'it certainly knows thoroughly about the inherent ability of the mechanical camera, and feels passionate about this new device of writing. If the past history of cinema is a history of resistance toward theatrical play, then the "Kino-eye" movement is without a doubt holding the line' (my translation).[82] From this, one can see that Liu considers Vertov as a truly avant-garde film theorist and filmmaker. Liu was also against the direct adaptation from literature and theatre in cinema. He extended his idea based on Pudovkin's montage theory and came up with the concepts of photographique and cinematographique. In Liu's opinion, film material without the re-organization of montage is 'dead, and purposeless' (my translation).[83] It is only through the process of montage that the film material can transform from photographique (the still photograph) into cinematographique (the film).

  Liu's understanding of Kino-eye theory focuses on the following parts: (1) the Kino-eye does not necessarily need a story or actor[84]; (2) the Kino-eye is a mechanical eye (high-speed and microscopic) which is better than the human eye[85]; (3) the Kino-eye is an

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[82] Kang and Shu, *Liu Na'Ou Collection – Movies*, p.269.
[83] Ibid., p.262.
[84] Xin-Lai Kang and Chin-Chen Shu, *Liu Na'Ou Collection – Supplementary* (Tainan: National Museum of Taiwan Literature, 2010), p.187.
[85] Ibid., p.188.

analytical, explanatory, and organisable tool for constructing a film with an unified theme[86];

(4) the Kino-eye wishes to express a whole 'life', a collective city life.[87]

However, throughout the three articles, Liu does not mention Vertov's theory of intervals.[88] In the first article 'Film Theories in Russia and France', Liu comprehends the Kino-eye as a method of describing social reality, which is closer to the documentary in a traditional sense. Then Liu continues to emphasize the Kino-eye as a truthful representation of mechanical documentation. At first glance, Liu seems to see the Kino-eye theory as a method of realism (record life as it is) which could reflect truth and reality, and fails to notice the complex concept (revealing, re-organizing) of truth and reality in Vertov's theory.

The Correspondence Between Na'Ou Liu and Vertov's Films

Besides praising Vertov's theory and films in his article, Liu also pays his respect to Vertov by finishing a film called *Man with a Camera* in 1933. The *Man with a Camera*[89] series consists of five sections: 'People', 'Tokyo', 'Sightseeing', 'Guangzhou' and 'Parade'. The movie title directly corresponds with Vertov's film *Man with a Movie Camera*, which makes the relation between Liu and Vertov even more evident. Besides the direct adaptation of the film title, in Liu's *Man with a Camera,* there are also many clues which show that Liu intentionally takes Vertov's film as a model. For example the train scene in 'People' (01:44), the street scenes in 'Tokyo' (02:03 and 09:46) and the street scene and building scene in 'Sightseeing' (00:22 and 04:32) [**Figure 2-4**].

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[86] Kang and Shu, *Liu Na'Ou Collection – Movies*, p.267.
[87] Ibid., p.268.
[88] Dziga Vertov, 'WE: Variant of a Manifesto', in Anne Michelson, *Kino-Eye: the Writing of Dziga Vertov* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), pp.5-9. The concept of theory of intervals lies in the kinesthetic relationship and the transition of movement between frames. It is the organization of movements, and of elements within shots (such as shot scales, angles, lights, speed, and duration).
[89] *Man with a Camera, A Retrospective Collection of Documentary Films from Taiwan – with films from the early 1930s to today – ranging from experimental short movies to longer documentaries.* [documentary, DVD] Dir. Na'Ou Liu. Taiwan, 1933. 46 mins. [TOSEE, SEE-001, 2006].
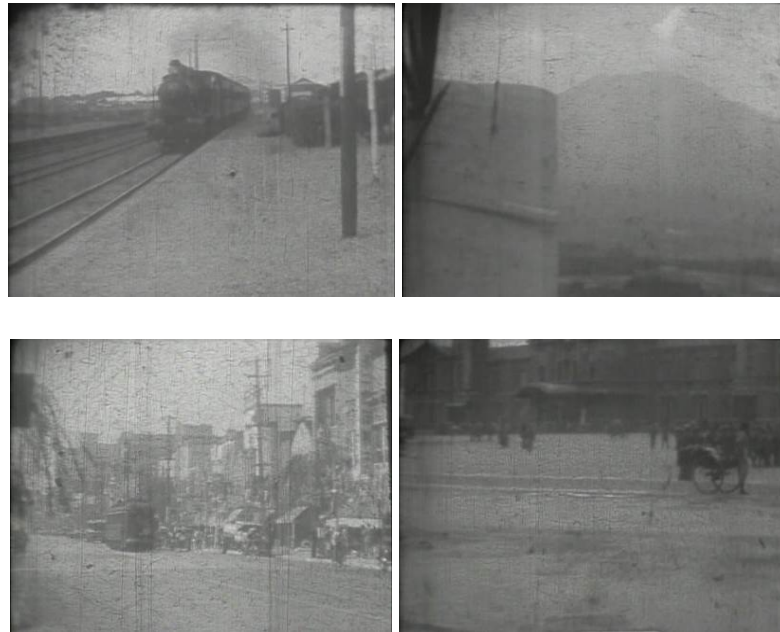
Figure 2-4: Stills from *Man with a Camera* Series

From these scenes, it is clear that Liu tries to imitate some characteristics of Vertov's film, such as camera movement, theme, and frame composition. Nevertheless, except for the similarities mentioned above, Liu's films and Vertov's film basically have nothing in common. Does this mean that Liu, despite the fact that he knows Vertov's theory very well, was unable to put the theory into practice because of the lack of techniques? Or does it mean that Liu was consciously moving from Vertov's theory and looking for a new cinematic possibility? Lack of evidence makes these questions difficult to answer, since only one of Liu's films has been left for research. However, with the unearthing of Liu's 1927 written diary manuscript, I would argue that there is a new opportunity to interpret Liu's film.

Na'Ou Liu's Misreading or Paradigm Shift?

Liu's film, *Man with a Camera*, might seem to be a home movie. It is about family members ('People'), travel ('Tokyo', 'Sightseeing' and 'Guangzhou') and festival ('Parade'). There is little editing in his film, obviously without the concept of montage to

create a certain dramatic effect. There are also some title cards in the film, which serve merely as indication of location and event rather than serving a narrative purpose. The film demonstrates tendencies common to amateur filmmaking, such as poverty of technique, and flash panning and 'fire hosing' (where the camera follows eye movement).[90] The people in his film, especially in the *People* section, have obviously been told to perform in front of the camera. They walk from a distance toward the camera, and then they freeze, as they would to take still photos. There is a sense that they exist only for the camera, and they are made for display. Another obvious example that connects Liu's film with home movies is the opening title cards in 'People' and 'Sightseeing'. In these two sections, the opening title cards say 'Film by Man Who Has Movie Camera'. This suggests a hierarchy between the man who has the camera and the filmed object. The man who has the camera also has the power over filmed objects – Liu's family members. This seems to be contrary to the Kino-eye theory; here the camera is intervening rather than filming unnoticed.

However, a new possibility of interpreting Liu's film emerges from the publishing of Liu's written diary. From Liu's 1927 written diary, there is a clear connection between this written record and his film [**Figure 2-5**].
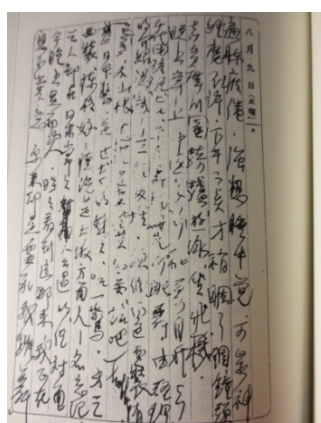
Figure 2-5: Na'Ou Liu's Diary (9 August 1927)[91]

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[90] Stefan Szczelkun, 'The Value of Home Movies', *Oral History*, Vol. 28, No. 2, Memory and Place (Autumn, 2000), p.95.

[91] Xin-Lai Kang and Chin-Chen Shu, *Liu Na'Ou Collection-Diaries II* (Tainan: National Museum of Taiwan Literature, 2001), p.506.

On 25 May 1927, Liu wrote:

> '…went to pick up some berries with Ai-Yi Tsai, his wife, and sister in Takarazuka. Went to the *zoo*. Back to Osaka around 6pm' (my translation and emphasis).[92]

On 28 May, Liu wrote:

> 'Went *boating* after lunch in Senzokuike. Fell into the pond by accident. Soaked my lower half body like a buffalo. Went back to change. Chi came by, went [to Senzokuike] again with Jin and other four. They went back after sunset' (my translation and emphasis).[93]

On 9 August, Liu wrote:

> 'Went donkey riding, swimming, and took a ride on an *airplane* at Tamagawaen' (my translation and emphasis).[94]

Liu kept a diary every day. In the 1927 diary he documented his trip to Tokyo from May to September. Interestingly, when watching Liu's *Man with a Camera* – 'Tokyo', we find the same depiction about the boating, the zoo, and the airplane [**Figure 2-6**]:

Boating (*Man with a Camera* – 'Tokyo', 00:16-00:26)

The Zoo (*Man with a Camera* – 'Tokyo', 00:55-00:57)

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[92] Liu started his trip to Japan on 21 May 1927 and went back to Shanghai on 10 Sep 1927. See Xin-Lai Kang and Chin-Chen Shu, *Liu Na'Ou Collection-Diaries I* (Tainan: National Museum of Taiwan Literature, 2001), p.336.

[93] Ibid., p.342.

[94] Kang and Shu, *Liu Na'Ou Collection-Diaries II*, p.506.

Airplane (*Man with a Camera* – 'Tokyo', 02:25-04:45)

Figure 2-6: Stills from *Man with a Camera*

We might assume that the scenes in the film are from the 1927 diary (the Zoo and the 25 May diary; the boating and the 28 May diary; the airplane and the 9 August diary). From this point of view, Liu not only kept written diary but also made a visual diary with his camera. He filmed the footage when the events happened, and then when he went back home, he wrote them down again in his journal. This brings up another question—is the film *Man with a Camera* actually a diary film? Or at least less Kino-eye than a diaristic film? To answer these questions, I suggest going back to Vertov's manifesto in the beginning title of *The Man with a Movie Camera,* in which the concept of the diary is also mentioned:

Man With A Movie Camera (A Record on Celluloid in 6 Reels)

(An Excerpt from the **Diary** of a Cameraman)

Chief Cameraman: Mikhail Kaufman

Assisting Editor: Elizaveta Svilova

—the beginning title cards of *Man with a Movie Camera* (my emphasis in bold).

It is an interesting but strange finding that Vertov uses the word 'Diary' in the manifesto in the beginning of *Man with a Movie Camera,* as Vertov considers the Kino-eye theory as a process of selecting the good materials (the bricks) and developing a unified theme (building a house), while the concept of the diary focuses on fragments and spontaneities.

However, as Vertov mentions that the Kino-eye theory includes three steps: Kino-seeing + Kino-Writing + Kino-organization. The second step, Kino-writing, does imply the act of writing (with the camera), in other words, a cinematic writing. Clearly, Liu does manage the first two steps, the kino-seeing (observing life) and kino-writing (filming life), very well. Yet Liu abandons the final step—kino-organization (montage), and tries to maintain life as it is. That the same events appear both in Liu's written diary and his film somehow suggest that, when writing his written diary with his pen, Liu was also trying to adapt the new technology – the movie camera – to write on film with the camera. Therefore, the Kino-eye seems to change in Liu's hand. The Kino-eye becomes the eye + the hand; the observation and analysis become the act of actually writing. The three steps of the Kino-eye become 'I see + I write (with pen and with the camera) + I edit/sequence (presented in a looser chronological narrative form and without the sense of montage organization)'. In this case, Liu was closer to the concept of 'Life-As-It-Is' than Vertov. The life in Liu's film stays in life-facts, it does not turn into film-object (film-thing). Also with the emphasis of the hand as an extension of the body, the notion of the author (the diary writer and the filmmaker) is retained. The works of Liu are about him and the life around him, not about the people as in the works of Vertov, which are about collectivity. Hence, I would say that Liu's film is not, as Prof. Daw-Ming Lee suggests, just 'family activities documentations, and home movies without thematic and artistic treatment' (my translation),[95] but rather, a conscious experiment on the intertextuality between written and film forms. It is based on Vertov's Kino-eye theory, but Liu transforms it into his own Kino-eye theory as diary-film.

Na'Ou Liu's study of film theory and filmmaking practice were ahead of his time. Unfortunately, on 3 September 1940, at the age of 35, when he had just accepted the position as the president of *Guo Ming* News Agency, he was assassinated in Shanghai. The cause of this assassination is still a mystery. It is generally believed that he was killed

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[95] Lee, 'The Cinema Aesthetics of Liu Na'Ou', p.35.

because he was mistaken for a Japanese spy. Liu left only one film, the *Man with a Camera* series. Liu's version of the Kino-eye theory might have been developed and improved, but due to his early death, we will never know. Even though he died so young, Liu did open up an important page in the history of Taiwanese avant-garde movement, and, in my opinion, explored and foreseen the potential of cinematic diary writing.

After Na'Ou Liu

After the death of Na'Ou Liu, there was a gap in Taiwan avant-garde film movement due to economic and political instability both abroad and domestically. In 1945, with the end of World War II, Taiwan had finally been freed from Japanese colonization. However, the battle between Republic of China and Chinese Communist Party was still going on. In 1949, Chinese Communist Party took over mainland China, the Republic of China government retreated to Taiwan and moved the capital to Taipei city. Under the governance of KMT (Kuo Min Tang, the Chinese Nationalist Party), Taiwan suffered from a great deal of oppression. During that period of time, the film industry was directed by the government. Most of the movies produced during this time were propaganda films against Communism. The political order made other alternative voices disappear. The development of Taiwan avant-garde film, which started by Na'Ou Liu, officially broke off and stopped for almost twenty years. It was not until 1965, with the launch of the first issue of *Theatre Quarterly* magazine, that the Taiwanese avant-garde movement started to bloom again.

2.2.1.2 Phase Two: *Theatre Quarterly* in the 1960s

Theatre Quarterly was probably the first avant-garde film magazine ever published in Taiwan. Its appearance also marked the rise of Taiwan's avant-garde film movement

during the 1960s. At this time, Taiwan was ruled under martial law by the government (from 1949-1987). Suppression over freedom of speech and artistic expression reached its highest peak. This oppressive period was also known as 'the White Terror'. With the establishment of *Theatre Quarterly* magazine, young people had an outlet to fully express themselves, to escape from governmental control and commercial interferences. Through the magazine, for the first time they had the chance to embrace avant-garde and non-mainstream cinema and theatrical plays. Although it only lasted for a short period of time (from 1965 to 1968), its importance and influence on later generations was exceptional.

Theatre Quarterly was founded in Taipei in 1965; its members included Kang-Chien Chiu, Ying-Zhen Chen, Lin Chuang, and Hua-Cheng Huang. They came from different backgrounds: they were an artist, photographer, poet, painter, and designer respectively. Its first issue was launched on 1 January 1965, and its last issue (Issue 9) on 15 January 1968. *Theatre Quarterly* magazine focused on the introduction and translation of Western contemporary cinema, theatrical plays and scripts, such as films and scripts of Alain Resnais (Issue 1), Michelangelo Antonioni, Maya Deren, and Samuel Beckett (Issue 2), Akira Kurosawa (Issue 3), Underground Film (Issue 5/6), Jean-Luc Godard (Issue 7/8), and Auteur Theory (Issue 9). Most of these materials were introduced to Taiwan by Mr. Kang-Chien Chiu. When studying Theatre in East-West Center in Hawaii in 1962, Chiu had direct access to Western film studies, books, and magazines. As he returned to Taiwan and started publishing *Theatre Quarterly*, these materials became rich resources for the journal's content. Chiu describes the starting period of the *Theatre Quarterly*: 'I received scholarship for advanced study in theatre in the East-West Center in Hawaii. During that period, I saw many contemporary films, especially since it was when the French New Wave had reached its highest peak. I was very interested in both theatre and cinema, so I felt that when I went back to Taiwan I had to start-up a film magazine' (my translation).[96]

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[96] Meng-Wen Tsai, 'Looking for the Coordinates of the "Avant-Garde": the Perception, Communication, and the Practice of *Theatre Quarterly* to European/American Cinema', *ACT*, No.41 (2010), p.27.

It is worth noting that in all nine issues, there are in total 1,795 articles; among them there are 1,596 articles translated from other languages. Articles that were actually written by the *Theatre Quarterly* members are less than 12% of the total articles.[97] The statistics might suggest the lack of originality; however, the members understood that as well and considered the translation of the Western thoughts necessary. As Mr. Lin Chuang explains: 'the purpose of *Theatre Quarterly* was to advance the level of Chinese cinema by promoting Western cinema, and moreover, to transform Taiwanese films into pure art. By doing so, the first step would be to "study others' accomplishment", in order to "stimulate yourself to progress"' (my translation).[98] Therefore, the role of the magazine was clear, it was an intermediary between adopting and translating the Western thoughts. Under the suppression of thoughts and freedom of speech by the government, *Theatre Quarterly* was trying to stay connected to the contemporary international art and avant-garde cinema.

However, the members of the *Theatre Quarterly* were influenced unconsciously by Western cinema as the magazine continued publishing. Besides translating and writing articles, *Theatre Quarterly* also held film appreciation screenings. In 1966 and 1967, *Theatre Quarterly* held two public experimental film screenings at Tien Educational Center (1966) and Armed Forces Cultural Center (1967) in Taipei. The programmes from two screenings were as follows [**Table 2 and Table 3**]:

Table 2: *Theatre Quarterly* First Screening[99]

(18 February 1966 at Tien Educational Center, Taipei)

Title	Director	Synopsis	
Life Continued (延)	Ling Chuang (莊靈)	A documentary about a day of his pregnant wife.	Producer/Camera/Edit: Lin Chuang Music: Yao-Chi Chen

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[97] Jow-Jiun Gong, 'The Gully of 1965 Parallax: *Theatre Quarterly* magazine – I was too late for avant-garde', *ACT*, No. 41 (2010), p.9.

[98] Tsai, 'Looking for the Coordinates of the "Avant-Garde"', p.28.

[99] Jia-Xuan Yang, 'The Study on the Works of HUANG, Hua-Cheng (1935-1996)', Master thesis, Tainan National University of the Arts, Tainan, 2001, p.44.

Alienation (疏離)	Kang-Chien Chiu (邱剛健)	A story about 3 caterpillars and a man's masturbation.	Duration: 6 mins *Not Screened
Yuan (*Origin*) (原)	Hua-Cheng Huang (黃華成)	Adapted from Sherwood Anderson's *Seeds in The Triumph of the Egg*.	Black & White/Silent/16mm/20 mins
Modern, Intellectual, Popular Bride (現代的知性的受歡迎的新娘)	Hua-Cheng Huang (黃華成)	Blackness and blank on screen.	Camera: Hua-Cheng Huang Actor: Shu-Fang Chang

Table 3: *Theatre Quarterly* Second Screening[100]

(29 July 1967 at Armed Forces Cultural Center, Taipei)

Title	Director	Synopsis	
Dream of Afternoon (下午的夢)	Jun-Yi Hsu (許俊逸)	A boring afternoon. A boy and a girl go for a picnic.	Script: Song Xi Camera: Yung Song Huang, Chao Kuang Chang Actor: Cheng Jie Yao, Bi Lian Jiang
Diary (日記)	Chao-Tang Chang (張照堂)	A story about a young teacher bored with his life.	Camera/Edit/Makeup: Chao-Tang Chang
「」	Kwok-hung Cheung (張國雄)	Colors, lights, heat, movement, and life.	Camera/Edit: Kwok-Hung Cheung
Beauty of Life (生之美妙)	Suk Fong Cheung (張淑芳)	Close-up on the actor tasting coffee repeatedly.	Script: Suk Fong Cheung Camera: Chi Yuan Hu Actor: Lin Chuang
My New Born Baby (赤子)	Ling Chuang (莊靈)	A documentary about his new born baby.	Camera/Edit: Lin Chuang
Festival Celebration (過節)	Sih-Liang Long (龍思良)	Depictions on daily activities of men and women in Chinese Opera.	Camera/Edit: Sih-Liang Long
Experiment 002 (實驗 002)	Hua-Cheng Huang (黃華成)	6 channel film projection in round shape.	Camera: Chao-Tang Chang Actor: Bing Xing Jin

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[100] Yang, 'The Study on the Works of HUANG, Hua-Cheng (1935-1996)', p.45.

Experiment 003 (實驗 003)	Hua-Cheng Huang (黃華 成)	6 channel film projection of the other six films from this programme.	
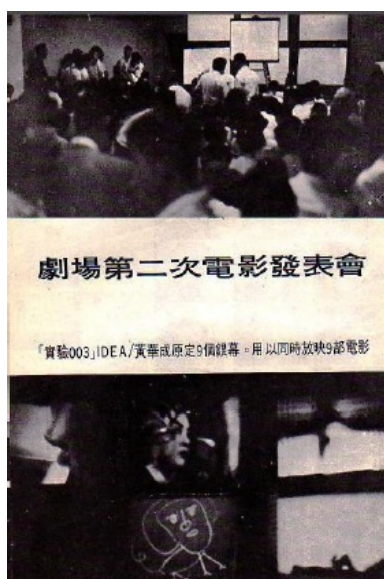
Figure 2-7: Photo from the Second Public Screening of *Theatre Quarterly* (29 July 1967)[101]

The first screening included three members from *Theatre Quarterly* magazine: Lin Chuang, Kang-Chien Chiu and Hua-Cheng Huang. One of the four films, *Alienation*, was not screened that day because it featured masturbation (Tien Educational Center is a Catholic church). The second screening of *Theatre Quarterly* started to open calls to the public and screened eight films from seven filmmakers. According to one of the curators, Kang-Chien Chiu, the purpose of holding these screening events was that 'because of publishing the magazine, we feel that it is necessary to promote the idea of making films ourselves' (my translation).[102] Also, Lin Chuang mentioned that 'we want to start a revolution against Chinese cinema, in both content and techniques' (my translation).[103]

Films from both screenings contain documentaries and experimental films. The reason for the sudden emergence of experimental and documentary films was diverse. Besides his continuous contact with Western contemporary cinema and works in translation, Mr. Yao-

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[101] Yang, 'The Study on the Works of HUANG, Hua-Cheng (1935-1996)', p.43.
[102] Ibid., p.44.
[103] Ibid.

Chi Chen also played an important role for the inspiration of the alternative filmmaking practice. In 1964 Chen graduated from UCLA and returned to Taiwan. According to Lin Chuang: 'We didn't have the chance to see those films (Western experimental films)… Because at that time, Yao-Chi Chen just returned from UCLA. He had a very good connection with the United States Information Service (USIS). So he borrowed many documentaries from it, such as films of Flaherty, and some works of Cinéma Vérité. We saw these films and were deeply touched by them. Because documentary we used to know was not like that at all. So these new ideas and concepts came in…' (my translation).[104] In another article 'The Birth of *Life Continued*', Chuang admits the influence Chen had on him and the creation of his film *Life Continued*: 'Chen is always talking about Cinéma Vérité, I didn't understand what that is. But I remember last year when Chen first joined *Theatre Quarterly*, he hosted a screening event in Kang-Chien Chiu's new house after his wedding. Chiu screened James Blue's *The March* (1963), which he borrowed from USIS. Maybe unconsciously I was influenced by the film' (my translation).[105] Besides the introduction of Cinéma Vérité films from America, Yao-Chi Chen also finished *Liu Pi-Chia* in 1965, which was considered the first documentary in Taiwan that follows the idea of Cinéma Vérité. In the film Chen interviews a farmer, Pi-Chia Liu, who talks about his exile from China to Taiwan during the war time. The camera follows Liu and documents his daily life and his friends. The impact of *Liu Pi-Chia* was crucial. From the films from two screenings of *Theatre Quarterly*, we can see that filmmakers started to shift their focus from public to the more personal, ordinary depiction of daily activities, diaries, and home movies.

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[104] Yung-Hao Liu, 'The Early Development of Experimental Film in Taiwan: Interviews with Yao-Chi Chen, Lin Chuang, Wei-Cheng Yu, and Chung-li Kao', in Tony Chun-hui Wu (ed.) *Stranger Than Cinema* (Taipei: Le Ganges, 2013), p.203.

[105] Lin Chuang, 'The Birth of *Life Continued*', *Theatre Quarterly*, Issue 5 (1966), p.161.

Lin Chuang and His Diary Films

Lin Chuang was one of the co-founders of *Theatre Quarterly* magazine. His *Life Continued*[106] (1966) records a day of his pregnant wife. As Chuang states, the original idea of *Life Continued* was 'to document the life of Xia-Sheng [his wife] in a day' (my translation).[107] The camera (hand-held by Chuang himself) follows her everywhere: on the bus to her work at the Soil Research Center and to the market. His camera sometimes witnesses his wife's life as a quiet observer without intrusion, but it is also obvious that sometimes his wife was told to perform in front of the camera (wakes up and goes to balcony [see Figure below]: in order to make an impression of continuity editing, his wife has to perform the act [leaning against window] twice) [**Figure 2-8**].

Figure 2-8: Stills from *Life Continued* (01:48-01:52)

There is no 'story' in *Life Continued*, just mundane activities of ordinary people: Chuang's parents practice Tai Chi in the morning (00:46-01:33), Chuang's father walks the dog (02:10-03:03), Chuang's mother waters plants on the balcony (03:04-03:25), Chuang's parents and his wife have breakfast (03:29-03:43), Xia-Sheng takes the bus, goes to work, Xia-Sheng goes to the market (10:33-11:17), and then goes home and falls asleep in the bed [**Figure 2-9**].

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[106] *Life Continued, A Retrospective Collection of Documentary Films from Taiwan – with films from the early 1930s to today – ranging from experimental short movies to longer documentaries.* [documentary, DVD] Dir. Lin Chuang. Taiwan, 1966, 13mins 35secs. [TOSEE, SEE-005, 2006]

[107] Chuang, 'The Birth of *Life Continued*', p.160.

Figure 2-9: Stills from *Life Continued*

Life Continued was shot entirely by Chuang himself, he was the director, the script writer, the cameraman, and the editor. There were no lighting or artificial stage props in the film. Chuang explains himself in 'The Birth of *Life Continued*' that 'I am against all kinds of artificial props (except for costume film), moreover, I am against so-called "cinematic lighting". That is to say, I am against all the prolix "cinematic technique" which was considered necessary by those "film-makers"' (my translation).[108] Chuang considers *Life Continued* as a revolution both in content and technique in relation to conventional Chinese cinema. According to Chuang, the shooting of the film took only two days, using expired 16mm black and white film stock, and it cost only 300 NTD (approximately 10 US Dollars) for processing the film.[109]

Chuang soon made another film, *My New Born Baby*[110] in 1967, for the second public screening of the *Theatre Quarterly*. In my opinion, it was probably the first film that took the form of the diary in Taiwan. The film opens with a title card 'Born & 12 months' and

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[108] Chuang, 'The Birth of *Life Continued*', p.160.
[109] Ibid.
[110] *My New Born Baby, A Retrospective Collection of Documentary Films from Taiwan – with films from the early 1930s to today – ranging from experimental short movies to longer documentaries.* [documentary, DVD] Dir. Lin Chuang. Taiwan, 1967, 7mins 55secs. [TOSEE, SEE-005, 2006]

then inserts a slideshow of still photographs of his baby daughter (00:14-01:12) [**Figure 2-10**].

'Born & 12 months' (00:14-00:22)

'In the City' (04:07 & 07:43)
Figure 2-10: Stills from *My New Born Baby*

From the slideshow photographs the spectator witnesses the growth of his daughter as he/she is browsing through Chuang's family album. In all there are five sections in the film ('Born & 12 months', 'One Year Old', 'Picnic', 'In the City', and '18 Months' Confusion'), and except for the first section, the other four are presented in home movie footage. The use of inter-titles divides the film into different temporal moments in the life of his daughter, creating a form very similar to the written diary book – each inter-title marks a beginning of a diary entry, which ends before the next inter-title appears. Besides the form, the content of the film is also very diaristic. The main character, Chuang's daughter, grows up as the film proceeds: celebrating her first birthday with the family, visiting the zoo (04:44) [**Figure 2-11**], and walking hand in hand with her mother in the city. These are all fragmentary events in her life documented continuously by Chuang. Therefore, the film can be seen as 'a diary of my daughter'.

Daughter's first birthday & the Zoo scene (01:33 & 04:44)
Figure 2-11: Stills from *My New Born Baby*

2.2.1.3 Phase Three: Golden Harvest Awards and Chung-li Kao in the 1980s

As *Theatre Quarterly* hastily ended in 1968, the first wave of the avant-garde film movement had officially come to an end. The members of the *Theatre Quarterly* were disbanded as the last issue published. Kang-Chien Chiu and Hua-Cheng Huang went to Shaw Brothers Limited in Hong Kong working as film director and script writer, Chao-Tang Chang and Ling Chuang went into television as journalist and commercial director respectively. It was not until ten years later, in 1978, when Taiwan Government Information Office founded Golden Harvest Awards for Experimental Films and announced the beginning of the second wave avant-garde film movement in Taiwan. Before the establishment of the Golden Harvest Awards, there was only one film festival in Taiwan – the Golden Horse Awards (founded in 1962). Its purpose was to encourage and promote commercially made feature films. Differentiated from the Golden Horse Awards, the categories of the Golden Harvest Awards were more diverse, including feature film, documentary, short film, 8mm experimental film (set up in 1982), and 16mm experimental film (set up in 1983). Therefore, the emergence of the Golden Harvest Awards drew attention to the non-professionals, and became a place where all filmmakers, students, and amateurs were welcome. Many internationally renowned film directors participated and won awards in the Golden Harvest Awards, such as Ming-Liang Tsai (*UFO Rhapsody* for 8mm Short Honorable Mention in 1981) and Ang Lee (*Dim Lake* for the Best 16mm

Narrative Film in 1983). The Golden Harvest Awards is the second longest running film award in Taiwan and in 2015 it celebrates its 37th anniversary. Its contribution to promoting the development of Taiwanese cinema cannot be overlooked.

However, sadly, the historical documents from the Golden Harvest Awards were not carefully preserved in Taiwan. When I visited the Chinese Taipei Film Archive in 2013 to collect data for my thesis, there were only twenty films from early Golden Harvest Awards period available. The quality of the films was poor for they were stored on VHS tapes, and most of them were feature films and documentaries. From the archival condition, one can assume that the experimental and alternative film in Taiwan is still a minority pursuit. Even so, from the two VHS tapes in the archive, I surprisingly found two films that were made in diaristic forms and styles. The first one is from the 4th Golden Harvest Awards in 1981, Ms. Shu-Chen Liao's *Home Movie*, in which she documents her mother's pregnancy with hand-held camera and added with voice-over narration. The home-movie-like footage shows the excitement and anxiety of her family expecting the arrival of a new member. In the voice-over, the dates of different events are specifically marked out. For example, 'December 23rd, Tuesday. Father is obviously absent-minded' (my translation), and 'January 5th, Slide Cold [from the lunar calendar]...we have a new member in the family. The purpose of making this film is all about him [her younger brother]' (my translation). The second film is Hung-i Chen's *Penetration Between Hard and Convex No.3 Impotence* from the 13th Golden Harvest Awards in 1990. Chen uses the form of diary-film letter in the film, addressing Derek Jarman. The title cards inserted between the mundane images of Chen's wandering in the city, asking Jarman questions like 'I heard that you like cinema', 'Do you know Godard? Do you like him?' (my translation). Near the end of the film, Chen's voice-over directly confesses that 'this is not an avant-garde film. It is just blank spaces and moments of boredom in life', and 'to be frank, the reason why I made this film is I have felt something, and I need to express it. That's all' (my translation). Chen's

confession, whether he's conscious or not, somehow suggests that the film has characteristics of the diary film in relation to the content ('moments of life') and intention of the filmmaker ('I felt something and I need to express it'). However, due to the lack of more supportive evidence, my understanding of these two films can only come from analysis of film texts. Yet, their existence confirms that in the 1980s and early 1990s, the concept of the diary film did exist in Taiwan.

Besides the two unexpected discoveries of the diary films in the Chinese Taipei Film Archive, there is, still, one important figure that cannot be ignored in both the discussions of the history of experimental cinema and the development of the diary film in Taiwan in the 1980s. By looking at the list of all the past winners of the Golden Harvest Awards, one can notice that Mr. Chung-li Kao had won an award for five years consecutively from 1984 to 1988. Mr. Chung-li Kao (born in 1958) started his filmmaking practice in the late 1970s; he neither graduated from a film academy nor did he receive professional training in filmmaking. His early experience of experimental film came from two places: one was the occasional film screenings held by Chinese Taipei Film Archive, which, according to his description, included films of Maya Deren and Fernand Léger's *Ballet Mécanique*;[111] the second one came from the screenings of the winning films from the Golden Harvest Awards. Moreover, he also saw the films of Chao-Tang Chang, who continued making films after he left the *Theatre Quarterly* after 1968. At that time, there were also film appreciation clubs in universities, and Kao met Hung-i Chen (the director of *Penetration Between Hard and Convex No.3 Impotence*) in a screening held by National Taiwan University film appreciation club and they became good friends.[112] It is probably due to Kao's amateur background that his films are never bounded within a particular cinematic form, and it is also difficult to categorize his films into any specific genre. This phenomenon is obvious if we look at his winning films from the list of the Golden Harvest

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[111] Liu, 'The Early Development of Experimental Film in Taiwan', p.229.
[112] Ibid., p.235.

Awards. In the 7th Golden Harvest Awards in 1984, his film *That Photograph* won the Best

8mm Experimental Film; in the 8th Golden Harvest Awards in 1985, his *24 Hours × 12*

Months = 365 Days won the 8mm Documentary Honorable Mention; in the 9th Golden

Harvest Awards in 1986, *I Grew Up Eating this Brand of Milk Powder* won the 8mm

Experimental Honorable Mention; in the 10th Golden Harvest Awards in 1987, *Like a*

Virgin won the 8mm Feature Film Honorable Mention, and in the 11th Golden Harvest

Awards in 1988, *Home Movie* won the Best 8mm Documentary. From 1984 to 1988, he

won every category − feature film, documentary, and experimental film − in the Golden

Harvest Awards (there was no Animation category in the Golden Harvest Awards at that

time). In an interview with Prof. Yung-Hao Liu, Kao recalls that when he was confused

about which categories he should choose, a friend told him that '"Anyhow, your film is

neither feature film nor documentary, and it's certainly not animation, so let's call it

experimental film…", this example also explains that it [my film] is quite freed from

formality' (my translation).[113]

Kao's films are always wandering between different genres, and he often uses different

materials and mediums in his films. In *Home Movie*, Kao integrates still photographs,

hand-painted animation, and diary film footage together to tell the story of his father.

According to Prof. Yung-Hao Liu, Kao's *Home Movie* 'is one of the best films in the

history of independent and personal filmmaking in Taiwan' (my translation).[114] It is also, I

would add, a milestone in the diary filmmaking after Lin Chuang's *My New Born Baby* in

Taiwan. In *Home Movie*, Kao aims the camera at his father, Wen-bin Kao. On the one hand,

Kao's father tells his own stories of retreating with KMT from China to Taiwan after the

war, on the other, Kao expresses his relationship with his father by filming his father's

daily activities. The images of the film include Kao's father flattening the dough with a

rolling pin, taking a nap; in the voice-over, Kao returns to his childhood, reminiscing how

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[113] Liu, 'The Early Development of Experimental Film in Taiwan', p.228.
[114] Ibid., p.250.

often his father asked him to buy wine from the grocery store: 'besides real people, my father's best company would be wine' (my translation). From these fragmentary moments in the voice-over, Kao is trying to get closer to his father. Compared to Lin Chuang's *My New Born Baby*, Kao's *Home Movie* is obviously more mature in terms of the form and the characteristics of the diary film. Kao was more conscious in adopting the voice-over as a narrative strategy and exploring the relation between the voice-over and the images in the film. Besides the daily documentations of Kao's father in the image track, the voice-over is also very diaristic and includes momentary reminiscences that include his father: 'when I was a second grader in junior high school, father caught me smoking…'; 'I came back home, that was the first Chinese New Year's Eve after I served in the military service…' (my translation). In my interview with Kao in 2013, I particularly asked him about his diary filmmaking approach and the use of the voice-over and the audiovisual relationship in his films. He replied: 'in making diary films, the camera becomes a part of my life. I consider film camera as a part of me and a device that can record images. I don't use the point-of-view of the camera; it is always my point-of-view…I film whatever is in my mind. And if the material is not enough, I go out and film more, or I simply look for materials from my old footage' (my translation).[115] He also elaborates on his idea of the voice-over and the relationship of it with the images: 'the narrative is indeed in the voice-over, but this does not mean that the images are just auxiliaries. They proceed in parallel with each other…when adding voice-over to the image, I don't consider the montage effect at all. The spectators will do the montage by themselves when viewing' (my translation).[116] From Kao's filmmaking approach, we can see that despite the fact that when making *Home Movie* in 1988, the concept of the diary film was still foreign to him, and yet he had already started making film directly from his life and considering filmmaking as a part of his life, and through post-production editing (not in the sense of montage) to organize this

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[115] Chung-li Kao, Interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 20 August 2013 (unpublished material).
[116] Ibid.

diary film footage. At the same time, he became aware of the function of the voice-over and used it strategically to create the complicated temporalities of the diary film. Kao's approach somehow resonates with Jonas Mekas's early filmmaking, although Kao had not seen Mekas's films at that time.

In 2010, Kao finished *My Mentor, Chen Yingzhen* as a direct homage to Ying-Zhen Chen, who was one of the co-founders of the *Theatre Quarterly*. The film was later screened at EX!T II 2011 – the 2nd Experimental Media Arts Festival in Taiwan. It was the only film in the festival during the nine days. It was a film festival (or a solo exhibition of Kao) which contains only one film (*My Mentor, Chen Yingzhen*). As the curator, Prof. Yung-Hao Liu elaborates in his curatorial statement: 'Can a film festival only screen one film and three installations from one filmmaker? Can a solo exhibition of a filmmaker have only one film? ...Most of the film festivals and art exhibitions are pursuing submissions of films, size of the festival, budget, venue, numbers of participations, viewing numbers, etc. Can these numbers represent quality and value of the works? There seems to be no precedent for screening only few works of a single filmmaker in a film festival. If so, why not give it a try?' (my translation).[117] The film festival was a success. Not only was the importance of Kao in the history of experimental film in Taiwan emphasized, but a connection was also made – between the first generation of the avant-garde film movement in Taiwan (Ying-Zhen Chen), the second wave (Kao himself), and the future generation of young filmmakers.

2.2.1.4 Phase Four: the Academic Teaching of Experimental Film Since 2003 – Yung-Hao Liu, Chung-li Kao, and Tony Chun-hui Wu

In 2005, Prof. Yung-Hao Liu offered a course called Home Movie Studies in the department of Radio, Television and Film in Shih Hsin University; the course objectives

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[117] Yung-Hao Liu, *The 2ⁿᵈ Experimental Media Arts Festival in Taiwan (EX!T) 2012 – Repeat and Pause: Transparent Light through Experimental Film Catalogue* (Taipei, 2012), p.2.

include the introduction of academic studies of home movies, diary films and documentaries from the West and also personal filmmaking practice. It was the first academic course to specifically focus on home movies and alternative filmmaking that had ever been taught in Universities in Taiwan. Prof. Yung-Hao Liu came back to Taiwan after receiving his PhD in film and literature studies in Université Paris VIII, and started teaching in Shih Hsin University in 2003. He also curated a special issue on the diary film in *Film Appreciation* (*FA*) magazine in 1996.[118] In the special issue, he translated articles including Roger Odin's 'Du Film de Famille au Journal Filmé' ('From Home Movie to Diary Film'),[119] Jonas Mekas's 'Extraits de Mon Journal' ('Extracts of My Diary'),[120] Yann Beauvais and Jean-Michel Bouhours's 'Le Je à la Caméra' ('The I in the Camera'),[121] and Stan Brakhage's 'In Defense of Amateur'.[122] The *FA* special issue is so far the most extensive and thorough study on the history development of the diary film in Taiwan. In the 2005 Home Movie Studies course, Liu introduced research on the diary film and home movies of Roger Odin, who was one of his PhD Viva external examiners, Eric de Kuyper, Patricia R. Zimmerman and Jean-Pierre Esquenazi as course material. In addition, he also introduced films of Jonas Mekas (*Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania*, 1972), Hervé Guibert (*La Pudeur ou l'impudeur/Modesty and Shame,* 1992), Stephen Dwoskin (*Trying to Kiss the Moon*, 1994), Nicole Betancourt (*Before You Go: A Daughter's Diary*, 1995), and Alain Cavalier (*Le Filmeur*, 2005). The course had a direct influence on the young generation of filmmakers including Shine Lin and myself. In the final presentation of the course, Shine Lin finished a diary film of her band and her Japanese friends, which was later developed into her Master Thesis film *Blues Biyori* in 2007. My short film *Time Variations* was also completed as the final presentation of that course, and it was also the inspiration and the starting point of my diary film-making practice. In 2014, the Home

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[118] *FA* (*Film Appreciation*), No.81-82, 1996, Taiwan:Taipei.
[119] Beauvais, *Le je filmé*, pp.1951-1944.
[120] Ibid., pp.1975-1972.
[121] Ibid., pp.1990-1977.
[122] Ibid., pp.1969-1960.

Movie Studies course has reached its tenth year and its influence on the younger filmmaking generation is both profound and lasting.

In 2005, Chung-li Kao also joined the Department of Radio, Television and Film in Shih Hsin University and started teaching experimental filmmaking. I still remember the day he brought his own Super 8 film projector and screened his *That Photograph* and *Home Movie*. These two films are not stored in the Chinese Taipei Film Archive, therefore, for the young generation who has never participated the Second Wave of Taiwanese avant-garde film movement it was a rare and precious experience and probably the only chance to see these two films. Kao's personal and Do-It-Yourself filmmaking approach also opened up new possibilities for students: besides feature film and documentary, there is an alternative way of making film, which does not require a large budget, a big crew, high-end technology, or a script – a filmmaking approach which directly draws strength from life.

Tony Chun-hui Wu received his MFA degree from Bard College, Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts (NY) in 2004 and also started teaching filmmaking in Shih Hsin University in 2007. His courses focus more on the small format filmmaking, such as Super 8mm and hand-processing darkroom practice. He also commits himself to promote the development of the Taiwan experimental filmmaking. In 2010, Wu and Liu together founded the first EX!T – Experimental Media Arts Festival in Taiwan. The purpose of EX!T is to provide a platform specifically for the Taiwanese experimental filmmakers. In 2013, Wu published *Stranger Than Cinema: A Study of Taiwanese Experimental Film*. The book calls together Taiwanese experimental filmmakers ranging from the 1980s (Yu-Shan Huang, Chang-Jay Shih, Mo-Lin Wang, and Chung-li Kao) to the new generation (Shine Lin, Ming-Yu Lee, Shu-ting Jiang, Ming-Yen Su, and Cheng-Ju Ying). The book includes interviews with members from the *Theatre Quarterly*, studies on early experimental film in Taiwan, articles from Taiwanese experimental filmmakers, and the bibliography of the

Taiwanese experimental film. *Stranger Than Cinema* therefore not only pieces together the fragmented history of the Taiwanese experimental film, but also provides more evidence in relation to research on the diary film in Taiwan.

2.2.2 Conclusion: Young Generation of the Taiwanese Diary Filmmakers since 2007

After reviewing the historical development of experimental film and the diary film in Taiwan from the early 1960s to 2014, it is obvious that, as compared to the diary film in America, the history of the diary film in Taiwan is intermittent and fragmentary. The thread of influence is always disconnected due to various reasons and is less clear than that of the American filmmakers. The three figures I mention above, in my opinion, play crucial roles in inheriting the legacy of the diary film tradition from the 1960s' avant-garde film movement in America and the first wave avant-garde film emerged from *Theatre Quarterly*, and connected to and passed on the legacy to the new Taiwanese diary filmmakers. With the efforts of Liu, Kao, and Wu, the new generation of the Taiwanese diary filmmakers started with Shine Lin's *Blues Biyori* in 2007 and was followed by Ming-Yu Lee's *Going Home* in 2008. By 2014, there are now four filmmakers who use diary films as their Master's thesis films, they include: Shine Lin's *Blues Biyori* (2007), Ming-Yu Lee's *Going Home* (2008), Chien-Hung Lien's *The Household Diary* (2010), and Ming-Yen Su's *Daylight Developing* (2011). Different from the filmmakers from the previous phase, these young diary filmmakers have never been studied abroad – many of them did not even come from the filmmaking background: Shine Lin studied Chinese Literature in college, Ming-Yu Lee studied English Literature, and Ming-Yen Su Journalism. However, they are gradually developing a mode of diary filmmaking which combines the indirect influence (the Western method from the academic education) and their own experience, showing diversities both in theme and in style, which I will further discuss in Chapter Five. In 2008, Wu curated a programme, 'State of Freezing', in EXiS

(Experimental Film and Video Festival in Seoul). The programme includes the diary films from the Home Movie Studies course and other diary films from the Taiwanese young filmmakers. The programme not only received great attention from both academics and audiences, but also showed that the new generation of the Taiwanese diary filmmakers is rising.

In this chapter, I have located the origin of the diary film in 1960s American avant-garde film movement, and moreover, discovered its intersection with contemporary Taiwanese diary filmmaking practice. To sum up here, this chapter marks the framework of my research of the diary film in this thesis, and can be considered as the historical aspect of the diary film in the thesis. As I mentioned in Chapter One, this thesis focuses on both the historical development and the aesthetical aspect of the diary film. Therefore, in the following chapters, I will start the discussion of the diary film in terms of its voice-over narration (in Chapter Three) and its unique temporal structure (in Chapter Four) by close reading of the diary film texts from the North America as case studies.

Chapter 3 – the Voice-Over in the Diary Film

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the diary film is a mode of personal and reflective filmmaking. The notion of author (the diarist) and how the subjective voice can be expressed become the essential issues in the diary film. Current studies of the diary film and the first person cinema seem to agree on the function of the voice-over as a most common approach in terms of expressing the subjective voice of the author.[1] However, in my opinion, the notion of the voice-over in the diary film should not be taken for granted. On the contrary, it should be treated with special attention. In this chapter, I will examine the use of the voice-over from two diary films, and moreover, I will propose a new way of treating the voice-over in the diary film.

3.1 Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)*[2]

3.1.1 The Voice-Over in the Diary Film

In his article 'Film Diary/Diary Film: Practice and Product in *Walden*', David E. James considers Mekas's *Diaries, Notes and Sketches*[3] as 'the first of the films in the mature mode, it is the place where the film diary was first edited into a diary film'.[4] As an archetype of its kind, *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* shows, both in form and in content, how diary film footage can be transformed into a work of art. This transformation – the way in which the film diary is edited into a diary film – refers to the process of editing. By acknowledging the achievement of Mekas's *Diaries, Notes and Sketches,* James also points out the importance of editing in the diary film. However, it should be noted that editing in the diary film is different from editing in the conventional feature film tradition. As I

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[1] See Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, p.141; Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, p.277; and Rascaroli, 'The Essay Film: Problems, Definitions, Textual Commitments', *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Fall, 2008), p.39.
[2] *(nostalgia)*, *Treasures IV: American Avant-Garde Film 1947-1986.* [experimental/diary film, DVD] Dir. Hollis Frampton. USA, 1971, 36mins. [National Film Preservation Foundation, NATD4737DVD, 2009].
[3] Also known as *Walden.* In my thesis, however, I will use *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* as the title of the film for it resonates more with the central topic of my discussion.
[4] James, *To Free the Cinema*, p.147.

mentioned in Chapter Two, the diary film does not impose ideas on its spectators, it simply shares.[5] It is the same in relation to the editing process in the diary film. During the editing in the diary film, intentionality is reduced to a minimum. The intention lies not on creating a montage effect, but in selecting, eliminating, and connecting various sequences. When talking about the editing in *Diaries, Notes and Sketches,* Mekas has more than once emphasized that the editing is done in the camera when filming and the footage presented is exactly as it was filmed.[6] If, as Mekas claims, most of the editing is done in filming, then we might ask, in relation to James's assertion, what exactly is added during the editing process, if not the arrangements of scenes, that transforms the film diary into the diary film? In *Diaries, Notes and Sketches*, it is obvious that the primary added factor is the voice-over. Although inserted title cards also appear, it is less significant than the voice-over, for they serve the function of explanation and punctuation (to separate different sequences). The voice-over not only functions as the bridge which connects different sequences, but also reveals the presence of the author. In her article 'The Essay Film: Problem, Definition, Textual Commitments', Laura Rascaroli discusses the use of voice-over as 'the prime location of the author's subjectivity'[7] in the essay film. It is through the notion of Astruc's caméra-stylo, which considers the language as a means for artistic expression, and with Bazin's notion of vertical montage (which I will discuss later in this chapter), which highlights the intelligence of the artist and language as the immediate means of expression, where the expression of words in the film, especially the voice-over, originate. The presence of the author can be foregrounded through different cinematic techniques (such as the physical appearance of the author), but the voice-over remains 'the most simple and

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[5] Instead of establishing a conversation with the spectator, the diary filmmaker invites the spectator into his/her world. For more detail, please see Chapter Two.

[6] In the programme notes of the film screening at the Museum of Modern Art in 1970, Mekas describes his filmmaking approach as follows: 'I had to do all the structuring (editing) right there, during the shooting, in the camera'. See P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film*, p.361. Also, in the interview with Jon Lanthier, Mekas, when differentiating his filmmaking with Cinema Vérité, claims that what he does in editing is merely 'splic[ing] scenes together'. See Lanthier, 'Film and Film and Film': 'Cinema vérité was premeditated. In my case…there is no script, no notes, no premeditation. I just film and film and film. And then I splice scenes together'. http://brightlightsfilm.com/66/66mekasiv.php#.VI9MaHu0kXh [accessed 21 Nov 2014].

[7] Laura Rascaroli, 'The Essay Film', p.39.

successful way'.[8] Therefore, the use of the voice-over in the diary film, especially in Mekas's case, plays an important role in turning the film diary into the diary film. It not only reveals the presence of author, bus also adds another dimension and temporality to the diary film.

However, when analysing the image-sound relation in the diary film, a few principles that belong specifically to the diary film should be established. First of all, the diary film is not a dominant narrative cinematic form: diary film tells 'events' in a particular temporal order (mostly chronological), which are dispersed and lack coherence; and it does not tell 'a story', which has a unified theme. Diary film consists of discontinuous visual entries (which I have identified in Chapter One), photos, feelings and reflections (usually presented by voice-over or title cards). Of course, every narration, when it is being told until it is finished, has a beginning, middle and an end. This is the definition of traditional story-telling process – what a 'story' is and how it is being told. But in my opinion, in diary film, the concept of the term 'story' should *not* be understood as a traditional story-telling narration, but as an *act of narrating*. The main focus on this act in diary film should be about 'narrating' and not about 'what has been narrated'. Therefore, diary filmmaker does not tell a story, he/she collects various, fragmented events instead of developing a theme – it is never his/her intention to tell 'a story'. The diary filmmaker is like a parent documenting his/her baby learning how to walk, little step by step; sometimes he/she is like a gardener, who checks his/her gardens everyday and finds with joy the blooming of flowers. The result seems less important than the process.

Secondly, the diary film does not contain actors and characters, nor does it have a script written beforehand. The people who appear in it are from life itself, from reality, and doing what they normally do everyday. They are not 'characters', which play certain functions in

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[8] Rascaroli, 'The Essay Film', p.38. The voice-over in the essay film aims to manifest the authorial presence as well as to build up a conversation with the spectator. However, in the diary film, as Rascaroli argues, the voice-over is, besides authorial manifestation, *monological* rather than dialogical (See Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera*, p.118).

the narration in order to complete the story. They do not memorize dialogue; they say what they want to say. Thirdly, the narration of the diary film, both visual and audio, is always generated by the author him/her-self. It is the author 'I' who is narrating 'my life' through images and words (the voice-over, title cards, etc.). The narrative act is also the manifestation of authorship in the diary film (this is 'my' diary film). Finally, I use the term 'voice-over' to describe oral presentation in the diary film narrative. The voice-over does not operate according to the general classification in the narrative film, in which the voice-over often refers to the voice of a character neither heard nor seen by other 'characters'.[9] The 'voice-over' situation I am referring to in the diary film is closer to that which Mary Ann Doane describes as the voice-over commentary in the documentary in her article 'The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space' that, 'the voice-over commentary is necessarily presented as outside of that space [diegetic space]. It is its radical otherness with respect to the diegesis which endows this voice with a certain authority'.[10] It is true in the diary film as well, since in the diary film the voice-over narration is usually added during editing process – a space (and time) different from the place (and moment) of filming;[11] and it is certainly a voice of authorship. Therefore, the voice-over in the diary film is – to make it more specific – a voice of the diarist that comes *over* from a different time and space as a narrative strategy in the film.

After establishing the above four characteristics of narrative in the diary film, I try to distinguish the diary film from narrative film, and moreover, to establish a cinematic narrative analysis that belongs to the diary film only. It is difficult (and perhaps pointless)

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[9] Avrom Fleishman, *Narrated Films: Storytelling Situation in Cinema History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p.76. According to Fleishman, the arrangement of the voices in film can be made based on two characteristics: 'whether or not the voice is heard by other characters, and whether or not the human source of the voice is seen by them at or about the time it speaks'.

[10] Mary Ann Doane, 'The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space', *Yale French Studies*, No. 60, Cinema/Sound (1980), p.42.

[11] There are also examples in which the voice-over narration is added simultaneously with filming, such as George Kuchar's *Weather Diaries* series. However, one thing should be noted that Kuchar is filming with video, not film, and hence needs different attention. I will discuss the use of the voice-over in the video diary-film in Chapter Five.

to identify first person, second person, and third person narration in analysing diary film narrative, since the diary film is always narrated by the filmmaker him/her-self and signals their authorship. There is only 'I' in the narration; there are no other people. The concept of 'acousmêtre'[12] proposed by Michel Chion in *The Voice in Cinema* also faces challenges when the source of the diary film's voice-over is always confirmed and does not need to appear on screen (to be visualized). In the diary film, the spectator knows who is narrating as well as whose narration it belongs to (a pact that has been agreed before viewing). With the limitations of conventional narrative analyses, I propose that we should look at the voice-over in the diary film from the different narrative levels which are created by the voice-over that are initiated from different locations and different temporalities. In *Narrative Discourse*: *An Essay in Method*, Genette distinguishes the differences of narrative acts by 'narrative levels', in which he argues that '*any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed*' (italics in original). Genette continues, using M. de Renoncourt as an example, that the 'writing of his fictive *Mémoires* is a (literary) act carried out at a first level,…the events told in Des Grieux's [the main character] narrative, a narrative in the second degree…'[13] These narrative levels might be applicable to the diary film analysis for the following reasons: first, the image of the diary film is a two-level narrative, the first narrative is completed in the moment of filming (direct reaction to the events), and the second narrative is completed in the process of editing (a retrospection). Secondly, the voice-over of the diary film is a two-level narrative as well. It is also added to the film in the editing process and it is evoked by the images of the diary film and initiated in a form of reflection. I will, in this chapter, focus on the voice-over in the diary film and its relation to diary film images. By combing the theories and ideas from different

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[12] According to Michel Chion, the 'acousmêtre' is a sound that is heard without its cause or source being seen, a voice that is not yet visualized. For example, a person you talk to on the phone, whom you've never seen. Discussions of disembodied voice and acousmêtre see Michel Chion, *The Voice in the Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999,), pp.18-21.

[13] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), p.228.

film theorists and filmmakers who bring new perspectives into studies on audiovisual relationships, and by discussing two diary films of Hollis Frampton and Jonas Mekas, I hope to explore new possibilities in relation to voice-over in diary film in this chapter.

3.1.2 Eisenstein and Vertical Montage Theory

As cinema turned from silent to sound film in the early 1920s, it raised new challenges for earlier classic montage theory. Following the new development of sound film, Eisenstein also adjusted his theory of montage. Yet, in his opinion, 'the change from silent montage to audiovisual montage changes nothing in principle'.[14] This is because when he proposed his montage theory before the appearance of sound, he had already considered that montage elements covered 'almost the whole range of human sensory perception'. [15] Taking Leonardo Da Vinci's *The Deluge* as an example, Eisenstein elaborated on the combination and juxtaposition of montage elements in *The Deluge* that relate to sensory perceptions; this includes 'tactile, olfactory, lights and colours, auditory, mobility, and emotion'.[16] This is to say, from the very beginning, Eisenstein did not confine his montage theory to just visual perception (image). He argued that montage should and could function and be perceived by spectator in all possible ways. Even so, the invention of sound did change the cinema in 1920s. Eisenstein did not ignore this fact; he believed that a new form of montage was necessary – he called this new form of montage 'vertical montage'.[17] In 1940, Eisenstein wrote an article entitled 'Vertical Montage',[18] in this article he explained this revised theory of montage with the newly added element – sound. He uses the orchestral score as an example to elaborate the concept of vertical montage: 'There are a certain number of staves on the page, each stave being allotted to the part of one particular

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[14] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Vertical Montage', in Richard Taylor (ed.) *S. M. Eisenstein: Selected Works Volume II – Towards a Theory of Montage* (London: BFI Publishing, 1991), p.328.
[15] Eisenstein, 'Vertical Montage', p.329.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., pp.327-421.

instrument. Each part develops in a forward movement along the horizontal'.[19] Then he continues: 'No less important and decisive a factor, however, is the vertical: the musical interaction between the various elements of the orchestra in every given bar. Thus the advancing movement of the *vertical*, which permeates the entire orchestra and moves horizontally, creates the complex harmonic movement of the orchestra as a whole'.[20] This concept can be further understood with the help of the following diagram:[21] [**Figure 3-1**]
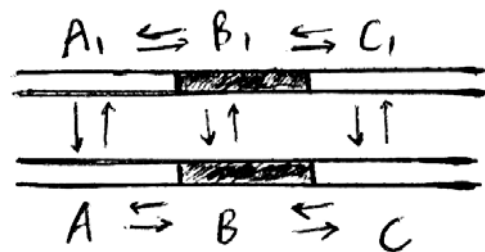
Image: A, B and C. *Music*: A1, B1 and C1.
Figure 3-1: Eisenstein's Vertical Montage

Both A (image) and A1 (sound/music) graphically correspond to each other, in order to create or form a coherent montage effect. Eisenstein's vertical montage is, in his own term, 'polyphonic',[22] which is similar to the montage structure of silent film. The added sound track gives the whole montage structure an 'upward superstructure'[23] on the vertical plane as another dimension of a film. In this structure, A and its relative A1 correspond with each other, B with B1, and so on. There are some key concepts in Eisenstein's vertical montage theory that should be given more attention: the sound track and image sequence are, first and foremost, vertically dubbed together. They are two layers of information and therefore the montage has two dimensions. And the relation between these two dimensions is not simply a matter of synchronization. From Eisenstein's point of view, there is a general

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[19] Eisenstein, 'Vertical Montage', p.330.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., p.333. This diagram is drawn based on Eisenstein's original diagram in 'Vertical Montage'.
[22] Ibid., p.330.
[23] Ibid., p.332.

misunderstanding in the synchronization of montage. Sounds recorded from the natural world (he uses a croaking frog as an example here)[24] is the basic, and lowest level of sound montage, and will eventually destroy the culture of montage.[25] What he is actually saying is that the sound montage should also, as in montage theory of the silent era, be carefully considered as artistic treatment. For Eisenstein, the highest level of vertical montage – which means it has been constructed with artistic treatment – is:

1. *Correspondent* (polyphonic and contrapuntal): Eisenstein assumes that every visual and sound element has its proper place in this structure. In this proper place, each montage element corresponds *vertically* with the other element from the other dimension which places it in its relative position, and simultaneously moves ahead *horizontally*.

2. *Harmonic* (thematic): vertical montage is not just about the synchronization of sound and image. It also seeks a cumulative and thematic progression to create a 'complex harmonic movement'[26] and a unified motif, an 'organic whole'.[27]

Eisenstein's montage theory is profound and vigorous. However, here, I focus on the discussion of the audiovisual relationship in his vertical montage theory as a starting point for providing a new perspective for the voice-over.

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[24] Eisenstein, 'Vertical Montage', p.334.
[25] Sergei Eisenstein et al., 'Statement on Sound', in Richard Taylor (ed.) *S. M. Eisenstein: Selected Works Volume I – Writings, 1922-34* (London: BFI Publishing, 1988), p.113.
[26] Eisenstein, 'Vertical Montage', p.330.
[27] Ibid., p.331.

3.1.3 Bazin and Horizontal Montage

In addition to Eisenstein, André Bazin also probes into the audiovisual relationship within film. In his 1958 article 'Bazin on Marker',[28] Bazin mentions the idea of 'horizontal montage' rather than traditional montage. He suggests that in Chris Marker's filmmaking approach in *Letter from Siberia* (1957), 'the image does not refer back to that which precedes it or to the one that follows, but laterally, to what is said about it'.[29] In the article, Bazin analyses Marker's film *Letter from Siberia* and its voice-over narration. Generally speaking, in montage theory, the image is considered as the uniquely cinematic element which constitutes the primary material of the film. Voice, however, is used as a subordinate and explanatory discourse. But in Marker's *Letter from Siberia*, this order is subverted. Near the middle of the film *Letter from Siberia*, Marker intentionally repeats the same image sequence of the street of Yakutsk town – a bus, road workers, and a passerby – three times and each time he adds a different voice-over to the sequence (26:22-27:39).[30] Here the voice-over becomes active in relation to the repeated image sequence, and each time the voice-over appears it changes the meaning of the image sequence. As Bazin describes, the montage operation of Marker in this particular sequence is 'sending three different intellectual beams to the same image and receiving their echo'.[31] It is this direct, active interference of the voice-over with the images that makes the relationship between voice-over and the image dialectical – a process of sending and receiving an echo. Moreover, Bazin suggests that the primary cinematic element in *Letter from Siberia* is 'Marker's intelligence, that its immediate means of expression is language, and that the image only intervenes in the third position'.[32] Bazin calls this new concept 'horizontal

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[28] André Bazin, 'Bazin on Marker', *Film Comment*, July/Aug 2003, pp.44-45. The article was first published in *France Observateur*, 30 October 1958.

[29] Ibid., p.44.

[30] *Letter from Siberia*. [documentary/experimental film, DVD] Dir. Chris Marker. FR, 1957, 67mins. [TAMASA, EDV 2115, 2011].

[31] Peter Von Bagh, '*Lettre de Sibérie*', *Il Cinema Ritrovato Festival Bologna Festival Catalogue.* Bologna, 2013. http://www.cinetecadibologna.it/evp_lettere_marker/programmazione/app_5025/from_2013-07-02/h_1645 [accessed 3 December 2014].

[32] Bazin, 'Bazin on Marker', p.44.

montage', as 'opposed to traditional montage that plays with the sense of duration through the relationship of shot to shot'.[33] Bazin's horizontal montage is obscure and incomplete (the whole concept was explained in one paragraph only), yet it is obvious that by praising Marker's intelligence Bazin is actually elevating the importance of the author in the filmmaking process. The sending-receiving of intellectual beams is very similar to Mekas's acting-responding mode, and it is in this sense that the 'intelligence' can be understood. Moreover, it is possible that what Bazin means by 'horizontal' is actually the *same* as Eisenstein's 'vertical' montage. Bazin as a viewer and Eisenstein as an editor, had different physical interaction with the filmstrip. In 'Montage as Resonance: Chris Marker and the Dialectical Image', Daniel Fairfax states that '[a]s a filmmaker, Eisenstein would largely experience the film-strip in a horizontal fashion, when working with it on the editing table; by contrast, Bazin, as a film viewer and critic, would experience it vertically…as it passed through the projector during a screening'.[34] Therefore, Bazin's horizontal montage is the relationship between image track and sound track (as Eisenstein's A →A1 relation) *as well* [**Figure 3-2**].
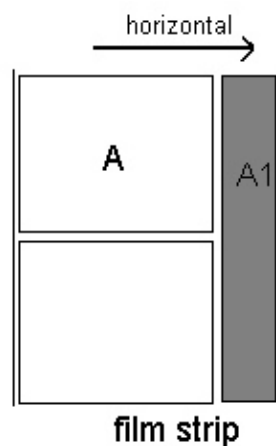
(A: image; A1: sound)

Figure 3-2: Bazin's Horizontal Montage

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[33] Bazin, 'Bazin on Marker', p.44.

[34] Daniel Fairfax, 'Montage as Resonance: Chris Marker and the Dialectical Image', *Senses of Cinema*, Issue 64, September 2012. http://sensesofcinema.com/2012/feature-articles/montage-as-resonance-chris-marker-and-the-dialectical-image/ [accessed 3 September 2015].

However, Bazin does not further explain in the article the concept of horizontal montage; even so, I believe that what Bazin does is more about the elevation of the position of the author and language (verbal commentary) rather than constructing a set-form of montage. Bazin rearranges the hierarchy between sound and image in cinema, and adds 'intelligence' and considers it as the 'immediate means of expression'. The expression of intelligence is of course from Marker, as he arranges and manipulates the voice-over, the order of images, and the dialectical relations between the two tracks. By elevating the position of language, Bazin also affirms the importance of the filmmaker as a creative individual who is able to perform such artistic treatment on his/her film. In Bazin's horizontal montage, the importance of image is demoted to third place (after intelligence and voice). Image is no longer a dominant element, but refers primarily to what is said (by the voice).

Both Eisenstein and Bazin emphasize the importance of the sound track, and that the sound should not be a subordinate element to image. Eisenstein considers sound as an equivalent element to image in audiovisual montage in the film. They both interact with each other to create the harmony. Bazin, on the other hand, elevates the importance of (authorial) voice in montage, to highlight the input and the significance of the filmmaker. Both of them overturned the hierarchy between sound and image in conventional montage theory, and at the same time, foreshadowing the potential audiovisual relationship for the diary film.

3.1.4 Jonas Mekas and Spontaneity

In my interview with Jonas Mekas, he has some problems with the idea that people categorized his voice in the sound track as 'voice-over'. He states that 'I don't know if I would call it voice-over. It's just part of film. It's the same function as images, which is not

a voice-over; it's just another element. Voice-over is like you make comments about the images that you see. I don't make comments about the images. I add another level of content. So it's not a comment, not a voice-over. You could say that [it's] image-over…sometimes the sound is more important, sometimes images. Images illustrate the sound'.[35] From Mekas's description, some key issues can be drawn. First, Mekas's statement somehow resonates with Eisenstein's vertical montage theory and Genette's narrative level ('I add another level of content'), in which different levels of montage elements (sound and image) should be treated equally and can interact with each other. As Mekas argues, sometimes the sound is more important, sometimes images'. The relationship between sound and image changes randomly without parameters. Second, the spontaneous arrangement between different levels is also highlighted in the making of the diary film. Here, the spontaneity Mekas is referring to comes from literature (Wordsworth, Emerson,[36] and Jack Kerouac[37]), painting,[38] Jazz music,[39] and cinema,[40] which emphasizes the interaction with reality in the process of filming.

 Mekas intentionally reverses the relationship between the voice-over and the image and yet his reversed, spontaneous, and random manipulation with audiovisual elements

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[35] Jonas Mekas, Interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 14 December 2012 (unpublished material).

[36] In Dardess's discussion, Wordsworth considers poetry as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'; whereas Emerson in his 1836 essay 'Nature' considers the writing, the imagery, as 'the blending of experience with the present action of the mind'. See George Dardess, 'The Logic of Spontaneity: A Reconsideration of Kerouac's "Spontaneous Prose Method"', *boundary 2*, Vol. 3, No. 3, The Oral Impulse in Contemporary American Poetry (Spring, 1975), p.730.

[37] Jack Kerouac's spontaneous prose method (based on the metaphor of 'sketching') is an 'active engagement with the object, person, or place sketched'. Dardess, 'The Logic of Spontaneity', p.733.

[38] Picasso's spontaneous painting was captured by Henri-Georges Clouzot in his film, *The Mystery of Picasso* (1956). The film documented the process of Picasso 'discover[ing] some new ideas, ideas that have emerged from his interaction with the canvas'. Keith R. Sawyer, 'Improvisation and the Creative Process: Dewey, Collingwood, and the Aesthetics of Spontaneity', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 58, No. 2, Improvisation in the Arts (Spring, 2000), p.149.

[39] Sawyer explains the relationship between the spontaneity and the jazz music that in jazz music, 'the performance that results emerges from the musical interactions among multiple band members; there is no director to guide the performance, and no script for the musicians to follow'. Sawyer, 'Improvisation and the Creative Process', p.150.

[40] The cinema here refers to the notion of 'Spontaneous Cinema' which Jonas Mekas proposed in his article 'New York Letter: Towards a Spontaneous Cinema' in 1959. Mekas praises these filmmakers for their 'use of actual locations and direct lighting; their disrespect for plots and written scripts; their use of improvisation' (Mekas, 'New York Letter', p.119). For more discussion of spontaneous cinema, please see the 'the Reflective Mode' section in Chapter Two.

produces a critical question in relation to the part voice-over plays in the diary film. In the diary film, does the spectator comprehend the film text from watching the image, or from hearing the voice-over? How does the narration operate in diary film? And where is the narration? Is it in the images or in the voice-over? In the following paragraphs I will discuss two diary films, Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)* (1971) and Jonas Mekas's *The Song of Avila* (2006), as examples to examine the different strategies involving the use of voice-over in diary film.

3.1.5 Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)*: Visual and Audio Levels

In my interview with the French diary filmmaker Joseph Morder, he mentions a special mode of his diary film-making approach: 'When I finish this interview and go home tonight, I see the moon in the sky through my window, I might grab my camera and film the moon; but in fact, I am not filming the moon, the moon is just a metaphor, a substitution. What I am actually saying [trying to say] is a reflection on this afternoon's interview with you, my feelings'.[41] Morder points out an interesting phenomenon in the diary film, which is that the image in the diary film is also a product of the dialectical process between the filmmaker and the filmed image. The 'moon' functions as a trigger for evoking the past, which exists only in the filmmaker's mind (Bazin's notion of 'intelligence'), and adds another level to the diary film. Hence, the diary film has at least three levels of content: the first level is the intelligence of the filmmaker, which is made evident through visual or audio forms of expression; the second level is the image. It is the metaphor and reflection of the past, and the expression and embodiment of filmmaker's interior thoughts; the third level is the voice-over, which is the product of the dialectical exchange with images.

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[41] Joseph Morder, Interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 4 July 2013 (unpublished material).

The multilevel narrative situation is obvious in Frampton's *(nostalgia)*. It is a film constructed from thirteen still photographs, written diary texts and voice-over narrations. Each still photograph was taken by Frampton himself, except the last one ('The Texas Fruit-grower'). These photographs were taken from 1959 to 1966, presented in chronological order as visual diary entries. They include:

1. The portraits of Frampton himself (I6)[42] and friends: Carl Andre (I5), Frank Stella (I9) and James Rosenquist (I10).
2. Photographs of Frampton's art creations: *A Cast of Thousands* (I8), Two Toilets (I12).
3. Snapshots from life and from work: Cabinet maker's window (I7), a Bank's window (I11), Spaghetti (I13), and Michael Snow (I14).
4. A photo of a grapefruit grower from newspaper (I16).

Frampton arranges them in chronological order and puts them on a hotplate, and lets them slowly be burnt by the heat from the plate. This is the arrangement of image track in *(nostalgia)*. On the sound track, Frampton takes a special structure to describe each photograph with his written texts. Each part of the voice-over (there are in total thirteen descriptive voice-overs [V4-V16], two dialogue voice-overs [V1 and V3], and one voice-over statement [V2])[43] describe details of a photograph: When was it taken? Where was it taken? Who is in it? And why was it taken? For example, in V4 the voice-over says: 'This is the first photograph I ever made with direct intention of making art. I had bought myself a camera for Christmas in 1958. One day early in January of 1959, I photographed several drawings by Carl Andre, with whom I shared a cheap apartment on Mulberry Street'. Also in V6 the voice-over says: 'This photograph was made in September of 1960. The window is that of a dusty cabinetmaker's shop, on the west side of West Broadway, somewhere between Spring Street and West Houston'. These two examples show that the voice-over

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[42] Capital 'I' stands for image track, 'V' for the voice-over in the sound track. The number stands for the shot in the film. For example, 'I6' refers to the image in shot 6; 'V6' refers to the voice-over narration in shot 6. For details, please see the storyboard of *(nostalgia)* [**Table 4**] at the end of this chapter (p.144).

[43] For the complete transcript of the voice-over narration, please see the storyboard of *(nostalgia)* [**Table 4**] at the end of this chapter (p.144).

functions as providing information about the photograph, including what the photograph is about, who/what is in the photograph, and when/why the photograph is taken. To put it in other words, these voice-overs are based on Frampton's written diaristic texts, while the images (the photographs) are Frampton's visual diary. The thirteen descriptive voice-overs in *(nostalgia)* are basically presented in recital manner. Some words in these voice-overs are worthy of mention; they serve not only to describe what the photograph is about, but also reflect Frampton's trifling matters of everyday life. In the voice-over narration in V4, the voice tells us that 'I had bought myself a camera for Christmas in 1958' (a flashback narration, and not-related to the photograph itself), and depicts the friendship between Frampton and Carl: 'with whom I shared a cheap apartment on Mulberry Street' (not the topic/motif of the photograph). Also in V7, 'In 1961, for six or eight months, I lived in a borrowed loft on Bond Street, near the Bowery…' (a flashback and a digression, again not related to the content of the photograph), and '…the girl, who had never said a dozen words to me, laughed, and then laughed outrageously, and then, outrageously, kissed me' (the girl is not shown in the photograph). A crucial example is in V12, when the voice-over describes the making of a photographic document of spaghetti: 'Later in the fall of 1964, a painter friend asked me to make a photographic document of spaghetti, an image that he wanted to incorporate into a work of his own…Then, instead of disposing of the spaghetti, I left it there, and made one photograph *every day*. This was the eighteenth such photograph' (my italics). After finishing what his friend had asked, Frampton left the spaghetti there and made a photograph 'every day', as if he is writing a diary, with the camera.

This is what makes *(nostalgia)* a diary film, with different levels of visual and written diary entries. The detailed descriptions of Frampton's life (based on written entries and expressed in voice-overs) are at the same time continuous (writing/photographing as a habit from 1959 to 1966) and discontinuous (each of these thirteen descriptions is self-

contained as a single, independent narrative). As for the visual presentation of thirteen photographs, each photograph operates as a condensed memory of the past. Acting in the same way as the voice-over descriptions, they are continuous (acts of constant photographing for years) and discontinuous (each photograph corresponds only with a specific voice-over narration; they do not provide a seamless or coherent narration. Also, between each photograph there is a black screen separating them). Therefore, *(nostalgia)* is a diary film that consists of different levels of diaristic narrations (the narration of the photographs and the voice-over narration) and also different diaristic materials (written diaristic texts in voice-overs and visual entries in photographs).

3.1.6 The identification of Author

When defining what diary film is, the primary principle would be to confirm that the narrator and the diary author are indeed the same person. This principle is nearly overthrown in *(nostalgia)* when it is known that the voice-over narrator is actually Frampton's good friend Michael Snow. Nevertheless, I will argue that *(nostalgia)* is still, without violating the primary principle of diary film, a diary film for the following reasons: while the voice-over is performed by Michael Snow, he functions only as a proxy for Frampton. The man who wrote down these words is still Frampton himself. This argument can be proved from details in the texts of voice-over narration. In V13, the content of the voice-over is about Frampton and Snow working together in 1965. The voice says: 'This photograph was made in *Michael Snow's studio*, sometime in 1965…If you look closely, you can see *Michael Snow himself*, on the left, by transmission, and *my camera*, on the right, by reflection' (my italics).

If we were to try and suggest that Snow is the narrator/author, there are mistakes in the use of pronouns in this narrative. If this is Snow's diary, he would not use 'Michael

Snow's studio' and 'Michael Snow himself' to address himself instead of using third person pronoun. He would use 'my studio' and 'me'. Therefore, the 'I' in this narrative is clearly Frampton himself, who made the photograph. But why did he ask Snow to read his diary for him? The answer is unknown. The other proof of my argument is that throughout these thirteen voice-over narrations, the sound of page turning appears seven times (V5 [04:45], V9 [14:56], V10 [17:47], V12 [22:53], V13 [26:01], V15 [31:01], and V16 [33:33]). This suggests that Snow is reading word by word from the manuscript written by Frampton. Several times he even pauses or mispronounces words. The manuscript is not written by Snow, he doesn't appear to be familiar with the words. He is merely reading on behalf of Frampton; Frampton is the real author and the narrator (whose position is replaced by a proxy) of this diary film. An example can be seen and heard in the fifth shot of the film, where the voice-over tells the story of the self-portrait photograph of Frampton himself (in I6). This is where the Joseph Morder's 'moon' formula comes in: something evokes the past of the filmmaker, something that is not there. In Frampton's approach, he reverses Morder's formula. When Morder films something that evokes the past, Frampton writes down the past evoked by the photograph ('I made this photograph on March 11, 1959…' and then a flashback in the invoked past: 'I sent that one [photograph] to a very pretty and sensible girl on the occasion of a vernal equinox…'). The multilevel narratives and temporalities may complicate the situation, but the real author of the diary, which is Frampton, remains unshakable.

3.1.7 Asynchronization and Delay of Audiovisual Montage in *(nostalgia)*

After briefly elaborating the diaristic characteristics of *(nostalgia)* and discussing separately the contents of sound track and image track in the film, I shall now focus on the concept of delay in image in *(nostalgia)*. In the film, Frampton deliberately makes the voice-over heard in advance, and the described photograph appears only *after* the voice-

over finishes. This arrangement creates a unique structure, which emphasizes the function of the voice-over. Here, I would like to borrow Eisenstein's diagram of vertical montage to illustrate this particular audiovisual structure in *(nostalgia)* [**Figure 3-3**]:
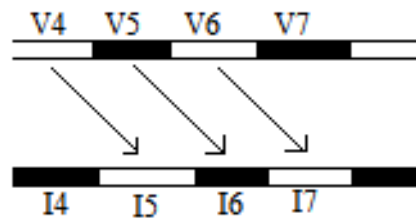
Figure 3-3: The Audiovisual Montage Structure in *(nostalgia)*

As the diagram shows, the spectator first hears the description of a photograph (V4), and then sees the photograph (I5) itself after the voice-over finishes and moves to the next shot. In the viewing experience, the spectator realizes very quickly that in this asynchronized structure, the voice-over in the fourth shot (V4: 'This is the first photograph I ever made with the direct intention of making art') is not describing the photograph in the fourth shot (I4: the photograph of a dark room) [**Figure 3-4**], but the photograph that will appear in the next shot (I5, 'Portrait of Carl Andre').
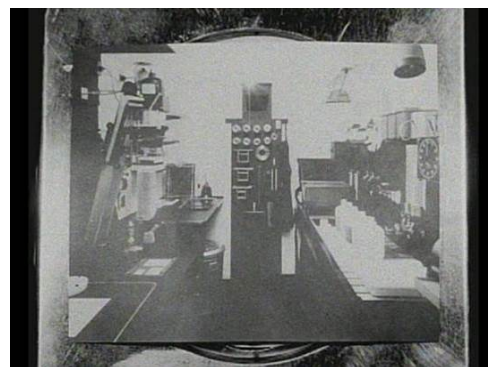
Figure 3-4: I4, Photograph of a Dark Room in the Fourth Shot of *(nostalgia)* (00:34-03:15)

In the photograph (I4), the spectator does not see the drawings ('I photographed several drawings by Carl Andre'), nor does he/she see the lovely picture frame that North gave to Carl ('…a handsome small picture frame that had been given him years or so before by a girl named North') or the annoying metronome ('How the metronome entered the scheme,

I don't recall, but it must have been deliberately'). None of the things mentioned above appears in the dark room photograph (I4). It is not until the next shot (the fifth shot) that the I5 ('Portrait of Carl Andre') [**Figure 3-5**] photograph shows things mentioned earlier in V4.
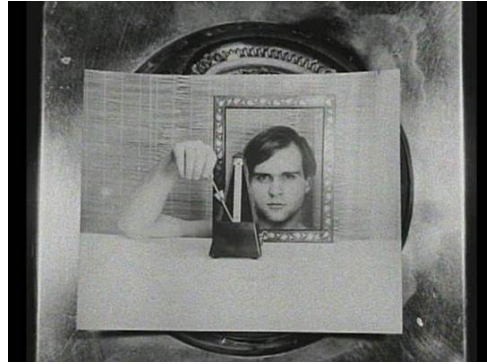
Figure 3-5: I5, Portrait of Carl Andre in the Fifth Shot of *(nostalgia)* **(03:16-05:59)**

However, just as I5 photograph appears and the spectator finally recognizes the things V4 mentions, the narration again moves ahead: V5 voice-over starts to describe the next photograph (I6). Hence, in the film *(nostalgia)*, the image (photograph) is always lagging behind the voice-over narration and always in delay. This proves what Joseph Morder says, that the image in diary film is always telling 'something else'. In the case of *(nostalgia)*, both the voice-over and the image are telling something else. The voice-over describes the soon-to-appear image, and the image illustrates the has-just-passed voice-over. The two, throughout the film, never meet; they are always incomplete – a puzzle that misses a piece. In this audiovisual structure, two key points are highlighted: the retrospection and the gap between the past and the present. In the structure, the image is always chasing the voice-over, but the direction is backwards, from present to the past. The two will never meet, for there is always a temporal gap between them. The structure and the tension within it seem to be the drive that initiates the desire to write a diary and pushes it further – a gesture that by keeping on writing, the diary tries to remember the past, and avoid forgetting, in order to eliminate the gap between the past and the present. However, for the diary film, the situation is more complex. The retrospection in the diary film is multilevel, for the post-

production, the editing, adds another temporal level to the film. The images become memories once produced; and when the diary filmmaker edits these images, he/she may revisit the past through time, and by adding voice-over to images, he/she over-writes his/her visual diary and hence adds another level of temporality. By delaying the image in *(nostalgia)*, Frampton intentionally enhances the gap between the two dimensions – the sound track and the image track – with asynchronization montage. It not only makes the spectator aware of the multilevel structure of the diary from different media, but also asks the question of where does the narration (or the meaning) in the diary film lie? Is it in the voice-over or in the image? Which is explaining which? I suggest, in order to answer these questions, to focus on the parentheses in the film title *(nostalgia)*.

3.1.8 Parenthetical Structure of the Voice-Over and the Images in *(nostalgia)*

In *(nostalgia)*, Frampton arranges the photograph in the centre of the hotplate. Before the photograph turns into carbon, the composition of the frame looks just like a photograph within parenthesis [**Figure 3-6**].

Figure 3-6:
I6, Portrait of Hollis Frampton in the Sixth Shot of *(nostalgia)* **(06:00-08:42)**

This pictorial composition, where an image is enclosed in parentheses, is a suggestion of the audiovisual relation in *(nostalgia)*. It opens up a different perspective of looking at the

voice-over in *(nostalgia)* and is perhaps applicable to many other diary films. I shall call this audiovisual structure 'parenthetical structure'.

Parentheses as a literary device in literature is often understood and discussed from the following perspectives:

1. In Greek, 'parenthesis' means 'to place in beside'. [44] What is enclosed in parentheses is placed beside a text, serving as adjunct.
2. It is secondary and subordinate to the principal text, but also an 'independent textual segment'.[45]
3. It functions as an explanatory as well as an independent narrative.
4. The insertion of a parenthesis sequence structure constitutes an 'isolated block within the narrative'.[46]

From a narrative point of view, a parenthesis segment cannot exist on its own. It is indeed placed in a subordinate position (next to the principal segment). The parenthesis segment exists and means something only when the preceding segment exists before it. However, the fact that the parentheses segment cannot exist on its own does not necessarily mean that it is irrelevant to the narration. In fact, I would argue that the relation between the principal segment and segment in parentheses are associative and interdependent. Separately they can be seen as two different and independent sentences, but it is when they join together that the two segments become dialectical, as the montage of sound and image in film. The dialectical process between principal segment and parentheses segment function as follows: the parentheses segment provides additional remarks to what the main segment does not tell, and more importantly, it makes additional remarks to what the main segment *could not* tell.

In the film *(nostalgia)*, the principal segment does indeed belong to the voice-over. It is not only because of Frampton's arrangement of the photographs in the centre of the

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[44] Robert Grant Williams, 'Reading the Parenthesis', *SubStance*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Issue 70 (1993), p.60.
[45] Susan Suleiman, 'The Parenthetical Function in *A la recherche du temps perdu*', *PMLA*, Vol. 92, No. 3 (May, 1977), p.460.
[46] Ibid.

hotplate, as parentheses segments, but also because of the misaligned structure of sound track and image track. As in this structure when the voice-over in the fifth shot (V5) appears, it does not create meanings with the image (I5). We can say that in the fifth shot, the voice-over is the principal segment, and the image in the fifth shot (I5) is temporarily placed in parentheses. It is not until the photograph in the sixth shot (I6) appears that the I6 starts to interact with V5 and make additional remarks to V5 so that the meaning of V5 becomes clear. The principal segment (voice-over) tells the spectator what is occurring. However, it is the parentheses segment (photograph) that shows the spectator all the details: the contour of Carl's face (I5), how small the picture frame from North is (I5), what Frampton looks like when he was twenty three years old (I6), how the numbers are arranged in *A Cast of Thousands* (I8), how the spaghetti is arranged (I13) and how Larry reclines on his bed (I15) [**Figure 3-7**]. For the words (the principal segments) could not show details, they only describe; on the contrary, the image (the parentheses segments) could not describe events, instead it shows, directly. This is the relation between the voice-over and the image in *(nostalgia)* and the way the parenthetical structure functions.
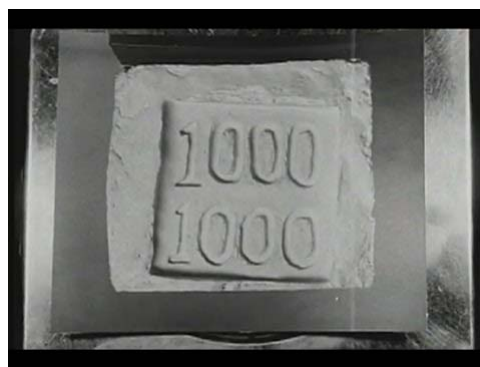
I8: *A Cast of Thousands* (11:27-14:08)
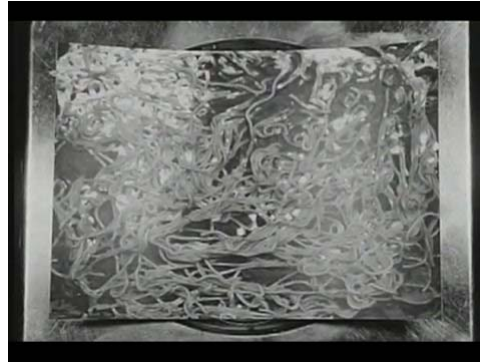
I13: Spaghetti (24:59-27:41)
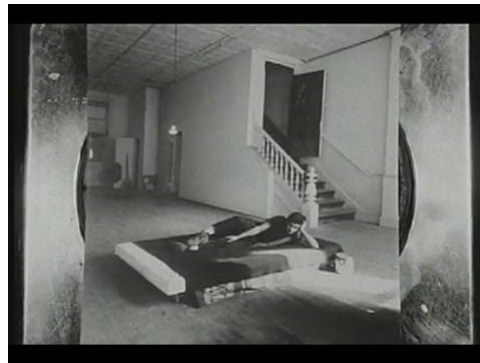
I15: Larry Poons reclines on bed (30:26-33:09)
Figure 3-7: Stills from *(nostalgia)*

3.1.9 Conclusion

Using parentheses structure as an analytical device in discussing the audiovisual relationship in *(nostalgia)*, I aim to establish a new form of analytic method in relation to the voice-over in the diary film. The parentheses structure of voice-over and image in *(nostalgia)* co-exist, correspond to and are inseparable from each other. One segment (voice-over) is in charge of what the other segment (image) could not accomplish. They are both indispensable in the audiovisual structure of the diary film.

However, it is still worth nothing that in *(nostalgia)*, Frampton intentionally misaligns the sound track and the image track to emphasize the following characteristics: the narrative level and the retrospection in the diary film. In the narrative level, although in the film the voice-over appears ahead of the corresponding photograph (here, the voice-over is the first narrative, according to Genette's narrative discourse, and the photograph belongs

to the second narrative level), the voice-over is actually added later in the editing process after the photograph had been taken. The photograph as a trigger provokes the act of writing the written diary entry, which is then expressed in the voice-over. Under such a situation, the photograph becomes the first narrative instead, and the written diary entry becomes the second narrative level. Frampton's deliberate manipulation of the narrative levels and the constant shifting between them can also resonate with Jonas Mekas's spontaneous approach to voice-over and image-over, in which the voice and the image constantly change its position between the first narrative and the second narrative levels. The second characteristic that has been emphasized in *(nostalgia)* is the retrospective nature in the diary film. In *(nostalgia)*, two different forms of diary – the photograph and the voice-over – are vertically engaged with each other as the film proceeds horizontally (as in Eisenstein and Marker's propositions). The vertical misalignment structure of the sound and the image in *(nostalgia)* makes the retrospection in the diary film prominent: as for the structure of the film, the photograph is retrospective in relation to the voice-over, since it appears *after* the voice-over in the following shot; and for the narrative level, the written diary entry (the voice-over) is retrospective in relation to the photograph, for it is added later during the editing process. Therefore, in *(nostalgia)*, every aspect is about retrospection of the past: the melancholy of the past that is hidden in the ashes of the photographs, in the indifferent tone of the voice-overs, in amnesia (the 'Darkroom' photo without voice-over in the fourth shot), and in absence (the taxi driver in V16 voice-over with no photograph).

3.2 The Absent Images and the Visible Voices in Jonas Mekas's *The Song of Avila*[47]

> *I arrived in Avila early that day. It was hot and I have not eaten for two days. I did not feel like eating. I wanted to be…uh…, maybe just not eat. So I was…and I walked. The whole day I walked, all to every streets of Avila, and around the town. Every street and every place was important for Santa Teresa. And…ha ha…, I picked up some flowers from the field, and I put them in Santa Teresa's church. I said 'This is from the filmmakers'.*

> *And I continued walking and walking. And then I…ha ha…, I was stood in the streets trying to decide to go to eat and not to eat. And that point a dog came from I don't know where, and began licking the dust from my shoes. And he licked all the dust from my shoes. And I felt like it was something that connected me and Santa Teresa to this little dog. It was like a… uh…I walked the streets for her. And this dust on my shoes was something that to this little dog connected, and brought us together. I walked the streets for her.*

> *In the morning I walked to the station. It was still…, the city was still sleeping. And I jumped in to the first train. And I looked back, the sun was rising.*[48]

In the first section of the voice-over chapter – analysing the structure of voice-over and the images in Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia),* I propose using the concept of a parenthetical structure as a mean of understanding the relationship between the voice-over and the image in diary film. This relationship, unlike the conventional audiovisual one in film, needs special attention for the following reasons. First, the role of the voice-over should not be considered as an enhancement of the image. In conventional audiovisual film analysis, both audio and visual need to be either in alignment, associative, or in contradiction to produce meaning through montage. In the diary film, however, the intersection of the voice-over and the image is constructed through an apparently arbitrary relationship. Second, the voice-over in the diary film is not dominated by the image, and should not be seen as occupying a supplementary role. It is worth considering the idea of 'image-over' proposed by Jonas Mekas when analysing the audiovisual relationship in the diary film, as both the voice-over and the images contribute to the process of the narrative. In *(nostalgia),*

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47 *The Song of Avila* [diary film, online] Dir. Jonas Mekas. USA, 2006, 3mins 1sec.
http://jonasmekas.com/40/film.php?film=29 [accessed 30 September 2013].
48 The voice-over text in *The Song of Avila*, narrated by Jonas Mekas.

Frampton repeatedly replaces the photograph in the brackets with voice-over narration, and then replaces it again with a new photograph. The voice-over describes what cannot be seen in the photographs, and the images show directly what cannot be heard in the voice-over. This constant changing of position of voice-over and images in the parentheses and their supplementary relationships can shed light on the analysis of the voice-over in the diary film. In this section of the voice-over chapter, I will continue discussing this particular parenthetical audiovisual structure in the diary film. First, by combining theories and discussions from linguistic, rhetoric, semantics, and literature, I will compare both positive and negative perspectives and examine how the parenthesis is used in different texts. Next, I will focus on how the notions of parenthesis turn from negative to positive; from initially being considered as surplus, subordinate, and inferior, to the re-evaluation of their role as a significant and indispensable part of the text, and most importantly, as a manifestation of authorship, the sign of the author's presence in the text, and how these shifts contribute to alternative interpretations. The insertion of the parenthesis also creates a syntactic space in the text. Borrowing Laura Rascaroli's concept of 'sonic interstices', I will look at how the voice-over in the diary film functions and relates itself to the images in the space created by parenthetical insertion. Finally, I will use Jonas Mekas's diary film – *The Song of Avila* as a case study, analysing the relationship between the voice-over and the images in this film by applying my concept of a parenthetical structure.[49]

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[49] The connection between Mekas and St. Teresa could be traced back to Mekas's mystical experience after he recovered from early childhood illness, as St. Teresa did in her early life. As Mekas mentions, 'I was very sick when I was five or six years old. I don't know what the disease was but I was close to death…Then suddenly I began seeing things. I could tell who was on the next street. When there was a car crash on the other side of the building, I would see the red of blood'. See Benn Northover, 'Another Man'(2010) http://jonasmekasfilms.com/images/anotherman-interview.pdf [accessed 22 November 2014]. Another possible connection comes from St. Teresa's writings about the experience of rapture and ecstasy. In the same interview, Mekas seems to connect to notion of ecstasy with his diary filmmaking approach: 'for me ecstasy is doing something when you don't even know what it is that you are doing…you are completely immersed in it…You are just in that moment'. However, despite the obvious religious implication in the film, the discussion in this section focuses only on the use of the voice-over in the diary film.

3.2.1 Parenthesis: Negative and Positive Perspectives

There are negative perspectives or misunderstandings regarding the use and the implications of parenthesis as early as the Renaissance. In Henry Peacham's *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577), Peacham categorizes parenthesis as a subclass under hyperbaton, and identifies it as an 'alteration by the improper placing of words or clauses'.[50] He further describes parenthesis as 'dispensable' for 'when a sence is case between the speache before it be all ended, whiche although it give some strength, yet when it is taken away, it leaveth the same speach perfect inough, thus'.[51] There are a few points worth noting from Peacham's argument. First, he considers the parenthesis as an 'improper placing of words'. This is a false impression; the parenthetical segment is not (or never) merely a rewriting or rearranging of words from the previous sentence (speech). The parenthesis and the hyperbaton are quite different concepts. The hyperbaton is the rearrangement of the existing words, and yet the words in the parentheses are not from the existing text, but often added later. Second, while Peacham thinks that the parenthesis gives some 'strength', this positive connotation (strength) is limited. The meaning of the speech remains the same with or without the parenthesis structure; it is still 'perfect inough'. The sentence exists perfectly well without the help of the parenthesis. The parenthesis, however, is just not important, not valuable, and not worth further discussion. In *The Harper Handbook to Literature* (1983), there is a different but equally critical opinion of the parenthesis. It defines parenthesis as 'a word or words included as a deviation from or addition to the primary flow of thought in a sentence or paragraph'.[52] Here, the parenthesis is presented as a *deviation* and obstacle which would cause problems for the reader, it stops the reader in the process of reading and diverts them away from the text ('the primary flow of thought'). Furthermore, there is also a concept of ranking deriving from the quotation in the *Harper Handbook*. The parenthesis does not belong to the 'primary' text, it is additional and

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[50] Williams, 'Reading the Parenthesis', p.56.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Northrop Fyre et al. (eds.), *The Harper Handbook to Literature* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), p.338.

secondary. Similar evaluation also appears in 1989 in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. One of the quotations referring to the word 'parenthesis' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* states as follows: 'You see the inconveniency of a long parenthesis; we have forgot the sense that went before'.[53] The parenthesis, not only hinders the act of reading, it also 'divides meaningful passages in two'.[54] This quotation resonates with Quintilan's attitude about the parenthesis in *Institutio Oratioria* (1921). The parenthesis 'consists in the interruption of the continuous flow of our language by the insertion of some remark'.[55] In both the *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Institutio Oratioria*, the 'textual unity' is prioritized, while the insertion of the parenthesis is a destructive act which could break off the continuity of reading and the unity of the text. From the early discussion of parenthesis, it is obvious that the parenthesis was considered as a foreigner who invades the text and damages the unity of the text, and hence, the use of parenthetical marks was restricted as often as possible.

Despite these negative views concerning the conceptual use of the parenthesis, some scholars also argue for a positive perspective. In his article 'Reading the Parenthesis', Robert Grant Williams argues that if the parenthesis, according to Peacham and Cuddon, is indeed dispensable, then 'why bother insert them at all'[56] in the first place? Williams believes that every literary device has its own purpose. This assumption then becomes the starting point of his reversion of the previous pessimistic judgment on the use of the parenthesis. The act of insertion must happen for a particular reason and it is certainly not dispensable. Williams digs out a number of views opposing the previously negative accusations: if the act of parenthetical intrusion implies the supplementary nature of the parenthetical discourse, what exactly is this supplementary nature? Do these statements, by degrading the parenthesis as supplementary, inadvertently confess that, to certain degree,

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[53] Williams, 'Reading the Parenthesis', p.59.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Robert Morrissey, 'Breaking in (Flaubert in Parentheses)', *SubStance*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Issue 56: Reading In and Around (1988), p.50.
[56] Williams, 'Reading the Parenthesis', p.58.

the text is incomplete in some way? And is it because the text does lack something, that the help of the parenthetical intrusion is needed promptly? In Williams's discussion, the parenthesis is first considered as 'an obstacle or hindrance to the primary flow of thought'.[57] Here, the 'primary flow', as Williams identifies, is the unity of the text, its organic oneness. Yet Williams's argument goes on to suggest that no text has complete unity, and every text has its defects, and furthermore, with the insertion of parenthesis, the illusory status of textual unity is destroyed. The parenthesis structure appears when the text makes the confession – the confession that within the grammatical structure, the text has difficulty fully expressing itself – and the parentheses come as a rescuer rather than an invader to complete the text.

Robert Morrissey in his article 'Breaking in (Flaubert in Parentheses)' argues that one of the functions of the parenthetical insertion (by Flaubert) is 'to lay more stress on what is not included in the text'.[58] And more importantly, 'they [parenthetical insertions] also might represent that which remains unspoken…'[59] This raises two questions. First, who do the unspoken words in the parenthetical insertions belong to? And second, why is the parentheses needed? In order to answer the first question, I would argue that the answer can be found in the *act* of insertion. In Robert Williams's 'Reading the Parenthesis', he analyzes a poem 'l(a' written by e. e. cummings in 1958. He notices that with the insertion of the parenthetical marks, it forms a boundary between words. In 'l(a', cummings separates the word 'loneliness' by inserting parenthetical marks between the first and the second letter of the word. Inside the marks there is a short sentence 'a leaf falls'. The insertion of parenthetical marks and the separation of letters thus create an 'alternative syntactic space'.[60]

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[57] Williams, 'Reading the Parenthesis', p.57.
[58] Morrissey, 'Breaking in (Flaubert in Parentheses)', p.57.
[59] Ibid., p.58.
[60] Williams, 'Reading the Parenthesis', p.64.

The poem goes like this:

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iness[61]

Obviously, cummings is using the parenthetical insertion as means of deconstruction and for aesthetic purposes. The inserted sentence 'a leaf falls' does not operate simply as a supplement, nor does it occupy a secondary position in the text. It certainly has deeper meaning which cummings wishes to express. However, my discussion here is not trying to discuss the poem, but rather the use of parenthetical insertion and its relationship to the text. Susan Suleiman in her article 'The Parenthetical Function in *A la recherche du temps perdu*' classifies the functions of parenthesis into three major categories: 'narrative, interpretive, and associative'.[62] The parenthetical insertion 'A leaf falls' is certainly a narrative, but not interpretive, since it does not explain the word 'loneliness'. Here in the poem the relationship between the text and the parenthetical insertion is produced by arbitrary association (the falling of the leaf perhaps connects to the feeling of loneliness) rather than narration and interpretation. The text (loneliness) and the parenthetical insertion (a leaf falls) together contribute to produce the third meaning that is describing neither the feeling of loneliness nor the falling of a leaf, but the intersection and the combination of

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[61] This poem can be found in George James Firmage (ed.), *E. E. Cummings: Complete Poems 1910-1962. Volume Two* (London: Granada Publishing, 1981), p.673.

[62] Suleiman, 'The Parenthetical Function in *A la recherche du temps perdu*', p.465.

the two. Furthermore, the invasion of the parenthetical insertion destroys the structure of the text, and creates a space between the text and the parenthetical insertion. When analysing the use of parenthesis in Flaubert's novels, Morrissey concludes that 'parentheses constitute an irruption into the text, which frees the encapsulated discourse from the constraints imposed by the text's established syntax and voice'.[63] And the alternative syntactic space created by the insertion transforms into a moment of freedom and of power. In cummings's use of parenthetical insertion, the conclusion that Morrissey makes might be applicable, as the insertion functions both to destroy the general meaning of words (the 'loneliness' becomes 'one' and 'ness') and as the manifestation of authorial power (the manipulation of structure and the meaning of words by cummings). Therefore, in this alternative space, where the author can freely make any intrusion, the marked discourse carries more weight on énonciation (the act of narrating) than on enoncé (the narrated text). In cummings's example, the important thing is how the sense of loneliness is expressed, not merely stating the fact 'loneliness'. Therefore, aside from dividing words, the significance of this space is that it is reserved for the author. Within the parameters the parenthetical marks provide, the author is able to speak his mind and say what is unspoken. However, by doing so, the trace of the authorial insertion is also uncovered, and the authorial power is manifested.

The second question raised by Morrissey's argument is why are the parentheses needed and why are they placed beside the text? Why can't these unfinished words, these missing sections, be used in the next sentence and paragraph? Why do they have to be placed side by side or within? Could it be said that there is certain connection between the primary text and the parenthetical insertions that makes them inseparable? To answer these questions, I'd like to use the example of word translation in dictionary to elaborate. In some cases, the parenthetical structure also functions as translation to another language. In Morrissey's

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[63] Morrissey, 'Breaking in (Flaubert in Parentheses)', p.49.

article, there is an example from Stendhal in *Le Rouge et le noir (The Red and The Black)*: "'*Loquerisne linguam latinam? (Do you speak Latin?)*'".[64] From the translation of this sentence from Latin to English, it can be said that the relationship between parenthetical structure and the text is not simply supplementary. The translation ('*Do you speak Latin?*') seems to directly translate from the text ('*Loquerisne linguam latinam?*') and clarifies the meaning of the text. Although they are two different signifiers expressing the same thing (signified), their relationship is not fixed but arbitrary (it is similar to Saussure's notion of the linguistic sign in which the link between signal and signification is arbitrary).[65] Another example can be found in the process of looking up words in dictionary. When looking up the word 'parenthesis' in dictionary, two explanations are available: 'either of two punctuation marks (or) used to enclosed textual material', and 'a message that departs from the main subject'.[66] In this example, the two translations can both explain the text, but they are at the same time not completely representing the text. The relationship between the text and its translations here is also arbitrary. Both explanations of the word 'parenthesis' explain it very well. Conversely, their relationship is also weak, since the explanation 'a message that departs from the main subject' does not necessarily indicate 'parenthesis' *only*. As in '*Do you speak Latin?*' there are many other ways to make the same statement. Therefore, between the text and the parenthetical structure, especially in the case of translation in dictionary, the parenthetical marks can switch places randomly, since the signified they refer to is the same. By the same token, if we consider the explanation 'a message that departs from the main subject' as the text, and switch the word 'parenthesis' as the translation of the text, the overall structure and meaning will still be the same. Hence, in the example of word translation, the primary text and its translation are able to function

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[64] Morrissey, 'Breaking in (Flaubert in Parentheses)', p.52. These sentences can be found in: Stendhal, *The Red and the Black: A Chronicle of the Nineteenth Century*, Catherine Slater (trans.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.181.

[65] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, Roy Harris (trans.) (Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 1986), pp.67-68.

[66] ColorDict. Version 4.2.1. Social & Mobile, Inc.

only by being placed side by side with parentheses instead of in different sentences, and supplement each other on the premise of expressing a shared purpose (signified).

3.2.2 Parenthetical Structure and Sonic Interstices

Laura Rascaroli, when analysing Robert Cambrinus's essay film *Commentary* (2009) in her article 'Sonic Interstices: Essayistic Voiceover and Spectatorial Space in Robert Cambrinus's *Commentary* (2009)', brings up the concept of 'sonic interstices'. Even though her focus is on essay film, I would like to discuss the similarities between sonic interstices and parenthetical structure in this section, and push them further to the analysis on the voice-over in diary film.

Rascaroli proposes, borrowing from Deleuze's idea of 'spacing', that the interstitiality in the essay film exists in multiple ways: it is a spacing 'between two actions, between affections, between perceptions, between two visual images, between two sound images, between the sound and the visual…'[67] She considers the interstice as a kind of 'vertigo of spacing' – meaning that by placing the voice-over in the position of the extra-diegetic, the voice-over and the meaning produced by voice-over interact with other elements in the essay film (such as the visuals, sound track, frames, enunciator and spectator) as a reciprocal imbrication. It is a space between the layering and stratification of text and the extra-textual. It is also a space 'between the text on which it (the voice-over) comments and the audience it (the voice-over) addresses'.[68] The relationship between diegetic and extra-diegetic seems familiar to the one between the primary text and the parenthetical text in the parenthetical structure. First, the voice-over is an 'extra' structure, it is as if the voice-over is bracketed by marks and placed next to or above the diegetic ('superimposed' may be a more proper word). Nevertheless, Rascaroli continues to explain that 'what the

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[67] Laure Rascaroli, 'Sonic Interstices: Essayistic Voiceover and Spectatorial Space in Robert Cambrinus's *Commentary* (2009)', *Media Fields Journal*, No. 3 (2011), p.3.
[68] Ibid., p.2 (my parentheses).

voice-over brings out, ultimately, is a series of interstices'.[69] This placing of extra-diegetic structure is analogous to the parenthetical insertion into the text: it creates a space, an interstice. What is more in the essay film interstices are also 'shaped by the speaking voice as spaces of thought, and thus as gaps that enable reflection'.[70] In the essay film, this place of thought is not only a place for the author to highlight his/her authority (by addressing the voice through different means such as the quality of the voice, the way of expressing the voice, the accent, and the personal viewpoint, etc.), but also a space for direct communication and negotiation to take place between the author and spectator. As in the essay film, the 'spectator may establish a relationship with the speaking subject and negotiate between the superimposed commentary and the images that are commented upon'.[71] The essay film invites spectators to enter into a dialogical situation with the enunciator, to 'follow his/her reasoning, and to respond by actively participating in the construction of meaning'.[72] However, the quality of communication and negotiation belongs to the essay film, not to the diary film. The diary film spectator is implied rather than targeted. As mentioned in the previous chapters, some diary films are only made for the sake of the filmmaker him/her-self. The diary film does not invite the spectator to 'actively' participate the production of meaning. It only shares. The diary film does not try to converse with the spectator; Mekas's reflective mode of filming is a conversation between the filmmaker and the object filmed, not with the spectator. In my opinion, however, the sonic interstices, the parenthetical structure and the audiovisual relationships in the diary film have something in common and can resonate with each other, especially from the perspective of 'space', which I will discuss next.

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[69] Rascaroli, 'Sonic Interstices', p.9.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., p.2.
[72] Ibid.

3.2.3 The Missing Images and the Unspoken Words in *The Song of Avila*

The Song of Avila was completed in 2006 by Jonas Mekas. The film depicts a day Mekas spent in the town Avila on 22 July 1967 in Spain.[73] The images were shot during that day in Avila. As always, he carried his camera everywhere and filmed whatever he could. Nevertheless, the film was not completed until 2006, when Mekas decided to initiate a new internet diary film project.[74] He started to search for footage in his archive and found the 1967 footage taken in Avila. The basic structure of the film remains the same, there is no big alteration, except adding the opening title 'THE SONG OF AVILA' and the closing title 'Jonas Mekas © 2006' and the insertion of the voice-over. The film proceeds chronologically as the way the images were shot. The image track can be divided into three sections: the arriving at the town of Avila (00:16-00:20), the people and things in Avila (00:21-02:40) and leaving the town of Avila (02:41-02:44). The narration of the film starts from the train approaching the town, followed by the observations of the people and the landscape of the town, and finally ends with the train's departure. Mekas spent about twenty-four hours in Avila, and the images are highly condensed into less than three minutes. In my interview with him, I asked him why didn't he film the dog he mentions in the voice-over? Mekas says 'No, I did not film the dog. I stayed there at least twenty-four hours, and I filmed only two minutes. I filmed only two minutes of footage, and you see it all. I did not cut out anything. So it means that I omitted twenty-three hours and fifty-eight minutes. So many thing are missing, not only the dog'.[75] That the dog is mentioned in the voice-over but absent in the images brings up the question of parenthetical structure.

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[73] Jonas Mekas explains the purpose of this trip on his official website: 'This is in Timothy Leary's place. In 1966 I came up upon a book of Meher Baba, the Indian guru/scientist, in which he said that there are three great holy places in Europe: Avila, Assisi, and Fatima. In 1967, I decided to visit Avila where I had an enlightening experience. This is a filmed record of my visit to Avila, with my voice telling how I felt there and what happened (especially with the little dogs)'. See http://jonasmekas.com/40/film.php?film=29 [accessed 15 August 2013].

[74] This new project is called 'The First 40': 'The cycle of FIRST FORTY I made in late 2006 as an introduction to my work for my new, Internet audience. All of them are based on my earlier films but slightly, sometimes more than slightly, changed. I consider them works complete in themselves, separate from the main body of my film work'. See http://jonasmekas.com/40/ [accessed 15 August 2013].

[75] Jonas Mekas, Interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 14 December 2012 (unpublished material).

The initiation of the new project in 2006 provides this opportunity for Mekas to fill the gaps, the omitted things, by adding voice-over to the images. The voice-over in the film can also be divided into three sections: the arrival and the offering of the flowers to Santa Teresa (00:04-01:19), the wandering in the town and the meeting with the dog (01:22-02:29), and the leaving (02:33-02:52). From the perspective of completion, the recorded voice-over in 2006 comes later and should be considered as a parenthetical structure; it is inserted into/superimposed to the images shot in 1967 (the use of the word 'insertion' would be more proper in the sense of discussing the meaning production relation between the voice-over and the images, while 'superimposition' is the physical doubling of two tracks). As a parenthetical discourse, the voice-over does act in a supplementary way to fill in the gaps between the images. These gaps are things missing in the images, but mentioned in the voice-over. They include (my italics):

1. Feelings (weather and hunger): 'It was *hot* and I have *not eaten* for two days' (00:12-00:19).
2. Offering flowers to Santa Teresa: 'I picked up some *flowers* from the field and I put them in Santa Teresa's church' (00:23-00:25).
3. The dog: 'At that point a little *dog* came from I don't know where, and began *licking* the *dust* from my *shoes*' (01:42-01:52).
4. The sense of belonging: 'I felt like it was something that *connected* me and Santa Teresa to this little *dog*. It was like…uh…I walked the streets for her' (01:59-02:13).
5. The sunrise: 'I jumped into the first train, and I looked back, the *sun* was *rising*' (02:41-02:53).

Interestingly, the real narrative starting point begins from the voice-over, not from the images. It is not until the first voice-over finishes ('I arrived in Avila early that day', begins from 00:04) that the first image of the film (the traveling shot on the train, begins from 00:16, not including the opening title card) appears. In other words, the duration of the voice-over segment is longer than the image segment: the voice-over starts from 00:04 and ends in 02:52 (totally 2 minutes and 48 seconds), and the image starts from 00:16 and

ends in 02:56 (totally 2 minutes and 40 seconds). From this perspective, the parenthetical identity seems to shift from the voice-over to the images. The voice-over now occupies the primary position, and the images become supplementary – the images are enclosed by parenthetical marks. The list below shows this shift of parenthetical marks from the voice-over to the images so that what is *not* mentioned in the voice-over, but appears in the images:

1. Donkeys (00:21-00:22, 00:41-00:44, 02:11-02:12, and 02:18).
2. Boy riding a donkey (00:29-00:33 and 02:45-02:50).
3. A kid wearing white underwear (01:13-01:14).
4. Kids playing in the town square (01:25-01:54).
5. Birds flying (02:00 and 02:28-02:32 [intermittently]).
6. Tourist/Crowd (02:02-02:10 and 02:20).
7. Sunset (02:12-02:25 [intermittently]).

These events are objects appearing in the images and never mentioned in the voice-over. It seems that the images, when understood as being within parenthesis, fill the gaps in the voice-over as well. Therefore, the audiovisual relationship in *The Song of Avila* is asynchronized as Frampton's *(nostalgia)*, and yet they are not deliberately separated from each other as a narrative strategy as in *(nostalgia)*. The voice-over in *The Song of Avila* does not explain any of the images, nor do the images explain the voice-over. They are like the example of translation in dictionary given earlier in this section: the two different narratives (the voice-over and the images) narrating the same events (a day in Avila). This means that their relation is arbitrary but also supplementary; they accompany each other as the narration proceeds, filling up the gaps of the film text.

3.2.4 Parenthetical Interstices

The random switching of places of the parenthetical marks between the voice-over and the images creates fragments and interstices in the film text. I believe that the notion of

interstices in *The Song of Avila* to be more complicated than those described by Rascaroli. The interstices in *The Song of Avila* occupy a space between the diegetic and extra-diegetic, but are also prompted by the exclusively retrospective temporal structure of the diary film. Mekas looks back from the Avila in 2006 (by the voice-over, in editing) to the Avila in 1967 (the images) – there is a temporal distance between filming and editing. On another level of temporality, we encounter the different narrative duration which also create interstices – the time Mekas stayed in Avila (24 hours), the time of the voice-over narration (2 minutes and 48 seconds) and the time of the visual narration (2 minutes and 40 seconds). These three narrative times parenthesize one another, creating a threefold structure with temporal differences which not only provide spaces for spectator to freely associate images with voice-over (or voice with image-over), but also allow the author (Mekas) to travel back and forth between past and present. Unlike the essay film, the registration of authorship in the diary film is confirmed not by providing subjective commentary on images, but by the act of narrating. Authorship in the diary film is manifested through the words spoken by enunciator throughout the film. In *The Song of Avila*, Mekas's identity as an author is expressed by the first-person narration, the use of subjective pronoun 'I' in the voice-over ('I walked…, I felt…, I wanted to…'), the slow tempo of his talking, the hesitation when he speaks, and the sounds of his laughter (appearing twice in 01:00 and 01:33). I asked him in my interview with him about the voice-over recording situation in his diary films and he replied that 'I was not reading (meaning there is no scripts for the voice-over). I was talking'.[76] He is just talking, to himself. It is just as in the diary writing scene, when the diarist stays alone in his/her safe space, in his/her bedroom usually, where he/she would feel secure and protected from the outside world. This private space refers to

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[76] Jonas Mekas, Interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 14 December 2012 (unpublished material):
'**Q**: In your short film *The Song of Avila*, near the ending there's a sound of page turning. So I was thinking, did you also read something like notes or your written diaries when you recorded the narration for this film?
A: No, I was talking, I was not reading, I was talking. I don't know what that sound was' (excerpt from the interview).

both the actual room and the space inside the diary notebook where he/she can write anything he/she wants. This is the authorial power of the diary writer, the control over how the writing is going to take place and how it will be presented, rather than control over what to write (as the diarist does not necessarily control what to write, he/she may write whatever comes to mind, as a surreal-like automatic writing practice).

As for the interstices created by the parentheses, the diary film and the essay film share the same characteristic, but with some differences. There are both spaces for the spectator to work with what the film provides in order to produce meaning out of the film. In the essay film, as Rascaroli states, this is the place 'from which the spectator may establish a relationship with the speaking subject and negotiate between the superimposed commentary and the images that are commented upon'.[77] In the diary film, the situation is slightly different. The diary film does not invite the spectator to participate in the negotiation of opinions and the production of meaning. The intention is very different. In Eisenstein's montage theory, the audiovisual relationship creates certain effect *for* the spectator; in the essay film, it asks the spectator to *join* the dialogue with the author. In the diary film, the space *simply* opens up so the spectator can enter or leave *at will*, or to engage in their own parenthetical thoughts.

3.2.5 Impossible Retrospection

Regarding the way in which the voice-over and image-over function in the interstice in diary film, I'd like to continue the discussion of the parenthetical structure between the voice-over and the images in *The Song of Avila*. There are two animals in the film worth emphasizing here – the donkey we see that carries a boy and the dog that we hear of, who licks the dust from Mekas's shoes. According to the voice-over, it is this dog that makes Mekas feel 'connected' to Santa Teresa. Whereas the donkey that carries a boy, on the

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[77] Rascaroli, 'Sonic Interstices', p.2.

other hand, does not at first glance seem to be important. The question raised here is, if the donkey is not important for Mekas, then why does Mekas use the image twice (00:29-00:33 and 02:45-02:56)? [**Figure 3-8**]

<div align="center">(00:29-00:33)   (02:45-02:56)</div>

Figure 3-8: Stills from *The Song of Avila*

Its inclusion is not random. The second use of the image is obviously against the chronological development of the film, as it appears *after* Mekas leaves the town on train (02:41). If we follow the order of this narrative, it is physically impossible for Mekas to shoot and even see this image in the first place. However, one might notice that these two images are nearly identical except they are left-right reversed. So the question remains the same: why does Mekas use it twice, and reverse it from left to right? Interestingly, when the second left-right reversed image appears, the voice-over in the sound track says: 'I jumped in to the first train. And [as] I looked back, the sun was rising'. Although I have established that the interstices in the diary film are a space of arbitrary association, I believe that this is the point where Mekas tries to conduct a certain montage effect by deliberately juxtapositioning the image with his voice-over: the reversed image of the donkey with the voice-over 'and [as] I looked back' is now understood as a retrospective gesture in both cases. The spectator never sees the sun rising. The images show only sunset, not sunrise. The sunrise on that day was in Mekas's memories, in his voice-over. This retrospective gesture 'I looked back' could be seen as a metaphor on many levels: Mekas physically looks back on 22 July 1967, on the train leaving Avila and Mekas looks back in

2006 editing film footage he shot in 1967. He looks back to his memories through the train window and through the little screen on the editing table; and the images of memories distort and reverse through the glass of time, through refraction. Which image represents the actuality of that day in Avila? Which side of the road is the boy riding the donkey really moving, the left or the right? Memories blur through the distance of time, in the case of *The Song of Avila* the temporal distance is thirty-nine years (1967 and 2006). The questions may never be answered, even by Mekas himself.

3.2.6 Conclusion

By providing the parenthetical structure as an analytic tool, which was inspired by Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)*, I aim to establish a new perspective for treating the voice-over and its relationship to the narrative in the diary film. The voice-over in the diary film should be differentiated from the subjective commentary often seen in documentary and should be treated seriously and with special attention. As Roger Odin suggests that the narration of the diary film 'is in the voice-over rather than in the images',[78] the use of the voice-over in the diary film is not only the most common approach, but also a key aspect for the registration and the identification of authorial presence. Through the voice-over, the author is able to re-visit the past, and at the same time to add another narrative and temporal dimension to the diary film. The spectator, on the other hand, confirms the identity of the author by the quality of the voice, which 'describes the author's subjectivity',[79] and moreover, gathers information provided by the voice-over, in order to unlock the secrets of the diary. The principle of the parenthetically audiovisual structure follows the spontaneity of positioning between the image and the voice of the author, and result in the form of the voice-over or the image-over. The parentheses constantly oscillate between the voice and the image creating interstices of discontinuities and temporal gaps. In the case of Mekas's

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[78] Roger Odin, Interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 12 December 2012 (unpublished material).
[79] Ibid.
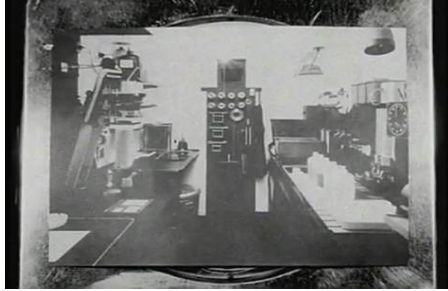
donkey, the image illustrates the voice-over as well as the voice describes the image-over, even in an asynchronized situation. And in *(nostalgia)*, Frampton uses the voice-over to extend the implication of the photograph, while at the same time the image-over verifies the content of the voice-over narration. However, ironically, the gap generated by the adding of the voice-over suggests that, in this mode[80] of the diary film, in keeping a diary, the primary psychological need is always about filling the gap which the diary filmmaker created in the first place between the image and the voice-over, and also between the past and the present. For the diary filmmaker, it is a gesture of rescuing the past from 'its proper corruption',[81] to use Bazin's term, and from forgetting.

The discussion of the use of voice-over in the diary film and the proposition of the parenthetical structure as an analytic tool in this chapter provide a novel and useful perspective in dealing with the subjective self-narration and its relationship with the diary film image. In the next chapter, I will continue to explore another key feature I've identified in Chapter One, which in its temporality.

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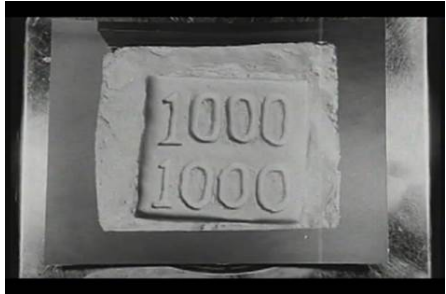
[80] The use of the voice-over in the diary film is common but it is not the only way of making diary film. In the next chapter, I will provide two different modes of the diary filmmaking regarding their different attitudes towards temporalities.
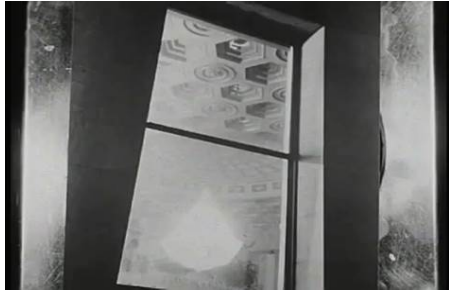
[81] Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, p.14.

Table 4: The Storyboard of *(nostalgia)*

SHOT	IMAGE TRACK	VOICE-OVER
1	Black screen	White noise. Breathing. Voice 1: 'is it alright?' Voice 2: 'It's alright.' Clearing throat. (00:09-00:16)
2	*(nostalgia)* title card	'These are recollections of a dozen of still photographs I made several years ago.' (00:17-00:24)
3	Black screen	Voice 1: 'does it sound alright?' Voice 2: 'Yes, yes, perfectly. It's fine.' (00:25-00:33)
4	Photograph of a dark room 	'This is the first photograph I ever made with the direct intention of making art. I had bought myself a camera for Christmas in 1958. One day early in January of 1959, I photographed several drawings by Carl Andre, with whom I shared a cheap apartment on Mulberry Street. One frame of the film was left over, and I suggested to Carl that he sits, or rather, squat, for a portrait. He insisted that the photograph must incorporate a handsome small picture frame that had been given him years or so before by a girl named North. How the metronome entered the scheme, I don't recall, but it must have been deliberately. The picture frame reappears in a photograph dated March 1963, but there isn't time to show you that one now. I discarded the metronome eventually, after tolerating its syncopation for quite a while. Carl Andre is twelve years older and more active than he was then. I see less of him nowadays than I should like; but then there are other people of whom I see more than I care to. I despised this photograph for several years. But I could never bring myself to destroy a negative so incriminating.' (00:34-01:58)
5	Portrait of Carl Andre 	'I made this photograph on March 11, 1959. The face is my own, or rather, it was my own. As you see, I was thoroughly pleased with myself at the time, presumably for having survived to such ripeness and wisdom, since it was my twenty-third birthday. I focused the camera, sat on a stool in front of it, and made the exposure by squeezing a rubber bulb with my right foot. There are…, are eleven more photographs on the roll of the film, all of comparable grandeur. Some of them exhibit my features in more sensitive or imposing moods. One exposure records what now looks to me like a leer. I sent that one to a very pretty and sensible girl on the occasion of a vernal

		equinox, a holiday I held in some esteem. I think I wrote her some sort of cryptic note on the back of it. I never heard from her again. Anyhow, photography had obviously caught my fancy. This photograph was made in the studio where I worked. It belonged to the wife of a friend. I daresay they are still married, but he has not been my friend for nearly ten years. We became estranged on account of an obscure mutual embarrassment that involved a third party, and three dozen eggs. I take some comfort in realizing that my entire physical body has been replaced more than once, since it made this portrait of its face. However, I understand that my central nervous system is an exception.' (03:16-05:02)
6	Portrait of Hollis Frampton himself	'This photograph was made in September of 1960. The window is that of a dusty cabinetmaker's shop, on the west side of West Broadway, somewhere between Spring Street and West Houston (clearing throat). I first photographed it more than a year earlier, as part of a series, but rejected it for reasons having to do with its tastefulness and illusion of deep space. Then, in the course of two years, I made a half-dozen more negatives. Each time, I found some reason to feel dissatisfied. The negative was too flat, or too harsh; or the framing was too tight. Once a horse was reflected in the glass, although I don't recall seeing that horse. Once, I found myself reflected, and my camera and tripod. Finally, the cabinetmaker closed up shop and moved away. I can't even remember exactly where he was anymore. But a year after that, I happened to compare the prints I made from six negatives. I was astonished! In the midst of my concern for the flaws in my method, the window itself had changed, from season to season, far more that my photographs had. I had thought my subject changeless, and my own sensibility pliable. But I was wrong about that. So I chose the one photograph that pleased me most after all, and destroyed the rest. That was years ago. Now I'm sorry. I only wish you could have seen them.' (06:00-07:40)
7	Cabinetmaker's window	'In 1961, for six or eight months, I lived in a borrowed loft on Bond Street, near the Bowery. A young painter, who lived on the floor above me, wanted to be an Old Master. He talked a great deal about gums and varnishes; he was on his way to impastos of record thickness. The spring of that year was sunny, and I spent a month photographing junk and rubble, in imitation of action painting. My neighbour saw my new work, and he was not especially

pleased. His opinion upset me, and for good reason. He lived with a woman, I believe her father was a Brazilian economist, who seemed to stay with him out…, out of inertia. She was monumentally fair and succulent and indifferent. In the warm weather, she went about nearly naked, and I would invent excuses to visit upstairs, in order to stare at her. My photographs failing as an excuse, I decided to ingratiate myself in the household by making a realistic work of art. I carved the numerals you see out of modeling clay, and the cast them into plaster. The piece is called A Cast of Thousands. The numbers are reversed in the cast, of course, but I have them reversed again in printing, to enhance their intelligibility. Anyway, I finally unveiled the piece one evening. I suppose the painter was properly horrified. But the girl, who had never said a dozen words to me, laughed, and then laughed outrageously, and then, outrageously, kissed me.' (08:45-10:27)

| 8 | 'A Cast of Thousands' (two sets of number '1000') | 'Early in 1963, Frank Stella asked me to make a portrait. He needed it for some casual business use: a show announcement, or maybe a passport. Something like that. I only recall that it needed to be done quickly. A likeness would do. I made a dozen likenesses and he chose one. His dealer paid me for the job. Most of those dozen faces seem resigned, or melancholy. This one amuses me because Frank looks so entirely self-possessed. I suppose blowing smoke rings admits of little feeling beyond that. Looking at the photograph recently, it reminded me, unaccountably, of a photograph of another artist squirting water out of his mouth, which is undoubtedly art. Blowing smoke rings seems more of a craft. Ordinarily, only opera singers make art with their mouths.' (11:27-12:28) |

| 9 | Frank Stella blows smoke rings | 'I made this photograph of James Rosenquist the first day we met. That was on Palm Sunday in 1963, when he lived in a red brick building at number 5 Coenties Slip. I went there to photograph him in his studio, for a fashion magazine. The job was a washout, but Rosenquist and I remained friends for years afterward. He rented two floors in the building. The lower floor, where he lived with his wife Mary Lou, was cool, neat and pleasant. Mary Lou was relaxed, cool, neat, very tall and extremely pleasant. Rosenquist was calm. It was a lovely, soft, quiet Sunday (Page turning). We talked for a while and then went upstairs to his workroom. I made 96 negatives in about two hours. This was the last. It is unrelated to the |

		others. Rosenquist is holding open a copy of an old magazine. A map of the United States shows the distribution of our typical songbirds. I admire this photograph for its internal geometry, the expression of its subject, its virtually perfect mapping of tone values on the grey scale. It pleases me as much as anything I did. James Rosenquist and I live far apart now, and we seldom meet, but I cannot recall one moment spent in his company that I didn't completely enjoy.' (14:10-15:47)
10	Portrait of James Rosenquist	'This photograph was made at about 3 o'clock on the morning of June 6, 1963, in Lower Manhattan. It may even have been Wall Street. It is seen from the sidewalk, through the window of a large bank that had been closed for renovation and partially demolished inside. A big crystal chandelier is draped in a dust…, dusty, translucent membrane that recalls the tents of caterpillars. Someone has written with a forefinger, on the dusty pane, the words 'I like my new name.' This seemed mysterious to me. At that time, I was much take with the photographs of Lartigue, and I wanted to make photographs as mysterious as his, without, however, attempting to comprehend his wit. All I learned was that the two were somehow bound together. Anyway my eye for mystery is defective, and so this may be the only example I'll ever produce. Nevertheless, because it is a very difficult negative to print, I find that I do so less and less often.' (16:55-18:08)
11	Window of A Closed Bank	'This photograph of two toilets was made in February of 1964, with a new view camera I had just got at that time. As you can see, it is an imitation of a painted renaissance crucifixion. The outline of the Cross is quite clear. At its foot, the closed bowl on the right represents the Blessed Virgin. On the left is St. Mary Magdalene: a bowl with its lid raised. The roll of toilet paper stands for the skull of Adam, whose sin is conventionally washed away by the blood the crucified Saviour sheds. The stair leading up to the two booths symbolize Calvary. I'm not completely certain of the iconographic significance of the light bulbs, but the haloes that surround them are more than suggestive.' (19:39-20:34)

12	Photograph of Two Toilets	'Later in the fall of 1964, a painter friend asked me to make a photographic document of spaghetti, an image that he wanted to incorporate into a work of his own. I set up my camera above an empty darkroom tray, opened a number…, number 2 can of France-American spaghetti, and poured it out. Then I stirred it around until I saw a suitable random arrangement of pasta strands and finished the photograph in short order. Then, instead of disposing of the spaghetti, I left it there, and made one photograph every day. This was the eighteenth such photograph. The spaghetti has dried without rotting. The sauce is a kind of pink varnish on the yellow strings. The entirety is covered in attractive mature colonies of mould in three colours: black, green and white. I continued the series until no further change appeared to be taking place: about two months altogether. The spaghetti was never entirely consumed, but the mould eventually disappeared.' (22:23-23:27)
13	Spaghetti	'This photograph was made in Michael Snow's studio, sometime in 1965. It was made into a poster announcing a show of his Walking Woman works at Poindexter Gallery in that year. As many as possible of the pieces are seen, by reflection or transmission, in a transparent sheet of acrylic plastic, which is itself part of a piece. The result is probably confusing, but no.., no more so than the show apparently was, since it seems to have been studiously ignored. If you look closely, you can see Michael Snow himself, on the left, by transmission, and my camera, on the right, by reflection. I recall that we worked half a day for two or three exposures. I believe that Snow was pleased with the photograph itself, as I was. But he disliked the poster intensely. He said I had chosen a typeface that looked like an invitation to a church social. I regret to say that he was right. But it was too late. There was nothing to do about it. The whole business still troubles me. I wish I could apologize to him.' (24:59-26:14)

14	Michel Snow's Studio	'This posed photograph of Larry Poons reclining on his bed was made early in 1966, for Vogue magazine. I was ecstatically happy that afternoon, for entirely personal reasons. I set up my camera quickly, made a single exposure, and left. Later on, I was sent a cheque for the photograph that I thought in…, inadequate by half. I returned it to the magazine with a letter of explanation. They sent me another cheque for the amount I had asked for: $75. Months later, the photograph was published. I was working in a colour-film laboratory at that time. My boss saw the photograph, and I nearly lost my job. I decided to stop doing this sort of thing.' (27:42-28:31)
15	Larry Poons reclines on bed	'I did not make this photograph, nor do I know who did. Nor can I recall precisely when it was made. It was printed in a newspaper, so I suppose that any patient person with an interest in this sort of thing could satisfy himself entirely as to its origins. The image is slightly indistinct. A stubby, middle-aged man wearing a baseball cap, looks back in matter-of-fact dismay or disgruntlement at the camera. It has caught him in the midst of a display of spheres, each about the size of a grapefruit, and of some nondescript light colour. He holds four of them in his cupped hands. The rest seem half-submerged in water, or else lying in something like mud. A vague, mottled mass behind the crouching man suggests foliage. I am as puzzled and mildly distressed by the sight of this photograph, as its protagonist seems to be with the spheres. They seem absolutely alien, and yet not very forbidding, after all. What does it mean? I am uncertain, but perfectly willing to offer a plausible explanation. The man is a Texas fruit-grower. His orchards lie near the Gulf of Mexico. The spheres are grapefruit. As they neared maturity, a hurricane flooded the orchard and knocked down the fruit. The man is stunned by his commercial loss, and a little resentful of the photographer who intrudes upon his attempt to assess it. On the other hand, were photography of greater antiquity, then this image might date from the time of, let us say, Pascal; and I suppose he would have understood it quite differently.' (30:26-32:26)
16	Texas Fruit-grower	'Since 1966 I have made few photographs. This has been partly through design and partly through laziness. I think I expose fewer than fifty negatives a year now. Of course I work more deliberately than I once did, and that counts for something. But I must confess that I have largely given up still photography. So it is

all the more surprising that I felt again, a few weeks ago, a vagrant urge that would have seemed familiar a few years ago: the urge to take my camera out of doors and make a photograph. It was quite simple, obtrusive need. So I obeyed it. I wandered around for hours, unsatisfied, and finally turned towards home in the afternoon. Half a block from my front door, the receding perspective of an alley caught my eye. A dark tunnel with the cross-street beyond brightly lit. As I focused and composed the image, a truck turned into the alley. The driver stopped, got out, and walked away. He left his cab door open. My composition was spoiled, but I felt a perverse impulse to make the exposure anyway. I did so, and then went home to develop my single negative. When I came to print the negative, an odd thing struck my eye. Something, standing in the cross-street and invisible to me, was reflected in a factory window, and then reflected once more in the rear-view mirror attached to the truck door. It was only a tiny detail. Since then, I have enlarged this small section of my negative enormously. The grain of the film all but…, but obliterates the features of the image. It is obscure; by any possible reckoning, it is hopelessly ambiguous. Nevertheless, what I believe I see recorded, in that speck of film, fills me with such fear, such utter dread and loathing, that I think I shall never dare to make another photograph. Here it is! Look at it! Did you see what I see?' (33:10-35:39)

Chapter 4 – Temporality in the Diary Film

Current studies of the diary film, whether they are overlapped with other first-person cinema or not, seem to agree that the dual temporality of the diary film is the key which distinguish it from other cinematic forms.[1] The retrospection in the editing process, or the 'secondary revision'[2] in Catherine Russell's term, and the notion of 'continuous present' together constitute to the entry structure of the diary film. In this chapter, a close reading from two films of Saul Levine and Jonas Mekas will be carried out, in order to excavate the richness of the temporality in the diary film.

4.1 The Diary Film in the Perceptive Mode

Generally speaking, the written diary is always composed *afterwards*. As an act of daily routine, the diarist executes the act of writing at the end of day, recounting what happened during the daytime, thereby marking both the completion of a daily entry and the ending of the day with a closure. This characteristic aspect of composing a written diary involves two different temporalities: the first is *repetition*, the routine of conducting the same activity at a certain moment of the day – writing a diary entry every night before sleep. The second temporal modality in the diary writing situation is *retrospection*. Since the writing always occurs after the event, there is always a certain temporal distance which lies between the event as it happened and the event depicted. This temporal distance, in general, is retrospective. For the diary narration is not a direct demonstration of events as they occur, but mediated by the diarist – who, as the narrator, intervenes as an intermediary between the occurred events (before the intervention of the diarist) and the events described (after the intervention of the diarist), and thus generates a temporal gap of the past and the present.

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[1] See David E. James, *To Free the Cinema*, p.147; Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera*, pp.127-129; Timothy Corrigan, *Essay Film*, p.134; and Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, 282.
[2] Russell, *Experimental Ethnography*, p.282.

4.1.1 Filming While Walking

However, aside from these two temporalities – *repetition* and *retrospection*, there is another aspect of temporality in diary writing. In his study of the diary, Philippe Lejeune discusses the concept of 'writing while walking', which was proposed by the French philosopher Pierre-Hyacinthe Azaïs (1766-1845). Lejeune describes Azaïs as a pioneer and a 'sort of genius of the personal diary'.[3] Azaïs was so fascinated with diary writing that in his 6 October entry in 1801, he wrote: 'If we had two lives, I would spend the first one writing my diary'.[4] Apparently writing his diary indoors at the end of day was not satisfactory, so he started to seek out alternative means of writing outdoors. In June 1799, his young painter friend Jean-Baptiste Jalon gave him a gift. It was a tin box that could easily hold a small stock of paper, a small writing desk, pens, a penknife, and a sheet of cardboard. He was very excited about this gift, and in his 12 June entry in 1799 he wrote: 'This briefcase will have the advantage of protecting everything it contains from the rain, so that while I am travelling, and no matter where I go, everything I need to put my feelings or observations in writing will be at my disposal. My diary is one thing that will never be interrupted'.[5] He was very contented with his 'little writing utensils' and the pleasure they brought him. He described 'the pleasure of dating the picture at the very *place* and at the *moment* when it struck my gaze…I will never go for another walk without my little box; I want to put all my pleasures to good use' (13 March 1800).[6] In September 1800, he made an improvement to his little box, from a small sheet of cardboard to an even smaller stiffer briefcase, which is 'more comfortable to use' and, as he describes in his 30 May entry in 1801, 'that is stiff but light and fits into the pocket I use for it'.[7] The improved utensils allowed Azaïs's diary to no longer record simply what he had seen or

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[3] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.122.
[4] Ibid., p.123.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., p.124 (my italics).
[7] Ibid..

thought of during the day, but to 'write *live*, from life and in the moment'.[8] In 1801, he again reduced his device to a simple board, very small and light, strapped to his walking stick, which allowed him to write outdoors more easily. An explanation of how Azaïs's device works is provided in his 14 September entry in 1800: 'I sit down, get up, lie back, and lean over; I do whatever I want, and my table never leaves its horizontal position. I walk as long as it takes to find a way to express a thought; then I stop wherever I happen to be, standing or sitting, it doesn't matter: my pen keeps going'.[9] Hence, as the tools and the methods developed, a new form of temporality in keeping his diary also took place – a temporality between standing and stopping, walking and retrospection, and between the past and the present – a temporality that allows the diarist to write while walking.

Azaïs's idea of 'writing while walking' can be analysed in two aspects: the act of writing and the content of writing. In the first aspect, the act of writing, Azaïs's fascination with writing *live* is due to the 'pleasure of dating the picture at the very place and at the moment'.[10] In other words, he seeks out instantaneity to bring himself into direct involvement with the events he depicts. As time is considered to be a fugitive phenomenon, by dating on the spot Azaïs is able to inscribe both the time and himself in his diary, and this act gives him an 'existential'[11] feeling, as 'the thrill of being plugged directly into time'.[12] It resonates with Lejeune's definition of diary keeping as a sport – something like skiing or sailing – which is 'not developed to give meaning or pleasure to others…' but 'for your own purpose'.[13] In this way, the diarist does not think of time as an object, but a thing that he/she is 'sculpting, moving along with'.[14] In the second aspect, the content of writing, Azaïs's diary writing is provided by his perception of the world rather than recollection. As the writing of the diary occurs not at the end of the day, but on the spot,

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[8] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.124..
[9] Ibid., p.125.
[10] Ibid., p.124.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., p.182.
[14] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.182..

the experience of the present can be expressed through Azaïs's mobile writing device and recorded as first-hand material. This differs from those diarists who compose their diaries after the events and before the end of the day. The writing on the spot perceives experience immediately without modification ('the primary retention',[15] to use the words of Husserl, as in the perception of the melody while listening to it), whereas writing afterwards reconstructs materials from memory of the past ('the secondary retention',[16] as in remembering a melody heard yesterday).

However, it is important to note that Azaïs's 'writing while walking' still requires a momentary stasis during which he writes down thoughts and feelings. As Azaïs describes, during walking he needs to 'stop wherever [he] happen[s] to be, standing or sitting…'[17] Hence, Azaïs's 'writing while walking' seems to be better rephrased with 'writing *and* walking' (my italics), in order to place emphasis on these two acts, the writing and the walking in the sense that they are *not* occurring simultaneously. The diarist is either walking in a field or writing down his/her feelings, he/she simply cannot do both acts at the same time (hence the removal of the word 'while'). Azaïs's diary writing takes place in a relatively mobile outdoor situation, with more freedom and different perspectives than writing indoors. However, there is still temporal distance between the lived events and the act of writing. This temporal distance is so minute that it can be ignored, for it is *almost* instantaneous and it is indeed a writing 'on the spot', before fugitive thoughts (now) turns into memories (no longer now). Therefore, the concept of mobile diary writing is more complex than writing in a stable, indoor situation. From the phenomenological perspective, it is at the same time writing from perception (the present) and writing from memory (the past); it is 'on its way', seeking instantaneity, yet lingering between two states of temporality of the past and the present. From a narrative perspective, mobile diary writing

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[15] Ben Roberts, 'Cinema as Mnemotechnics: Bernard Stiegler and the Industrialisation of Memory', *Angelaki*, 11(1, 2006), p.58. For Husserl, 'primary retention' belongs to the act of perception, whereas 'secondary retention' belongs to imagination. See Roberts, 'Cinema as Mnemotechnics', pp.57-58.
[16] Ibid., p.58.
[17] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.125.

is involved with two different tenses as well, which I'd like to borrow the notions of 'narration' and 'monstration' in cinematic narratology to elaborate. In his study of filmic narration, André Gaudreault distinguishes two modes of narration in film: narration (to 'narrate') and monstration (to 'show').[18] These two narrative modes also involve two different temporal modalities: the past time (narration of the events that have already happened) and the present time (the direct demonstration of events, as in the theatrical narrative).[19] However, in filmic narrative, the two modes are intricately combined together as a narrative process. It is the basic principle of filmic narration. In the process, the past and the present are also mixed as the narrative process unfolds, and make the temporality in film even more complicated. First, during filming, the camera functions as the monstrator and 'records a multitude of micro-narratives (the shots)',[20] and then the narrator steps in, transposing material (that is the shots) into narrative (by the means of editing). The role and the position of the camera during the process are worth noting. It firstly functions as a monstrator in the filming, recording occurred events. The temporal tense at this moment is the present tense. However, in the next step, the editing, its position is replaced by the narrator, who adds the narration in the past tense to the material. Through the intermediary look (the editing), the narrator turns the occurred events into the *narration* of the occurred events. Finally in the projecting, the same position is then replaced by the projector, and again projects the film in the present tense. It is these constantly changing of positions and the tenses that construct the whole film. Therefore, in the conclusion of his article, Gaudreault proposes that in filmic narration, the concept of the 'filmic monstrator-narrator'[21] is a better replacement for the binary distinction between the monstrator and the narrator as two separated aspects. As Gaudreault explains, the filmic monstrator-narrator is

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[18] André Gaudreault, 'Narration and Monstration in the Cinema', *Journal of Film and Video*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Spring, 1987), p.30.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., p.34.
[21] Ibid.

the 'narrative originality and specificity of the cinema',[22] which brings about the union of the two modes of narrative – the fundamental instance of the filmic narrative is composed of. Here we can see that what Azaïs wanted to achieve, to write *live*, is achieved by the camera. In Azaïs's mobile diary writing, the pen cannot demonstrate events simultaneously while walking. It requires an intermediary to perform the act of writing on paper. The dilemma for Azaïs here is that he can't write down anything unless he stops, but every stop and every intervention will turn his diary writing away from writing *live*, transposing it from present tense (the monstration) to past tense (the narration). Hence, the true 'writing while walking', which was initiated by Azaïs and yet not fully matured, can only be managed through different technological means – the camera.

The similar mechanism of the camera to the retina of the eye enables the images to be captured with the light reflected from the object in the world and fixated on the surface of the filmstrip. In this sense, the camera can be seen as the second eye, which not only perceives the images of the world, but also preserves them. The camera is aligned with vision in a different kind of filmmaking, such as the subjective shot of a character in narrative film and in personal documentary. In the diary film, the film camera replaces the pen in the writing situation and simply records what it sees simultaneously. And because of the substitution of the pen for the film camera, the minute temporal distance between writing and walking is removed, and the concept of 'writing *while* walking' is finally achieved. In the history of early cinema, pioneers put the movie camera in mobile vehicles and brought audiences not only moving images but also sights in motion.[23] These include the so-called 'phantom-rides' films such as *The Haverstraw Tunnel* (1897) and *Railway Trip over the Tay Bridge* (1897) [**Figure 4-1**], both produced by American Mutoscope

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[22] Gaudreault, 'Narration and Monstration in the Cinema', p.34.

[23] The train plays an important role in the history of cinema not only for the contribution of Lumière (the *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*, 1895), but also, in Lynn Kirby's discussion, the train is a metaphor of movement, which resonates with cinematic experience of simultaneous motion and stillness (see Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, pp.68-69). In this aspect, the relationship between cinema and the train share similarities with Azaïs's notion of mobile diary writing.

Company. There is also the famous *A Kiss in the Tunnel* (1899) by George A. Smith. This film serves as the ideal example for elaborating the relationship between monstration and narration. The film depicts, as others do, a journey of train as it goes into a tunnel. However, Smith inserts a scene of a man kissing a woman in the train cabin in the middle of the tracking shot.
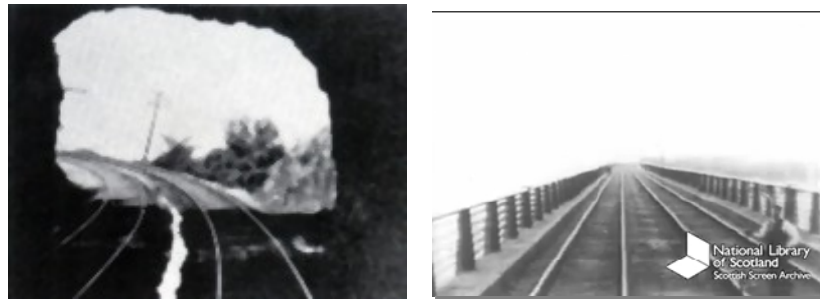
Figure 4-1: *The Haverstraw Tunnel* **(1897) &** *Railway Trip over the Tay Bridge* **(1897)**

The insertion (the editing) transforms the film from the experience of a ride (present tense) to a story, which has already happened, of a man kissing woman when the train goes into the tunnel (past tense). It is precisely the insertion of the kissing scene that drives *A Kiss in the Tunnel* away from monstration to narration [**Figure 4-2**].

Figure 4-2: Scene Insertion – A Man Kisses a Woman in *A Kiss in the Tunnel* **(1899)**

The camera fixated on the train records the landscape when the train is moving, bringing audiences along in this phantom trip. Comparing the writing/filming scenario with Azaïs's 'writing while walking', the camera does not need to stop when it comes to record events, it can simply keep on filming/writing *while* moving. The image-making process is, as André Bazin describes in 'Ontology of Photographic and Film Imagery', that '[f]or the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of

man'.[24] With the invention of tracking shot, the primary perception of experiences can be contemporaneously 'written down' without delaying. The obsession with the immediacy of the camera in recording 'now-ness' can also be found later in tourist photography and the travel diary. During vacations, tourists tend to 'photograph anything and everything in sight'.[25] In *Snapshot Versions of Life*, Chalfen quotes from Leon Gersten, a photojournalist and writer-photographer, to elaborate the strategy of tourist photography: 'Like many other writer-photographers, I used to live by three rules when I was traveling with my camera: (1) Always carry a fully loaded camera; (2) Take pictures of everything possible; (3) Never let anyone or anything stand in the way of getting a "good" shot…'[26] In his article entitled 'Tourism Mobilities and the Travel Glance: Experiences of Being on the Move', Jonas Larsen further distinguishes two different kinds of tourists' way of seeing: the 'tourist gaze' and the 'travel glance'. These two ways of seeing also provide different visual experiences: in the tourist gaze, it is more like a 'static photographic' way of seeing; while in the travel glance, it 'provides a visual *cinematic*-like experience of moving landscape images mobilized …'[27] By adopting the new technology – the film camera, the tourist can now capture landscapes as fleeting images while at the same time remaining mobile themselves. Larsen focuses on the film camera rather than the photographic camera by suggesting that '[f]ilm camera, however, can be seen as the natural extension of the glancer's cinematic eye: it is the only visual medium that can "realistically" record the traveller's vision of panoramic movement through time and space'.[28] Hence, besides *repetition* and *retrospection* in composing a diary, the third form of temporality that cannot be fully achieved in Azaïs's written diary is now coming to existence in the diary film. I shall call it *perception*, not only because I wish to distinguish it from Gaudreault's notion

[24] Bazin, *What is Cinema ? Vol. 1*, p.13.
[25] Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, p.105.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Jonas Larsen, 'Tourism Mobilities and the Travel Glance: Experiences of Being on the Move', *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 1:2 (2010), p.82.
[28] Larsen, 'Tourism Mobilities and the Travel Glance', p.93.

of monstration, but also to imply the presence of the diarist who *perceives* during filming, when the diarist and the film camera together become a sensuous subject and perceive the experiences of spatio-temporal mobility. Moreover, besides the diary film in the perceptive mode, there is the other mode when the narrator intervenes, adding another level of temporality to the film and turning it into narration. It is a gesture of looking back from the moment of editing at the already-filmed events. Therefore, I shall call it the *retrospective mode*. In the first section of this chapter, I will discuss one diary film in the perceptive mode by analysing Saul Levine's *Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2* (1976). And then in the second section of this chapter, I will discuss the diary film in the retrospective mode by using Jonas Mekas's *Zefiro Torna or Scenes From The Life of George Maciunas* (1992) as a case study to elaborate my arguments.

4.1.2 Saul Levine's *Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2*[29]

Notes of an Early Fall was made by Saul Levine in 1976, when he went back home with his new Super 8 sound movie camera to celebrate 'Rosh Hashanah' (the Jewish New Year) with his family in late September 1976. As the film title suggests, the film is about Saul Levine's notes of the season changing and his family gathering. During his stay with the family, he documented all kinds of daily activities, including his mother preparing for the holiday in the kitchen, the environment around the house, some young girls practicing cheerleading in the nearby park, animals and plants, and the film finally ends with his solitary walk in the field when the snow is melting. As the film was shot with a Super 8 sound camera, there are therefore synchronized ambient sounds in most of the scenes. Saul Levine does not use any voice-over to articulate his feelings in relation to the images, instead, he simply is there, while the events are occurring and he records them. The film also lacks any clear temporal markers. For instance, there are no title cards to indicate

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[29] *Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2*, *Saul Levine: Super 8 Films Volume One* [experimental film, DVD] Dir. Saul Levine. USA, 1976, 33.5mins. [TVEYE Video, TVE0002, 2004].

when the footage was being shot (although the images from TV show [**Figure 4-3**] might suggest the approximate time of the filming, but this indexical image requires certain background knowledge to decipher).

Figure 4-3: Image from the TV Show in *Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2* **(19:51)**

It is therefore difficult to distinguish whether the scenes in the film are organized in a chronological order or not. However, the scenes certainly appear to have been arranged randomly,[30] as there are no apparent causal links between scenes: they jump freely from indoors to outdoors (for example, the 'boxing game on TV in the living room' scene [22:19] is followed by the 'walking in the field alone' scene [22:55]), and this is a key characteristic of the diary film in the perceptive mode: being both fragmentary and discontinuous due to the fact the images are shown in the disorganized order in which they were shot. Saul Levine only speaks one sentence during the whole film. When he films his mother in the kitchen, his mother sees him taking the Super 8 camera and asks him: 'What's that, Saul?' To which Levine answers: 'It's a sound camera.' His mother continues to ask: 'Are you taking or just aiming?' And Levine does not answer (27:49-28:05). This is the only sentence from the diarist that the audience hears. It is obvious that the use of voice-over as authorial identification is not a strategy in the perceptive mode. Instead, Levine manifests his authorship in a different way. Near the end of the film, he walks by himself in the field and plays with his camera. He sometimes places the camera at

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[30] However, a few sequences do end with Levine's signature of editing technique, which can be found in his *Note to Pati* (1969), in which Levine takes footage from different scenes and juxtaposes them together to create a new scene. As a result, each image last less than a second. As I have already discussed the editing in *Note to Pati* in Chapter One, in this chapter, I will focus on Levine's use of the long takes in *Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2* for the discussion of temporality in the diary film.

eye level, so that the images the spectator sees are exactly what he sees, and when he speeds up his walking pace, the camera also becomes shaky, as if the spectator also experiences Levine's movements. Asides from this first person point-of-view angle, the manifestation of Levine's authorship can also be seen in the final sequence (29:58), when he films the landscape and the melting snow, and then uses his hand to partially block the camera lens to create a kaleidoscope effect [**Figure 4-4**]. The use of the hand as subjective interference between Levine and the filmed objects suggests that these images are no longer pure documentation and representation, but a representation of the mindscreen of the diarist. In the mindscreen the spectator sees what Levine deliberately presents as his own visual experience and imaginary reality. It is not only the perspective of the eye, but also of the mind which is presented here. The subjective mind of the diarist differentiates the perceptive mode of the diary film from Gaudreault's monstration, it highlights the presence of the diarist on the spot without turning it into narrative by editing afterwards.
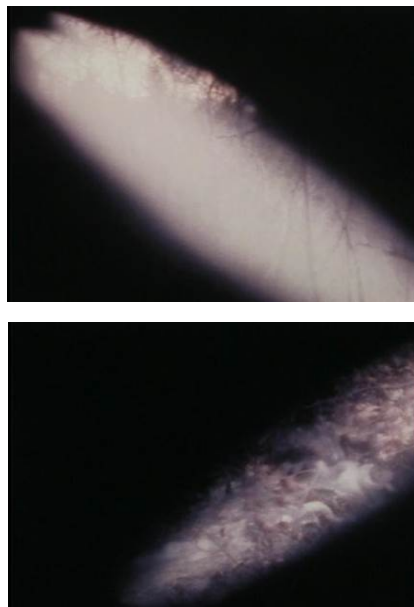
Figure 4-4: The Kaleidoscope Effect: the Interference of Levine's Hand (31:04 and 31:07)

4.1.3 Continuity, Repetition and Discontinuity: The Phonographic Record [Figure 4-5], the Bird, and the Bears

Figure 4-5: The Spinning Phonographic Record (01:02)

Keeping a diary film, unlike many written diaries, might not necessarily be a daily activity but it is certainly a routine. In *Notes of an Early Fall,* the quality of routine, repetition and on-going-ness in the diary film are highlighted through different means. Levine appears to be fascinated with the repetition of daily life, as he clearly states in his 'Artist Statement' on his website: 'NOTES OF AN EARLY FALL super 8 sound in which I use duration and repetition' (capitals in original).[31] The use of a particular object and its repetitive movement constantly recur throughout the film: the spinning phonographic record, the flying bird outside the window, the carousel, and the bears pacing-around in the cage. The spinning phonographic record is probably the most obvious example. As the second image in the film, the spinning warped phonographic record keeps playing for almost six minutes (01:01-06:16, interruptedly). The record is playing the song 'My Black and White Dog', which is from the album 'The Tricks' played by Champion Jack Dupree and Mickey Baker (1968).[32] Because the record is warped, the needle skips randomly and repeatedly into a range of grooves: 'He bit anybody…', 'It was funny when…', 'He bit anybody…', 'That son of…', 'the police…', 'It was fun…', and 'He didn't say a ...' The fragmentary lyrics

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[31] Saul Levine's 'Artist Statement', p.2. http://saullevine.com/resume [accessed 15 November 2013].

[32] Again, the relationship between Jazz music and the diary film is emphasized here. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, the diary film values the quality of spontaneity, which derived from painting, literature, and Jazz music, in which the creative process is created not by pre-established rules but from the interaction with 'the moment'.

become cycles, and each cycle is different from each other.[33] We never hear the complete song or even a complete sentence. The spinning record then becomes a metaphor for the qualities of the diary film: the warped bump on the surface of the record makes the machine play the same section over and over (continuity and repetition), and the bump also interrupts the playing and makes the lyrics incomplete (discontinuity).

The Bird and The Bears [Figure 4-6]

Figure 4-6: The Flying Bird Outside the Window and The Walking Bears in the Cage (10:14 & 15:52)

After the spinning record, with a little insertion of a TV show, the motif of repetition returns to the film. A little bird outside the window is trying to fly inside. The scene lasts for about three minutes (07:28-10:37). We see this little bird stop on the branch and the window pane, trying to fly inside the house but it fails, since the window is closed. It tries so many times and Levine just stays inside and films it. Here, again, the qualities of the diary film are suggested through the images of the little bird: the attempt of flying inside countless times (continuity and repetition), although each time its route is different and interrupted (discontinuity).

After the bird scene, another repetitive element comes in the film after a scene in which we see girls practicing cheerleading in the park: two bears pace back and forth in the cage

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[33] The original lyrics of the song 'My Black and White Dog' in the part which Saul Levine documents in the film are: 'He was a bad dog, that song of a gun, boy he was so bad till the police got at him, you know. Yeah, he was somebody else! You know, he bit anybody! Yeah! And it was funny, when I went there and saw you sitting there and he was laying on the floor asleep. Well I been around before you were. Yeah, I knew your wife before I knew you! Oh, that was the thing, yeah… you know, I come home the other day and he was sitting up on that hind leg and some cat, an insurance man, was patting him on the head, you know… and he didn't say a word'.

repeatedly (14:30-17:28), which continues for nearly three minutes. There is nothing happening in the scene except these two bears walking around. It seems like a boring activity and barely constitutes an event: there are just two bears walking in the cage. However, Levine appears to be obsessed with their repetitive gestures and while the act of walking is repetitive their walking routes are different each time.

The bird scene and the two bears scene highlight the relationship between the diary film and its temporality. First, the diary film is an act of repetitive and consistent behaviour. Second, the diary film focuses on the ordinary and invariable mundaneness of daily life. Even so, in the seemingly invariable mundaneness there is also heterogeneity – that is a difference within repetition. This is where the significance of the diary film manifests, in the difference and the uniqueness of repetition. In his discussion on repetition and the first time, Derrida considers the uniqueness of repetition as '[r]epetition and first time, but also repetition and last time, since the singularity of any first time, makes of it also a last time. Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time'.[34] The concept of repetition is not just a same thing happening over and again, but rather, every happening has its own significance and is different from others. The same idea can also be found in Walter Benjamin. In his discussion of 'aura', Benjamin explains that there is an essential element in the work of art: '[I]ts presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be'.[35] The sun, the aura of nature, rises from the east every day, giving its first light to the earth. And yet, today's dawn is different from yesterday's and will be different still from tomorrow's. To put this in other words, there is the concept of authenticity in every dawn, and this authenticity is what makes it unique and can not be reproduced. This is then connected to the experience in the aura, which in Benjamin's description as the unique phenomenon of a distance, that 'while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow

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[34] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, Peggy Kamuf (trans.) (New York: Routledge, 1994), p.10.

[35] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, Harry Zohn (trans.) (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p.220.

with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch'.[36] Following the conception of Benjamin's 'aura', the spinning record in Saul Levine's *Notes of an Early Fall* is also a manifestation of the uniqueness and the authenticity, although paradoxically achieved through forms of reproduction – the record and the film. In the looping of the record, the needle never follows the same track twice; there are no identical plays during the six-minute repetition ('it was funny…' and 'it was fun…'). From Derrida, Benjamin, to the spinning record, Levine's film touches the fundamental instance of time. In Heraclitus's famous quotation, 'you can not step twice into the same river'.[37] Each time of stepping into the river is different and unique. In this sense, the contradiction between repetition and the oneness of time justify the compulsion of preserving time which lies at the heart of the diary film in the perceptive mode. On the one hand, everyday activity is experienced as a normal phenomenon as time proceeds; on the other hand, it is exactly this uniqueness in every repetition, as each stepping into the river is a new experience, that the diarist values and cannot let pass by without preserving it with the camera.

4.1.4 Inscription, Perception, and Preservation

The invention of photographic technology – the film camera – makes it possible to keep a mobile diary in visual form. The film camera 'embalms time'[38] and preserves the duration of experiencing time and movement. As Bazin says in relation to the preservation of bodily appearance, the practice of embalming the dead originates from the fundamental need in mankind: 'a defense against the passage of time…for death is but the victory of time'.[39] Through representation, which is the description of the appearance of objects, mankind

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[36] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, pp.222-223.
[37] Francesco Ademollo, *The Cratylus of Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.203.
[38] Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, p.14.
[39] Ibid., p.9.

creates an 'identity-substitute'[40] of a 'duplication of the world outside'.[41] Photography as an art of the index provides this copy of the object and satisfies the need for preservation. Yet, in Bazin's idea of realism, the cinema is 'an inherently realist medium in that the mechanical processes of the camera and its photochemical rendering of an image on a filmstrip effectively replace the artist's role as mediator between reality and the work of art'.[42] In this sense, the camera not only replicates the appearance of the object, but also preserves the temporal duration of reality, due to its inherent mechanism – an automatic activity without human intervention. It reproduces, in Barthes's term, something that 'has passed'[43] in front of the tiny hole within the camera as continuous series of images. In the ending scene of *Notes of an Early Fall*, Levine carries his Super 8 camera out in the field and films *while* walking (22:55-24:44; 29:58-33:31). The camera captures what Levine sees, his walking routes, the mountains, the clouds, the melting snow, and the river. This diary writing with a camera is very different from Azaïs's 'writing while walking'. Whenever there are reflections in Azaïs's mind, he then has to stop and find a spot, takes out his portable writing tools from the suitcase, and writes down, as soon as possible, his ideas on paper. That is to say, he *recounts* the interior monologue of what he just had in his mind. Azaïs's approach is not simply retrospective nor writing contemporaneously, it is in-between. However, in the diary film, the filmmaker does not need to stop to operate the camera, he/she does not need to move away the focus of attention from what he/she sees to another medium (such as for Azaïs, the paper). He/she inscribes what he/she perceives, contemporaneously – a manifestation of instantaneity and immediacy. The diary filmmaker does not recount in the perceptive mode of diary filmmaking, instead he/she films his/her perception that provides both the experience of the present and the diarist's presence in that now. The perceptive presence of the diarist is different from Metz's discussion of the still

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[40] Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, p.10.
[41] Ibid., p.11.
[42] Justin Horton, 'Mental Landscapes: Bazin, Deleuze, and Neorealism (Then and Now)', *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Winter, 2013), p.25.
[43] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p.78.

photograph. Metz adopts Barthes's idea of photography to distinguish the difference between cinema and the photograph: 'When we look at a photograph, says Roland Barthes, we do not see a presence "being there" – for this definition is too loose and can be applied to any copy – but a presence that "has been there." "We therefore have a new category of space-time: place present but time past – so that in still photography there is an illogical conjunction of *here* and *then*"'.[44] The image in a still photograph, once it has been captured, becomes the past. However, in the making of diary film within the perceptive mode, the experience of time for the diarist is quite different. In *Notes of an Early Fall*, there is a scene where Levine stays inside the house and, unnoticed, films through the window the activities in the park. This scene includes three activities: the five young girls practice cheerleading, a woman plays clarinet, and two men walk through the park (10:59-14:24) [**Figure 4-7**].

Cheerleading practice (11:33)   Woman plays clarinet (12:46)   Two men walking (14:19)

Figure 4-7: Stills from *Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2*

The scene consists of three sections, and each of them is presented almost in actual duration with only few jump cuts. First there are five girls practicing cheerleading, and as they leave, there is a woman sitting on the bench and playing a clarinet (or a recorder), and then there are two men slowly walking through the park. This scene lasts for almost three minutes, which operates as what André Gaudreault has called 'monstration' (film simply

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[44] Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, Michael Taylor (trans.) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp.5-6.

shows the event)[45] and equally refers to Bazin's concept of the long take – a 'time that unfolds within a single, uninterrupted shot'.[46] Pasolini shares the same idea of the long take as Bazin when analysing the Abraham Zapruder's 8mm film of Kennedy's assassination. The long take is, according to Pasolini, always in the present tense, as it 'presents us with reality as it happens'.[47] For Pasolini, the cut is 'equivalent to death',[48] which converts the unstable present into a stable and certain past, hence narrative. In both Bazin and Pasolini's claims, reality can be presented only through a technique which can uninterruptedly embody the time and its contingency—that is the long take. In the park scene, Levine stays inside as an observer, as if he were standing by the river of time, and instead of freezing the moment – as that is what a still photograph would do – he inscribes his subjective experience and preserve the continuum of space and time with the duration of the long take picturing the park in that afternoon.

4.1.5 Conclusion

With the premise of Bazin's notion of embalming time, the diary film in the perceptive mode focuses on the description of daily activities, and at the same time, reduces the degree of human intervention in those events as far as possible. In the perceptive mode of the diary film, the use of the voice-over is rarely applied (see also Hutton's *July '71 in San Francisco*). And in most of cases, scenes are presented in the chronological order of filming. In addition, the perceptive mode of the diary film follows the path of Azaïs's 'writing while walking', but pushes the boundary further to the realm of the mobile visual experience akin to the tourist's travel glance. In the perceptive mode of the diary film, the diarist and the film camera are incorporated and become an 'extension of the glancer's

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[45] Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p.158.

[46] Lee Carruthers, 'M. Bazin et le temps: reclaiming the *timeliness* of cinematic time', *Screen* 52 (Spring, 2011), p.14.

[47] Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, p.104.

[48] Ibid., p.105.

cinematic eye'.[49] As in Vertov's famous saying: 'I'm an eye. A mechanical eye…I free myself today and forever from human immobility. I'm in constant movement…Freed from the boundaries of time and space…My way leads towards the creation of a fresh perception of the world'.[50] Although Vertov's practice was actually to interfere and manage the recording of events, the notion of the sensuous subject-machine of perceiving and reproducing the experience of the world is still applicable to the diary-filmmaking in the perceptive mode. The subjective human eyes and the objective mechanical eye (the camera) together perceive and record the experience of 'now'. On this level, the perceptive mode of the diary film is closer to film note than diaristic film entries. It is a compulsion of primitive documentation of events and the presence of the diarist, in which the function of the narrator is reduced to minimum. And because it is usually a direct snatching and perceiving of daily activities, it has a tendency in form and in content of being disorganized and fragmentary.

4.2 The Diary Film in the Retrospective Mode: Jonas Mekas's *Zefiro Torna*[51] *or Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas*[52]

Diary film ontologically possesses two different temporalities: on the one hand, the emphasis of the instant of the event happening, which, according to David E. James, 'lies in the moment of shooting'.[53] James's claim resonates with the concept of the diary film in the perceptive mode mentioned in the first section of this chapter. The diary film in the

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[49] Larsen, 'Tourism Mobilities and the Travel Glance', p.93.

[50] Michelson, *Kino-Eye*, p.17.

[51] The film title *Zefiro Torna* is taken from Claudio Monteverdi's madrigal *Zefiro Torna E Di Soavi Accenti* composed in 1632. Mekas also quotes the first three lyrics of it in the film as a title card. The first three lines: 'Zefiro torna e di soavi accenti l'aer fa grato e 'l piè discioglie a l'onde, e mormorando tra le verdi fronde fa danzar al bel suon sul prato i fiori'. Translated into English as follows: 'Zephyrus returns and with his gentle accents Makes the air pleasant, and puts his naked foot in the water, and murmuring among the green leafy fronds he makes the flowers in the meadow dance.' Translated by John Whenham in 2012: http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/1684/ [accessed 22 October 2013].

[52] *Zefiro Torna or Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas*, *The Sixties Quartet* [diary film, DVD] Dir. Jonas Mekas. USA, 1992, 35mins. [RE:VOIR, N˙EDV 519, 2012].

[53] James, *To Free the Cinema*, p.155.

perceptive mode is an interaction between the event and the diarist/camera, and the perception of the diarist and the camera is especially foregrounded during the act of shooting. On the other hand, the diary film can also presents a retrospective of the images filmed from the past which emphasises the process of putting them together, that is, the editing. The editing opens up the temporal gap between the already-happened events and the added narration, and this makes the diary film retrospective. I shall call this kind of diary film as functioning within a *retrospective mode*. In this section, I will therefore focus not on the temporality of the cinema per se, but the temporality that specifically belongs to the diary film in the retrospective mode.

4.2.1 The Notion of Retrospection in the Diary

Philippe Lejeune, in his discussion of autobiography, excludes the written diary from the autobiography category, for the written diary narrative is *not* 'retrospectively oriented'.[54] For written diary, in general, is a writing of 'continuous present'.[55] The contents of the written diary may include flashbacks or even predictions for the future, and yet the temporality of the written diary is still anchored in the time of writing. The continuous present of writing of the written diary follows the order of the calendar, which is usually (but not definitely) a linear progression towards the future from the present. However, I would like to emphasize, from a narrative perspective, that the written diary *does* have a retrospective quality, in the case of one who writes down what *happened* today, as this is obviously a retrospective narrative. As in Azaïs's example, the difference of the written diary and the autobiography in terms of a retrospective temporality might only be a matter of degree. For autobiography requires a wider range span of one's life before the writing and the composing of the autobiography, and for the written diary, this retrospection is

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[54] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.193.
[55] Jackson, *Diary Poetics*, p.19.

narrowed down from a life span to days, hours, and even minutes,[56] compared to autobiographical writing. By comparing the written diary with the autobiography before entering the discussion of the retrospective diary film, my aim is two-fold: first, to highlight the complexity of the time structure in 'diary' itself; the diary is a form of writing in the present but free to deviate from it to make reference to the past, and second; to insist that diary writing is *always* retrospective, but the distance from the past is so close to the present that sometimes it may hardly be discovered, or it can simply be ignored.

The second point I would like to emphasize corresponds with Lejeune's argument that the diary is 'written without the knowledge of the ending'.[57] Lejeune's argument suggests that the diary (written diary) is a continuous act of writing and it does not anticipate its closure. However, when it comes to analysing the diary and the diary film as an oeuvre, as a collection of diary entries from the same author, it is inevitable that the focus should narrow down and aim at more accurate definition and classification of the work of diary and diary film. My approach is first to define the diary film as an independent work, which consists of numerous diary entries, and with a narrative closure. That is, this approach examines a collection of visual entries as a filmic text. I consider the diary film in the retrospective mode as a structured narrative with organized *events* (I should stress again that the important thing is the notion of event and not of story when it comes to the narrative in the diary film) and a unified theme. As for the diary filmmaker, the intention of organizing diary entries together is not to tell a 'story' but to present these entries with a thematic purpose. Therefore, the diary film, the same as a published diary, has a closed status. It is an organization of dispersed visual entries orchestrated as a narrative act. And the 'ending' refers to the moment when narrative stops. It is from this position that a discussion on the diary film can be carried out.

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[56] Allen Ginsberg dates his journals down to the minute. In his 31 December entry in 1953, he starts it with 'New Year's Eve – Country Clun, Mérida 10:55'. Also in 24 August entry in 1961, he starts it with 'Aug 24 2pm '61'. See Allen Ginsberg, *Journals: Early Fifties, Early Sixties*, Gordon Ball (ed.) (New York: Grove Press, 1977), p.29 and p.220.

[57] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.170.

4.2.2 The Notion of Added Narrative

Lejeune also proposes the ways in which the organization of the diary can be achieved – there are solutions for turning disorganized entries into a narration: (1) use [them] to write a narrative; (2) shift & rewrite; (3) do a montage.[58] These solutions are also common in the diary film in the retrospective mode, as the process of editing, narrative structure and montage are usually employed (although as I have described, this is not the case in the diary film in the perceptive mode). It is precisely after the addition of narrative and montage that the temporality of the diary film becomes even more complex. As mentioned earlier, the diary film has a dual temporality – in the moment of filming and in the process of editing. And now with the adding of narrative, the discussion must also include narrative discourse. According to Gérard Genette, the following temporal distances are involved in narrative discourse: the starting point of a narrative, the narrative time (including the time of the thing told, the story time, and the time of the narrative), prolepsis (narrating in advance an event that will take place later), analepsis (any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier), anachrony (the inversion of the order of the events), reach (the distance between an anachrony of the past or the future from the present moment), and extent (the duration of the story).[59] The temporalities may become even more complex as if they were knots entangled, with the adding of the voice-over narrative; however, with the help of Genette's narrative discourse, an exit shall be revealed in the labyrinth of time. Next, I will be using Jonas Mekas's *Zefiro Torna* as a case study to discuss the temporality in the diary film in the retrospective mode by closely looking at narrative discourse, editing and montage.

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[58] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.171.
[59] More discussion on the narrative discourse, see the first chapter – 'Order' – in Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, pp.33-85.

4.2.3 *Zefiro Torna*: the Life of George Maciunas and Jonas Mekas

Zefiro Torna is a diary film about the life of George Maciunas and his life-long friendship with Jonas Mekas. George Maciunas (8 November 1931 to 9 May 1978) was one of the most important figures and founding members of the Fluxus movement in the 1960s. He composed the first Fluxus Manifesto in 1963, and organized numerous Fluxus events during 1960s. He was a very good friend to Mekas, as they both fled from Lithuania to New York in 1940s, and later on shared the same artistic interests in the New York avant-garde movement. Mekas describes him as a man who 'never throws anything away, not a single tin can, box, bit of paper, bottle, screw, nothing. And, like Joseph Cornell, he finds a place for everything in his art. Also, like Joseph Cornell, George works with a hundred different things all at the same time. He collects, hoards, cherishes, everything that he finds …Waste is one thing that George cannot stand'.[60] The film consists of footage and written diary entries heard as voice-over from 1952 to the end of Maciunas's life in 1978. The film ends with his funeral in 1978, accompanied by his favorite music *Zefiro Torna e di soave accenti* in the sound track recorded in 1992.

4.2.4 The Structure of *Zefiro Torna*: the Voice-over, the Written Diary, and the Images

The structure of *Zefiro Torna* consists of four parts: the written diary of Mekas, the visual diary made by Mekas, the revised written diary in the voice-over read by Mekas himself, and the reorganized visual diary. Mekas does not set a precedent in using his written diary in the diary film. Many diary filmmakers use different diary entries from different mediums and shift freely among them in the composition of their diary films. For example, Na'Ou Liu in his *Man with a Camera* – 'Tokyo' (1933) depicts the same scenes of the boating, the zoo, and the airplane trips in his 1927 written diary. Su Friedrich also uses her

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[60] Mekas, *Letters from Nowhere*, p.145.

childhood diary as a part of the voice-over narration in her *Sink or Swim* (1990), in the 'Journalism' chapter (24:14), her voice-over says 'On her tenth birthday, the girl's sister gave her a diary with a green cloth cover. It came with a lock and a small key, which she hid carefully under the bed. On the first page she scrawled a large note that declared: 'If anybody reads this diary, they are very mean. It is personal!'.[61] The adaptation of the written diary in the diary film seems common. This is due to the fact that the diary filmmaker considers keeping diary as a way of living, and the act of keeping diary is maintained as continuous activity whether it is written by pen or recorded by camera. The distance between keeping a diary with a pen and with a camera is so close in the life of the filmmaker as diarist that the mixed use of them seems inevitable. The use of the written diary in diary film functions as a memory-relay-object and a mnemonic device, it reactivates the images from the past and brings them to life again. Sometimes it is used as a starting point of a narrative to organize diverse visual diary entries into a unified theme (Lejeune's 'to write a narrative'), so that from this trigger the narrative begins and the construction of the diary film, in the retrospective mode, begins.

4.2.5 Three Temporal Starting Points in *Zefiro Torna*: 1952, 1977, and 1992

From the narrative perspective, there are three temporal starting points and kinds of duration in Mekas's *Zefiro Torna*: from 1952 in the image track, from 1977 in the voice-over, and from 1992 in the editing process. *First*, the image track starts from a scene of Maciunas and his family having a little party in the front yard in 1952 ('1952, no date' in the title card), and ends with a scene of Maciunas's friends gathering at Maciunas's funeral at the Fresh Pond Crematorium on 11 May 1978. The *second* temporal starting point is Mekas's written diary as voice-over, which starts from 16 April 1977 (V2),[62] when

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[61] *Sink or Swim* [Experimental film, DVD] Dir. Su Friedrich. USA, 1990, 48mins. [Outcast Films, 2005].
[62] V2 (voice-over 2) refers to the voice-over in the second scene in the film. Please see the chart bellows [**Table 5**] for details (p.177).

Maciunas is already using cortisone as treatment for his cancer, and ends on 11 May 1978, when Maciunas's friends gather for his funeral. The dual narratives (the images and the voice-over) start from different temporal points and end at the same time. This is a common narrative strategy in novels or in fiction films. However, a further analysis is required to excavate the exclusive temporal structure of the diary film in the retrospective mode. Diary writing is a continuous and repetitive act; the diarist writes an entry, ends it, and then starts a new entry the next day. The approach may apply to diary film as well. This is where the notion of the diary's 'continuous present' manifests, and it is even more obvious in the diary film in the retrospective mode. As Anna Jackson states, the 'continuous present' is not a matter of tense in sentence structure, but an 'overall narrative tense'.[63] In diary writing, every entry 'gives an account of the period from the time the last entry was written, up to and including the time of writing the current entry'.[64] In this sense, if we consider the time of writing the current entry as the narrative starting point, then every entry is a narrative of retrospection, and moreover, it also oscillates between the past (retrospection) and the present (the time of writing). The 'periodically shifting position in time'[65] is exactly the exclusive temporal structure of the diary film in the retrospective mode. The diary film is therefore a collection of 'continuous presents'; in it, every entry can be seen as a new starting point. Hence, in Mekas's *Zefiro Torna*, the first scene of twenty-one year old George having a party with his family in 1952 can be marked as 'the first visual narrative starting point'. And this first visual narrative ends soon with the last image from this scene (Maciunas's conversation with Ben Carruthers, the actor in John Cassavetes's *Shadows*) (01:36). What follows is the next dated visual entry, 'A Picnic at Almus, Great Neck, June 27, 1970' (I3),[66] which I would call 'the second visual narrative starting point'. When the picnic scene is over, the next visual entry, 'Flux Vehicle Day'

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[63] Jackson, *Diary Poetics*, p.19.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] I3 (image 3) refers to the third scene in the image track in the film. Please see the chart bellows [**Table 5**] for details (p.177).

(I6)[67], appears and functions as 'the third visual narrative starting point.' This is how the 'continuous present' of narration is presented in the retrospective diary film: one starting point after another starting point in the process of editing, and yet every starting point is a retrospective narrative, and so on. In *Zefiro Torna*, there are fifteen visual narrative starting points (I1, I3, I6, I7, I10, I13, I15, I19, I21, I22, I23, I25, I27, I31, and I32). The last one, I32, starts from the scene of Maciunas's funeral on 11 May 1978. By the same token, the voice-over in *Zefiro Torna* has multiple narrative starting points as well. There are eighteen 'narrative starting points' in the voice-over in the film (V2, V4, V5, V6, V8, V9, V11, V12, V14, V16, V17, V18, V20, V24, V26, V28, V29, and V30), 'the last narrative starting point' in the voice-over also starts from Maciunas's funeral on 11 May 1978.

'The *third* temporal starting point', however, is less obvious than the other two, since it is also in the voice-over, and it requires a further reference material – that is Mekas's written diary – to be aware of it. When the voice-over is first heard, it is clear that it is from Mekas's written diary, as Mekas always started with the exact date of the entry with a title card (it is the same with the three not-dated entries, [V16, V17 and V18] as Mekas starts the narrative with 'No Date'). The pause and the sound of page turning after Mekas finishes an entry also suggests the fact that the voice-over text originated from a written form. However, 'the third narrative starting point' is finally revealed when at the end of film the title card 'Copyright © 1992. Jonas Mekas' appears. The year 1992, the third temporal mark, is the time when Mekas edits and finishes the film. The crucial point here is that after comparing the voice-over text with the written diary entries from the same time period, it becomes evident that Mekas is not reading his written diary word by word. He makes alterations in every voice-over text. That is to say, Mekas edits the 1970s footage in 1992, and he at the same time revises his written diary from the same period as the voice-

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[67] The title card 'Flux Vehicle Day' does not indicate reference of time and date. However, according to the poster designed by George himself, the exact date of the event can be identified (19 May 1973). The poster can be found on http://walkerartcenter.tumblr.com/post/49368430017/a-poster-for-flux-vehicle-day-may-19-1973. [accessed 28 October 2013].
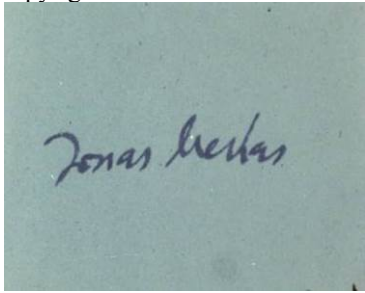
over for the film. From this point, 'the third narrative starting point' in the voice-over takes shape – a retrospective narrative from 1992 to the 1970s. In order to show these three temporal orders more clearly, I will use the following chart as the basis of my discussion [**Table 5**]. The numbers in the left column of the chart indicate the scene in the orders of appearance in the film, and some emphases are made in bold for the later discussion:

Table 5: The Storyboard of *Zefiro Torna*

Scene	Image and Title Cards	Voice-over (excerpt)	
1	'1952': Maciunas (21 years old) and his family.		1st Starting Point
2		'April 16, 1977. In a sense, George's stance is of one who is totally disillusioned of one who has resigned to the fact that he has no longer a firm place on this earth…'	2nd Starting Point
3	'A Picnic at Almus, Great Neck, June 27, 1970'		
4		'July 6, 1977. Hollis remarked today, while we were walking down Wooster Street and talking about George…'	
5		'Nov 17, 1977. George is in town, stopped to eat with us, with a friend, Billie. Hollis thought she was his girlfriend…'	
6	'Flux Vehicle Day' (19 May 1973) 	'Jan 28, 1978. Barbara Moore called. Said, George is getting married….'	

7	'Dinner at Raimund's (Maciunas, Brus, Nitsch, Paik) March 20, 1974'		
8		'Feb 3, 1978. George called. He planned to come to Sloan Institute on Wednesday and stay with us…'	
9		'Feb 4, 1978. Almus came and brought some Lithuanian bread…'	
10	'Richard Foreman Calls from Paris. June 24, **1972**'		digression
11		'Feb 11, 1978. To be aware of approaching death is one thing, to accept death is another thing…'	
12		'Feb 20, 1978. George: 'They have to do it every month, this damned needle, through the back, both sides of the spine, and very slow, because everything is in the way…'	Analepsis: Maciunas having operation when he was a kid; Maciunas's trip to Arizona in 1962
13	'George's **dumpling** party. 80 Wooster St. June 29, **1971**'		
14		'Mar 1, 1978. We were walking to the subway. I was carrying the bags. George refused at first, but then he gave in…'	
15	'Fluxus Hudson Trip. July 1, 1971'		
16		'No date. George's humor is self-referential, Brechtian. The awareness of every detail, of every daily act we perform…'	1978
17		'No date. George's basement, full of boxes of every kind, containers, cans. He keeps every container of everything he eats, everything, every wrapper…'	1978
18		'No date. George said his favorite writers are Dostoevsky and Thomas Mann…'	1978

19	'…on Broome St…. May 11, 1975'		
20		'Mar 15, 1978. And there is Seymour Stern, Xeroxing newspaper clippers, for his monumental biography of D.W. Griffith…'	
21	'George's door. 80 Wooster. May 11, 1975'		
22	Nov 10, 1975: George at St. Vincent Hospital.		
23	'George before the wedding. Feb 27, 1978'		
24		'Aug 1, **1989.** Warhol and George, Warhol and Fluxus, somewhere there, very deep, they were the same…'	digression
25	'Bride prepared… Feb 28, 1978'		
26		'Apr 3, 1978. Billie stopped to tell that George is doing much better under the enzyme treatment in Jamaica…And he has always been so proud of his **dumplings**. All those **dumpling** parties!...'	I13/ analepsis
27	'George's wedding. Feb 28, 1978'		
28		'May 5, 1978. Visited George at the University **Hospital, in Boston**. He looked so thin, sitting on his cot, when I came in, the nurses were preparing to wheel him out to the surgery room…' (**Last time saw George**)	I31
29		'May 9, 1978. A note I found on the table when I came home to eat. "Dear Jonas, George died this afternoon…"'	Maciunas died in the voice-over

30		'May 11, 1978. Shigeko, Carla, Francine, Hollis, Oona, we drove to the **Fresh Ponds Crematorium** in Queens…'	I32: the end of the written diary and the voice-over
31	'I Visit George in the **Hospital, Boston**. May 5, 1978'	Music: 'Zefiro Torna e di soave accenti'	
32	'**Fresh Pond Crematorium**. May 11, 1978'		First present (the end of the images)
33	'Copyright © 1992' & 'Jonas Mekas'		3rd starting point

The image track begins with the 1952 footage, when Maciunas was 21 years old, and still healthy. The voice-over starts from V2 (16 April 1977), when he was already sick and physically weak. As the voice-over in the V2 says: 'His body is here only by the grace of cortisone, an artificial – by now – frame held together only by his will power. The only thing left to him is his laugh' (03:21-03:31). Both image track and the voice-over end on the same date although not at the same time in the film, since the images end in I32, and

the voice-over ends earlier in V30, 11 May 1978 – Maciunas's funeral. Both the image and the voice-over proceed basically in a chronological order. For the image track, after the black and white footage of Maciunas's family gathering in I2, there are series of visual documentations of Fluxus activities in 1970s, including 'Flux Vehicle Day' (I6), 'Richard Foreman Calls from Paris' (I10), 'Fluxus Hudson Trip' (I15) and 'George's wedding' (I27), which is also known as the famous Flux Wedding. In the voice-overs, the time-span starts from V2, 16 April 1977, when Maciunas is already sick, and ends with 11 May 1978, in V32, when Mekas and friends attended Maciunas's funeral. Multiple starting and ending points in the images and in the voice-overs may generate a certain confusion. However, as Langford & West state, the narrative movement in the diary is from the past to the present, and 'the [diary] book closes at the very instant where the narration meets the present moment of writing'.[68] By identifying different narrative points of starting and ending, I try to draw a clear map as to how the extra temporality added by the narrative interweaves with the diary film's inherent temporalities. In the diary film, and especially in the retrospective mode, this narrative movement can be further elaborated on two levels: first, the making of the image, the monstration, ends simultaneously when the act of filming stops. It is in the second level, the narration (editing), that the narrative activity starts to function as recounting of past events. The past, as it unfolds with the narrative activity, meets the present in the process of editing. The narrative activities in *Zefiro Torna*, however, are even more complicated and can be divided into *three* levels. In the first level, the making of the image ends with Maciunas's funeral (I32) on 11 May 1978. I shall call it 'the first present', as it happened prior to other narrative activities (the editing) which took place in 1992. The next level, the making of Mekas's written diary, which I shall call 'the second present', also stops on 11 May 1978 with Maciunas's funeral in V30. These two narrative activities are basically chronological and linear, and moving toward 1978; and they are both closed narratives in relation to the death of Maciunas, or to put it more

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[68] Langford and West, *Marginal Voices, Marginal Forms*, p.182.

clearly − Maciunas's funeral. The directional movement of the dual narrative can be illustrated as follows [**Figure 4-8**]:
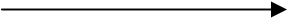
The pasts	Narrative movement direction	George's funeral
Image 1952 (1st present)		
Written diary 1977 (2nd present)	⟶	11 May 1978

Figure 4-8: Narrative Movement in *Zefiro Torna*

The same as Na'Ou Liu and Sue Friedrich, Jonas Mekas also keeps written diary as well as visual diary.[69] Evidence shows, with the publication of Mekas written diary,[70] that the intertextual adaptation of different diary texts does happen in more than one of Mekas's films. And more interestingly, Mekas's written diary which was later used as the voice-over in *Zefiro Torna*, after comparison, shows that alterations in the texts were made. For example, in V2 voice-over (6 July 1977), Mekas says:

> Hollis remarked today, while we were walking down Wooster Street and talking about George. 'Après moi le deluge' (after me the flood), that's George, which is another perfect description of George. One of one hundred such descriptions. No wonder his favorite historical character is Louis XIV, including Rossellini's film of that name. He cares nothing but what people say, do, or possess today: it's all worthless, in his eyes. And the way people behave, they are still on the level of elephants…

The same description of George in the voice-over can also be found in Mekas's written diary recorded on the same day (6 July 1977) in his published written diary, *Letters from Nowhere*. However, the content of the written entry is slightly different:

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[69] Mekas describes his diary keeping of different formats: 'around 90s I switched from film to video. Up to then, I did a lot of writing. I had my "film diaries" and I also had a written diary'. In Žanete Skarule, 'I Never Do That What Other People Do', *Arterritory*, 10 July 2014: http://www.arterritory.com/en/texts/interviews/3741-i_never_do_that_what_other_people_do/ [accessed 29 November 2014].

[70] Jonas Mekas's diary during 1970s was first published in French in *Le je filmé* (1995), edited by Yann Beauvais and Jean-Michel Bouhours. It was then published again in English in *Letters from Nowhere* in 2003. See Mekas, *Letters from Nowhere*, pp.140-151.

> We are going down Wooster Street, me and Hollis, my wife. Wooster is in the very center of SoHo. This is where George started his cooperative building project, or rather, invasion. Wooster Street Number 80 – this is where he organized his first cooperative.[71]

In the next written entry with '(…)' as the title rather than a specific date, Mekas writes:

> George's favorite historical figure is Louis XIV. Rossellini's film about Louis XIV is his favorite film. Louis XIV was the one who said: '*Après moi le deluge!*' George agrees with him completely. Because he does not accept modern civilization. He doesn't give a damn what people worry about, what they talk about, what they own, what they care about. In his eyes all that has no value. Nonsense. 'Just look at how people behave – they're still in the age of elephants!' he says. How many times have I heard him say that! People are elephants. They ruin everything. They will ruin everything they touch: doorknobs, chairs, light switches…[72]

These two entries (V2 and the written entry) from the same day describe basically the same event: Mekas and Hollis walking on Wooster Street and talking about Maciunas. But the details are different. In written diary in *Letters from Nowhere*, Maciunas's favorite Louis XIV, the phrase 'Après moi le deluge' and comparing people to elephants actually belongs to the next undated entry, not the 6 July entry. In the voice-over in *Zefiro Torna*, Mekas combines the two written entries into one and uses it as the material of the voice-over in V4. Another example is in the V6 voice-over (28 January 1978): 'Barbara Moore called, said, George is getting married. She said, he finally collected his courage, he said and proposed to Billie and she said O.K. Called George'. In Mekas's written diary in *Letters from Nowhere* however, the 28 January entry in 1978 is like this: 'Barbara Moore called. She said that George has mustered up all his courage and has asked Billie to marry him and she said, "YES." I called George'.[73] Again some alterations are made in the voice-over in the film. 'Mustered up' becomes 'collected', and Billie's response to Maciunas's proposal is also changed from 'YES' to 'O.K.'. These are just two examples of how the written diary entries text are changed, added, or deleted in certain degrees in the voice-over.

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[71] Mekas, *Letters from Nowhere*, p.141.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.

Basically all the written entries have been altered in the voice-over. The act of this re-writing suggests two things: first, it proves that in the film there is a third narrative starting point (the 3rd level), which is in 1992 when the recording of the voice-over took place during editing. Secondly, it suggests the inherent fragility of the memory. As the first written diary in 1978 was already itself a recollection from the past, the modified voice-over in 1992 was again a re-recollection of the 1978 diary and the past that happened before 1978.[74] Therefore, it is a twofold excavation on the long-gone past.

4.2.6 Chronology and Analepsis: the Third Present

These alterations added in 1992 make the temporal structure in *Zefiro Torna* more complex. The voice-overs in the film consist of eighteen entries, including three undated entries in 1978 (V16, V17 and V18). All eighteen entries are altered by Mekas in the process of editing in 1992, which is also 'the third narrative starting point'. From this third narrative starting point in 1992, all the narratives move *backward* to the past as retrospection. In other words, Mekas makes a total of eighteen analeptic narrations during the editing process in 1992. The retrospective narrations in the film function as follows: every analepsis soon returns to 'the third starting point' when it finishes, and again from 'the third starting point' makes another analepsis in the next voice-over narrative. The movement of the analeptic narrative activities can be illustrated below [**Figure 4-9**]:

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[74] Each time Mekas's recollection/re-recollection is different in his written diaries. It is as if he gets the gist of the event but lost the details. I shall also mention that even in the two versions of Mekas's 1978 published written diary, one is selected in *Le je filmé* in 1995, the other one in *Letters from Nowhere* in 2003, there are still differences in the content of entries. For example, in the February 11 entry in *Le je filmé*, it ends with 'I called Susan and gave her the name of chemotherapist which George had spoken [to]. Susan told me she would call her the next morning' (j'ai appelé susan et lui ai donné le nom du chimiothérapeute auquel george avait parlé. Susan m'a dit qu'elle lui téléphonerait dès le lendemain matin). (Beauvais, *Le je filmé*, p.1975). However, in the same entry in *Letters from Nowhere*, it ends with 'I called Sontag and gave her the name of the doctor George had spoken to. She was very worried about George. She told me not to apologize…Now, she said, it was her duty to help others. George had spent too much time in a small hospital; he should have gone to Sloan-Kettering long ago' (Mekas, *Letters from Nowhere*, p.143).

1992 → (1977 [V1] + 1992) → (1977 [V2] + 1992) → (1978 [V3] …… (eighteen analepses in V.O.)

Figure 4-9: The Movement of the Analeptic Narrative in *Zefiro Torna*

Here, the third narrative starting point functions as 'the third present' (1992, when editing). Initiated from the third narrative starting point (1992), every voice-over is an analeptic narration. The narrative activities constantly oscillate and switch places between the past and the present, and at the same time move forward toward the funeral in 1978. It is not until they meet the last title card 'Copyright © 1992 & Jonas Mekas', which appears in I33 at the end of the film, that the narrative activities finally stop. In short, the temporal structure of *Zefiro Torna* is based on two different narrative movements: the first one is the narrative movements of the images and the voice-overs, they are chronological, with few temporal dislocations. They both start from the past (1952 for the image and 1977 for the voice-over) and head toward the funeral in 1978. The second movement is the narrative of the revised voice-over from Mekas's 1992 editing process. The written diary has been changed by Mekas, speaking from a present that is 1992 so that everything is overlaid by an analeptic framework, even if it appears to be moving forward.

4.2.7 Analepses on Analepses and Prolepses on Analepses

During the analeptic movements from 1992 to 1977 and 1978, there is also something interesting between the images and the voice-over narratives: three 'analepses on analepses' and two 'prolepses'.[75] The first analepsis happens in V26, in the 3 April entry in 1978, when Mekas talks about Maciunas's dumplings: 'he has always been so proud of his dumplings. All those dumpling parties!' It resonates *back* with I13, 'George's dumpling party. 80 Wooster St. June 29, 1971'. Here, the images of I13 appear prior to the images of V26. We see the images of the dumpling party first in I13, and hear the description of the

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[75] Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, p.79.

dumpling party later in V26. Therefore, in V26, the voice-over narration is an analepsis to the scene happens earlier in I13 (V26→I13). The second analepsis is in V12 voice-over, when Mekas re-tells the story that George told him on 11 Feb 1978 – the story of Maciunas having an appendix operation without anesthesia when he was a little kid:

> I told you about the appendix operation, with no anesthesia? After that, I can't take any operation…Yeah, I was screaming and the pain, I remember, the pain was the same…maybe I will scream really high, remembering the appendix…I still remember. I was screaming consistently during the whole operation. It was during the war, and the appendix was about to break, so they said there was no time to go to hospital, and they just cut it…

In here, the analepsis is an external narrative,[76] to use Genette's term, for the event it describes happens before the first narrative starting point in 1952. Therefore, it is also an analepsis from 1978 to Maciunas as a child. The third analepsis also takes place in V12, after the second analepsis of Maciunas's painful memory about the appendix operation, Mekas asks Maciunas: 'when did you go to Arizona, your asthma trip? I don't remember the year'. And Maciunas replies (narrated by Mekas, too): 'I went there in 1962 for two months. And then again in 1967, for a month. I remember in 1962 I went there with 2 suitcases, you know, like a man from New York and there were only cowboys and Indians in that town…' Here, by retelling the story of Maciunas's trip to Arizona, Mekas makes an analepsis (V12→1962). These are the three analepses in the film: V26 (1978) → I13 (1971), V12 (1978)→ Maciunas's appendix operation (during the war when Maciunas was still a child), and V12 (1978)→ Maciunas's Arizona trips (1962 and 1967). It is important to note that they still belong to the analepsis from 'the third present' 1992, therefore, they are 'analepses on analepses'. There relations can be illustrated as follow [**Figure 4-10**]:

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[76] Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, p.49. According to Genette, the external narrative is an analepsis (flashback) 'whose entire extent remains external to the extent of the first narrative', that is, an event which happened long time ago, before the starting point of the story. The starting point in *Zefiro Torna* is 1978, therefore, the stories George tells, which happened before 1978, are external narratives.

1992→1978 (1978→1971 [V26], 1978→Maciunas as Child [V12], 1978→1962 [V12])

Figure 4-10: Analepses on Analepsis in *Zefiro Torna*

There are also two prolepses narrating in advance in the film. The first prolepsis happens in V28, when Mekas visits Maciunas at the University Hospital in Boston (which was also the last time Mekas saw him alive). The images recorded during this last visit to Maciunas only appear later in I31: 'I visited George in the Hospital, Boston, May 5, 1978'. That is to say, the V28 voice-over narrates in advance before the corresponding images appear in terms of the structure of the film. The second prolepsis happens in V30, when Mekas and friends attend Maciunas's funeral at Fresh Pond Crematorium. The images of the funeral only appear later in I32: 'Fresh Pond Crematorium. May 11, 1978'. These two analepses, for the death of Maciunas is already an established fact, result in something more than just a narrative effect. First, Mekas receives the news of Maciunas's death in V29 from his wife Hollis's note, however, later on in I31, we again witness the images of Maciunas in the hospital. The anachrony caused by the insertion of I31 somehow divides Maciunas into two Maciunases; one has already dead in V29, and the other is still alive (or, brought back to life) in I31. At the same time, Mekas, who is narrating, is also divided into two Mekases; one reads his revised written diary in a calm and flat voice, and the other tries using images to turn back time. Examined from the perspective of the whole narrative structure, I31 seems like a technique which Mekas intentionally adopts in order to escape the chronology of time. The anachronical I31 incident metaphorically liberates Maciunas from time by the movements of analepses, and moreover, by the repetitive cinematic projection mechanism, in which the cinema specificity animates still frames into movement and brings the dead back to life. Bazin also discusses the relationship between death, cinema, and repetition.

He argues that although death as a single moment in life that cannot be repeated, it is cinema that 'can repeat any of those moments indefinitely'.[77]

Laura Mulvey echoes Bazin's idea and states that in the cinematic mechanism, '[t]he inanimate images of the filmstrip not only come alive in projection, but are the ghostly images of the now-dead resurrected into the appearance of life'.[78] Therefore, after Maciunas's death, it seems that the only way for Mekas to summon the ghost of Maciunas is by the power of narrative and of cinema to animate the images of Maciunas. Also, starting from V28, it is obvious that ellipses exist both in the voice-over and in the image (the description of Maciunas's death). The images of the scene when Mekas last saw Maciunas in the hospital (I31) immediately follow Maciunas's funeral (I32). This is the same in the voice-over, when Mekas sees Hollis's note in V29, the next voice-over jumps to the description of Maciunas's funeral (V30). The description of Maciunas's death is only supplemented later in V30, when Maciunas's mother tells Mekas at the funeral: 'I saw him. He is so serious, so calm' (29:25). In image, however, this ellipsis is never recovered. There may be explanations for the visual ellipsis of Maciunas's death: first, Mekas was simply not there when Maciunas died (he knew Maciunas's death from Hollis's note in V29). Second, even if Mekas was there witnessing Maciunas's death and documenting it, the image of Maciunas's body would not be simply his dead body.

In Mulvey's discussion of cinema's uncertainty, she describes that the uncanny nature of the cinematic images can confuse the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate, and between life and death: 'the presence of the past in the cinema is also the presence of the body resurrected and these images can trigger, if only by association, questions that still seem imponderable: the nature of time, the fragility of human life and the boundary

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[77] André Bazin, 'Death Every Afternoon', in Yvone Margulies (ed.) *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p.30.
[78] Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, p.36.

between life and death'.[79] A contradiction occurs here: the moving image re-animates life, but what if the life is already gone? Is it still the life we wish to bring back, or is it already something else? As the premise of cinematic power used in animating the dead (still images), what is then animated is, after all, the absence, or, according to Bazin, that 'the representation of a real death is…no longer a moral one…but metaphysical'.[80] It, therefore, becomes a paradox: the I31 not only functions as the last time Mekas saw Maciunas, but, more importantly, as a symbol of Maciunas's death – the image of a ghost, and of the embodiment of Mekas's memory of Maciunas. I31 is certainly the climax and the most dramatic moment of the film. It is also obvious that Mekas's mood becomes intense in I31 with the removal of the voice-over and the adding of Claudio Monteverdi's madrigal *'Zefiro Torna E Di Soavi Accenti'* in the sound track for montage or even melodramatic effect. In this hospital scene, the image is nearly under-exposed, which makes difficult to distinguish Maciunas from the background. There is also a marked fluidity of the images apparently caused by a technical problem – the film strip slips off the sprocket holes – creating an image that is simultaneously seized and moving, or, escaping. Here, by presenting the uncanny images of Maciunas's return to the world, Mekas is trying to 'preserve the *dead* as *animate ghost*' (my italics).[81] The use of the *Zefiro Torna E Di Soavi Accenti* as background music suggests a celebration for the ghostly return of Maciunas (the lyrics 'Zephyrus returns and with his gentle accents…' is also a metaphor of the return of Spring), which is soon destroyed by the images of Maciunas that literally slip off the sprocket holes, unable to stay fixed on the filmstrip, and therefore, metaphorically, escape from the river of time [**Figure 4-11**].

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[79] Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, p.53.
[80] Bazin, 'Death Every Afternoon', p.30.
[81] This phrase is modified from Mulvey's statement referring to cinema's 'paradoxical capacity to preserve the living as inanimate ghosts' (Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, p.107). Here, in Mekas's case, by switching words, I try to emphasize the fact that he wishes to reverse the death of George by animating the uncanny images of him caused by a technical problem.
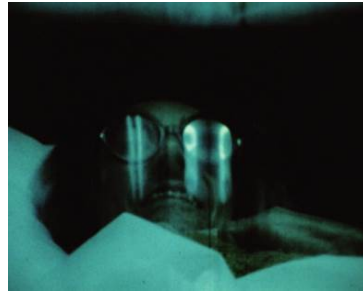
Figure 4-11: The Hospital Scene – Maciunas's Last Image

To sum up, Mekas's *Zefiro Torna* has a very complex temporal structure; analepses which start from different narrative starting points together interlace with other narrative threads into a labyrinthine network of time. The images in the film start from 1952 and end in 1978, Maciunas's funeral; and the voice-overs were based on Mekas's 1978 written diary, and were revised again as voice-over in the third narrative starting point in 1992. Therefore, from the completion of the images and the written diary (1978) to the completion of the film (1992), there is a fourteen-year time gap. After fourteen years, Mekas recalled the images of Maciunas in two ways: first, by projecting/viewing the footage again, Mekas was bringing still images back to life with the apparatus of the cinema that transform still frames into a series of moving images, freeing them from stasis. Second, by re-writing and re-recounting his 1978 written diary about the life story of George Maciunas, Mekas was trying to recall the past and resist time, as every retrospective diary filmmaker tries to do.

4.2.8 Conclusion

After discussing Saul Levine's *Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2* and Jonas Mekas's *Zefiro Torna or Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas*, I have identified two kinds of temporal modality in the diary film: the *perceptive* mode and the *retrospective* mode. The perceptive mode gives weight to the moment of filming and the diarist's perception of the world, and the retrospective mode places its importance on reminiscence and the

recounting of the past events. As a narrative strategy, the perceptive mode seldom uses voice-over, instead it focuses on the moment of filming and the perception of the world, which makes it closer to present tense; in the retrospective mode, the use of the voice-over is common and it is the registration of the voice-over narration during the editing process that makes it retrospective, and, to use James's words, turning film diary into diary film.[82] However, despite the differences in these two modes, here I would like to employ Bazin again. Bazin's concept of 'embalming time' plays an important role in both of these modes. The diary film, whether it is in the perceptive mode or in the retrospective mode, is deeply involved with the fundamental and the psychological need to incorporate time and prevent it from becoming past and therefore lost. In the perceptive mode, the contingency of the present is preserved and presented by the long take, whereas in the retrospective mode, the narrative strategy recalls the past and brings it back to life again. In both cases, time becomes central and reflects an obsession that needs to be satisfied. By embalming, the past and the present are now 'momie du changement'[83] (mummy of change). It is only through the mummy of change, which is preserved (in the perceptive mode) and re-animated (in the retrospective mode), that we can claim victory over time.

In the previous chapters, I have discussed the narratives and the temporalities of the diary film by using films mainly from the 1960s and 1970s as case studies for my analyses. In the first chapter, I discussed Mekas's *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* (1969), Saul Levine's *Note to Pati* (1969), and Peter Hutton's *July '71 in San Francisco* (1971). In Chapter Three, I discussed the use of voice-over as narrative strategy in the diary film with Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)* (1971) and Jonas Mekas's *The Song of Avila* (1967). And in

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[82] See James, *To Free the Cinema*, p.147.

[83] André Bazin, *Qu'est-ce-que le cinema?* (Paris: Du Cerf, 1975), p.14. Bazin's original words 'momie du changement' were translated into 'change mummified' by Hugh Gray in the English version (Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, p.15). Philip Rosen also uses the term 'change mummified' in his book *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (2001). As Rosen explains, he'd like to emphasize the 'oxymoronic and defensive aspects of Bazin's conception' (Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p.372). In my own translation, however, the 'mummy of change' emphasizes the diary filmmaker's obsession to preserve, in the perceptive mode, and at the same time to re-animate, in the retrospective mode.

Chapter Four, the analyses of Saul Levine's *Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2* (1976) and Jonas Mekas's *Zefiro Torna* (1992) provided further discussion of the temporalities of the diary film. The choice of these films was not random but, as I have argued in Chapter Two, according to their contribution, development, and practice of the diary film as a genre and how the materiality of film, the mechanism of the film apparatus, and the narrative strategy work together to produce the form of the diary film. More importantly, through the evidence I provided in Chapter Two – mainly with the emergence of *Theatre Quarterly* in the 1960s in Taiwan – a connection or a route for the migration and the development of the diary film between North America and Taiwan can be established. It is through this established connection that a new generation of Taiwanese filmmakers, including myself, have started making diary films. In the next chapter, I will focus not only on the migration of the diary film from America to Taiwan, but also on the transition of the diary film from celluloid to video.

Chapter 5 – The Diary Film and Changing Technology

In the previous chapters, both the historical and aesthetical aspects of the diary film have been identified and closely examined. In this chapter, I will focus on the transition of technology from film to video in the diary film practice, and moreover, introduce the young Taiwanese diary filmmakers who reconnect and respond to the North American diary film tradition.

5.1 Video Diary: George Kuchar's *Weather Diary 5*[1]

In the late 1970s, the emergence of video camcorder changed the form and the content of the diary film. If the appearance of the film camera realized Azaïs's mode of 'writing while walking', it is safe to say that the emergence of video represented another step in the evolution of the diary film. In American avant-garde film circles, Jonas Mekas turned to video making in the late 1980s, around the time he finished *He Stands in a Desert Counting the Seconds of His Life* (1985). George Kuchar not only changed the format of his work from film to video in the late 1980s, but also switched his thematic interest from melodrama to the diary film. In interview Jonas Mekas explained his conception of the difference between video and film:

> Video cameras record images on tape, movie cameras record on a filmstrip. Both films and videos are moving images, motion pictures. But the instruments are very different. The same is true for painting: the different means available all lead to the same end. As to conscious decision making, I do everything automatically and intuitively. I'm neither a psychologist nor philosopher and therefore don't know much about it. I suspect that it's a combination of unconsciousness and consciousness, guidance or knowledge. I don't think I'm stupid. When I have a need to film something, it comes from the unconscious, but will go on to touch upon the conscious. It's very difficult to distinguish them.[2]

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[1] *Weather Diary 5* [unreleased film, online] Dir. George Kuchar, USA, 1989. 38 mins 5secs. https://autodespair.wordpress.com/2012/07/06/weather-diary-v-george-kuchar-1989/ [accessed 10 May 2012].
[2] Juliet Helmke, 'In Conversation With Jonas Mekas', *The Brooklyn Rail: Critical Perspectives on Arts, Political, and Culture*. 5 November 2010. http://www.brooklynrail.org/2010/11/art/in-conversation-with-jonas-mekas [accessed 15 September 2014].

While idealizing (or romanticizing) the creative process, Mekas tends to overlook the possibilities and outcomes of different media forms (instruments) applied during the process of diary filmmaking. It is obvious that in Mekas's video diaries, the rapid camera movements and edits familiar from his work in film were replaced by long-takes and abundant zoom-ins in his video works. This new camera movement and cinematic aesthetic are only possible after adopting video as a tool for filmmaking. Therefore, adopting new technology in filmmaking should not be oversimplified as if it were only a matter of 'making decision intuitively'. In this chapter, I will use video diary-films that are both analogue and digital, originating from different backgrounds and generations as examples, to identify the difference between the video diary-film compared to the 'celluloid' diary-film, and furthermore, to excavate the potential of video as a medium in diary filmmaking. In order to achieve this and to establish further discussion, I will set some parameters to my arguments. First, it is important to identify, from a diary video-maker's perspective, that the similarities that the analogue and digital video share are more crucial than their differences. Analogue and digital video both possess the ability of simultaneously receiving, processing, and projecting images and sounds without the intervention of the film laboratory. We should also always keep in mind that there is an Azaïs in every diary film/video maker, for whom the quest of 'writing while walking' is paramount. It is in this sense – the desire to capture what is happening – that for the diary video-maker the similarities of the analogue and the digital form are more important than their differences. Second, they are both, especially in relation to the amateur use of video, inexpensive and portable. As Laura Rascaroli suggests, we need to acknowledge '…the way in which digital platforms are facilitating the authorial expression and self-expression of amateurs by giving them access to inexpensive technologies of production and postproduction'.[3] Rascaroli's claim is not restricted to digital platforms alone, since in

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[3] Laura Rascaroli, 'Working at Home: *Tarnation*, Amateur Authorship, and Self-Inscription in the Digital Age', in Laura Rascaroli and Gwenda Young (eds.) *Amateur Filmmaking: the Home Movie, the Archive, the Web* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p.230.

George Kuchar's case, the same mode of production and postproduction are also applicable in relation to analogue video. The qualities of inexpensiveness and portability also suggest the popularization of the video camcorder allowing video-makers to carry it anytime and anywhere. And finally, the additional emphasis on the identification of the 'diary' video is less relevant in this context, for the presence of the video-maker (as the diarist) and the immediacy of dailiness are already inscribed in the video apparatus. Raymond Bellour, when discussing the filmmaking approach of Jean-André Fieschi,[4] describes that Fieschi's use of the video camcorder as a '*paluche* (hand)', which is 'hold in hand rather than against the eye'.[5] Bellour's discussion emphasizes that Fieschi's video camcorder, the 'paluche', frees the body and extends the experience of image-making. However, here I focus on the fact that since the camcorder is now an extension of the body of the filmmaker, it has become an experimentation of 'how to move while filming, how to eat while filming, how to write while filming'.[6] In this aspect, the *paluche* is related to the dailiness of the diary and also to the idea of Azaïs's mobile diary writing. A strong connection can therefore be made between the video camcorder held in hand and the diarist writing by hand in the written diary scenario. They all establish a fact that there is an authorial presence behind the process of diary-keeping.

In this chapter, I will first discuss George Kuchar's *Weather Diary 5* (1989) for the discussion of video diary-film. Kuchar was one of the earliest video diary-makers in American avant-garde film. His video diaries focus on his fascination for nature and tornados. From his video diary-making approach and his exclusive in-camera editing, I will identify the key characteristics of the video diary-film. In the second section of this chapter I will shift focus to contemporary Taiwan in the 21st Century. In 2007, Shine Lin completed her Master's thesis film *Blues Biyori*, which was shot entirely by a portable digital camera. Here I will explain the perhaps surprising connection between Kuchar and

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[4] Jean-André Fieschi (1942-2009). French writer and filmmaker.
[5] Raymond Bellour, *Between-the-Images* (Zurich: JRP|Ringier & Les Presses du Réel, 2012), p.346.
[6] Bellour, *Between-the-Images*, p.347.

Lin – two generations of diary filmmakers, one from America, and one from Taiwan – and between their video diary-films. Both the video diary-films of Kuchar and Lin involve journeys, daily activities, and conversations with themselves, revealing the private and intimate sides of their lives. Moreover, besides the thematic similarities, it is important to acknowledge the direct influence of the American avant-garde film after 1960s on Lin's filmmaking practice. By connecting Lin with Kuchar, I try to draw a line of the development of the diary film geographically from America to Taiwan, and also technologically from the 1960s to the 21st Century, from the celluloid diary film to the video diary-film. The appearance of Lin's *Blues Biyori* suggests that diary filmmaking in Taiwan, after the dispersal of the *Film Quarterly* members and the decline of the avant-garde film movement in the late 1960s, has now reconnected with American avant-garde film through the introduction made by transnational academic education. In the final section of this chapter, I will use myself as example and discuss my Master's thesis film *Going Home* (2008) and my incorporation of different formats in diary filmmaking. As a diary filmmaker, I consider it is important to combine my diary filmmaking practice with my diary film research. Also as a researcher of the diary film, I believe that it is crucial to foreground my own work in this thesis in order to provide a closure of sorts. By charting the history, development and the aesthetics of the diary film genre, I hope that this research will contribute to diary film studies, and moreover, by concluding it with the analysis of my own film practice – a metaphoric destination for this written journey of the diary film – I hope that this research can serve as a mirror for me to understand and reflect upon my current and future practice as a filmmaker.

5.1.1 George Kuchar and His *Weather Diary* Series

George Kuchar (1942-2011) was one of the pioneers in the Underground Film movement in America during 1960s and 1970s. His filmmaking career can be divided into three

different phases. Starting in the 1950s and 1960s, he first collaborated with his twin brother, Mike. Together they were known as Kuchar brothers. They made numerous low budget melodramas using the 16mm and 8mm film cameras, non-professional actors, poor but stylized lighting and design, and rough special effects. Their works were often considered as B-movies, but at the same time, showed ingenuity, exuberance, and a kind of do-it-yourself charm.[7] The second phase of George Kuchar's filmmaking was in the early 1970s, when he was teaching at the San Francisco Art Institute. Every year he and his students also collaborated on films dealing with diverse subjects.[8] His third phase can be located in the mid-1980s, when Kuchar made a switch from film to video, and started to document his personal and diaristic video works. The most famous examples from this period are probably his *Weather Diary* series (1986-1990) and *Video Album* series (1985-1987). And it is the third phase of Kuchar's video diary works that I would like to focus on. In his own description of the films written for a retrospective film programme held by the Harvard Film Archive in August, 2011,[9] Kuchar reveals that his fascination with nature and weather stems from childhood:

> This whole thing started because of my interest in nature. Since I was a city boy, living in The Bronx, nature came to me via the colorful tapestry of sky that loomed above the tenements. The awe of summer thunderstorms, smothering blizzards and window rattling nor'easters left a lasting impression on me…Loving to draw and paint, I happened to come upon the books of Eric Sloane. He was an artist very interested in Americana and American weather. His beautifully illustrated volumes of the atmosphere were of great aesthetic and scientific value to me.[10]

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[7] For the detailed discussion of Kuchar's artistic biography and his early works, please see: Scott MacDonald, *A Critical Cinema: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp.297-302; also: 'Underground Legend: Hommage aux Frères Kuchar', *4th Lausanne Underground Film & Music Festival* catalogue (Lausanne: LUFF, 2005), pp.28-29.

[8] According to Tony Chun-hui Wu, he also participated in several of these film collaborations when he was a student in San Francisco Art Institute. These films were copied for every participating student. However, as time passes by, few were preserved in good condition and therefore it is rather difficult to have access to them now. Tony Chun-hui Wu, Interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 09 August 2014 (unpublished material).

[9] The programme is entitled 'George Kuchar's Weather Diary'. Selected works included: *Wild Night in El Reno* (1977), *Weather Diary 1* (1986), *Weather Diary 3* (1988), and other digital video diary-films he made after the 1990s. The full programme and the descriptions of his films can be viewed online at http://hcl.harvard.edu/hfa/films/2011julsep/kuchar.html [accessed 16 January 2014].

[10] Ibid. Description of the retrospective programme written by George Kuchar.

His fascination continued to grow such that after graduating from the School of Industrial Art, he got a job drawing weather maps for a local NBC news show. These early experiences might help us to get a better understanding why in the third phase of his filmmaking career, he chose to make video diary-film about the weather. In an interview, Kuchar explains: 'the weather is just an interest of mine, aesthetically and scientifically. You make pictures of what you're interested in and then that becomes your world…You develop certain subjects that interest or fascinate and do a series and follow it through'.[11] Kuchar's descriptions above seem somehow romantic and naïve. However, we should always keep in mind that when it comes to diary filmmaking, the heritage of the notion of amateur (do it for *love*) from Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage, Marie Menken, and Jonas Mekas always occupies a central position and impetus. Hence, Kuchar's childhood fascination can now be realized with the help of the video camcorder in the form of diary film. Kuchar's video diaries, *Weather Diary* series, were documentations of his annual visits to the Tornado Alley region of Oklahoma. Starting from the *Weather Diary 1* in 1986, Kuchar visits Oklahoma and stays in the El Reno Motel each May. The video diaries consist of his observations on the weather, his interactions with local people during his stays, and are interspersed with weather reports from television. He does not actually chase the tornado in the video-diaries, as he confesses in the same Harvard film programme:

> I am not a storm chaser as I never learned how to drive a car. I wanted to experience springtime storms on the American plains like the simple folk I read about in those library books. Therefore the videos in the weather diaries depict the turmoil, tedium, terror and televised terrain of tornado country through the eyes of a transplant.[12]

It is interesting that Kuchar chooses the word 'transplant' to define himself in the weather videos. From my own reading, I consider that here Kuchar is trying to express a dilemma

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[11] Scott Trotter, 'George Kuchar: Interview by Scott Trotter' (1996): http://www.eurounderground.org/filmmaker/kuchar.htm [accessed 20 January 2014].
[12] Description of the retrospective programme written by George Kuchar. http://hcl.harvard.edu/hfa/films/2011julsep/kuchar.html [accessed 16 January 2014].

he is facing. He tries to be part of the experience as if he were local but he is not: in the videos, Kuchar is only on-screen when he is alone; there is no group shot of local people and Kuchar together at all. He always stays behind the camera as an 'outsider' (a person who has been 'transplanted' here), and as a voyeur who hides behind the drapes (as Levine does when observing cheerleading girls in *Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2*), when taping local people. Furthermore, he is placed in a situation where he can never achieve his apparent desire [**Figure 5-1**]: he chases tornados only through the news report from radio and television (07:30-08:29), and he peeps behind window drapes in his motel room with his video camcorder, recording a half-naked young man playing basketball outside (03:38-03:47).

News of tornados on TV   Young man plays basketball

Figure 5-1: Stills from *Weather Diary 5*

5.1.2 Video: Capture and Transmission

In the previous chapters, I have discussed continuity and discontinuity in the diary film. Likewise, these characteristics can also be seen in the video diary-film, but with slight differences. First of all, from the perspective of its material form, film is essentially discontinuous: there are always gaps between frames. Through the apparatus of the mechanical movement of the film projector, these gaps are overlooked, or are imperceptible, to the human eye. However, in video, there are no frames and hence no gaps between frames. The electronic patterning of images (immediate coding and encoding) is provided by video camcorder's ability to transform profilmic objects and

events into a continuous flow of image. This takes place in real-time, making the time of recording and the time of perception simultaneous. Hence, the characteristic of the video mechanism, as Christine Ross argues, lies in the immediacy of video, in which 'not only its feedback and instantaneity features but also its production of images made from the ceaseless flow of electrons scanning the surface from left to right and top to bottom'.[13] In his discussion of video, John Belton also stresses that the concept of transmission should be emphasized. While the genealogy of the cinema is traced 'back to photography, photochemistry', video 'looks back to the telegraph and the telephone…to the transmission of coded, electric signals across a wire'.[14] According to Belton, the mechanism of the video is similar to radio broadcasting. There is another example that supports his argument. In 1956, Ampex, an American electronic company, introduced a tape that would transfer video signals to sound format and then record them on a magnetic tape.[15] That is to say, the tape used for recording images was exactly the same as is used for sound recording. The uninterrupted flow of signals was recorded and transmitted to another medium—a characteristic that makes the video close to radio and television live broadcasting. Video does record, but not in the sense that the film does. Video records and transmits in the form of electronic signals, and produces the images through an endless scansion process. The image is never completed, it is always in process, and it is this in-process quality that gives the video a sense of immediacy and constitutes its continuity. The discontinuity in video, on the other hand, lies somewhere else. It is in the gap created by the video entries, with every pressing and releasing of the record button, creating sections of footage or files that are separated from one another temporally. The films I discuss in this chapter will show how the discontinuity in the video diary-film

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[13] Christine Ross, 'The Temporalities of Video: Extendedness Revisited', *Art Journal*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (Fall, 2006), p.86.

[14] John Belton, 'Looking through Video: The Psychology of Video and Film', in Michael Renov and Erika Suderburg (eds.) *Resolutions: Contemporary Video Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p.62.

[15] Ibid., p.63.

manifests itself, as well as how it is adopted by the video diary filmmakers as part of a narrative strategy.

5.1.3 Video: the Mirror Machine, Safe Space, and Private Secret

George Stoney calls the video camcorder a 'mirror machine'[16] as most camcorders have reversible LCD viewfinders, and most importantly, due to its ability to provide immediate play back, it introduces 'viewers to the viewed, even viewers to themselves'.[17] The premise of Stoney's argument was that he was working for TV Company in the 1970s and was always trying to find a simpler and more efficient way of recording and examining the footage right after recording. This was realized by the video camcorder. The video apparatus, as Michael Renov points out, is 'both screen and mirror, providing…a reflective surface on which to register the self'.[18] The video diarist often turns the camera to him or herself and speaks directly to the camera – a method that is adopted by many video diary-makers and is often described as a 'video confession'. The confession, in Michael Renov's discussion, has a long historic development and tradition. In the 13th Century, confession was carried out by priests as skilled physicians who 'pour wind and oil upon the wounds of the injured man'.[19] In early Christianity, the public confession of sins was considered as an exercise of penance. For Foucault, the confession invokes a power relationship between confessor (the authority) and the confessant, and in this relationship the authority can award judgment, punishment, or mercy onto the confessant. Renov, taking Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961) as an example, explains how the formula of the traditional confession can be applied in the documentary mode of filmmaking, which he calls 'techno-analysis',[20] whereby the role of

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[16] George C. Stoney, 'The Mirror Machine', *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Winter, 1971/72), p.9.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), p.186.
[19] Michael Renov, 'Video Confession', in Michael Renov and Erika Suderburg (eds.) *Resolutions: Contemporary Video Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p.78.
[20] Ibid., p. 83.

the analyst (or the priest) of the confession is replaced by the video camera, resulting in a kind of do-it-yourself psychotherapy. In the case of video confession, the mirror structure provides the reflection of the confessant him/herself and also effectuates the virtual presence of a 'partner'[21] as the confessor. Due to video's potential to provide instant feedback, a communicative relationship is established in the form of dialogue between the machine and the confessant. In this new confessional formula, the 'video becomes the eye that sees and the ear that listens, powerful but without judgment or reprisal'.[22]

However, one should note that turning the camera at the diarist is not exclusive to video-making. There are plenty of examples when filmmakers, using the film camera, turn the camera around and aim at themselves. At the beginning of *Diaries, Notes and Sketches*, Mekas turns his 16mm film camera to himself having breakfast in Marseilles. Therefore, it is necessary to differentiate the 'pointing the camera at oneself' in film from the 'to-camera piece'[23] in video. In 'pointing the camera at oneself' in filmmaking, the filmmaker tries to inscribe his/her images in the film but not the voice – it is a variation of subjective point-of-view shot in order to manifest the authorial presence. However, the lack of the diarist's voice means that this manifestation is presented but is also incomplete. A strange uneasiness appears when viewing Mekas having breakfast in Marseilles. The direct connection between Mekas and his camera suddenly collapses when his hand leaves the camera. The camera then becomes at the same time subject and observer without the promise of the subjective voice. On the contrary, the 'to-camera piece' in

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[21] Renov, 'Video Confession', p. 79. The word 'partner' here was a quote by Renov from Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1, An Introduction.* Robert Hurley (trans.) (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p.61. Foucault's use of the word 'partner' suggests the role of the confessor not only as the interlocutor but also as the authority in the confession, which highlights the power relationship within the traditional confession situation. In video confession, however, the 'partner' is replaced by the video camera, or the image double of the diarist him/her-self in the viewfinder. This situation, as Renov describes later in his discussion, becomes a do-it-yourself 'techno-analysis'.

[22] Ibid., p.90.

[23] The term 'to-camera piece' has many variations. In Dowmunt's discussion, it is called 'the piece to camera' (Tony Dowmunt, 'Dear Camera: Video Diaries, Subjectivity and Media Power', p.8). In Jon Dovey's discussion, it is sometimes called 'to camera interview style' or 'to-camera close-up' (Jon Dovey, *Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p.72). It is a method that derives from broadcast TV. In the video diary, it transforms and 'becomes another way of creating high levels of identification with the filmmaker' (Dovey, *Freakshow*, p.73).

video diary-filmmaking, first and foremost, has the ability to record sound and image simultaneously. It matters for the following reasons: first, the diarist is not only visually, but also audibly present 'on-screen'. In a 'to-camera piece' situation, which is very similar to a TV news report presented by an anchor, the audience (including the diarist him or herself) witnesses both the diarist in the image and the diarist on the sound track. This unity of image and sound of the diarist becomes a manifestation of the authorship of the video diary-film, and through the instant feedback and the establishment of the communication between the diarist and his/her partner, his/her technological double, this authorship is further enhanced. Second, as the video camcorder can now record sound and image at the same time, it is important that the voice of the diarist is no longer considered as a form of 'voice-over'. For the 'voice-over' implies that there is a certain distance between the image and the voice (which is recorded afterwards), and also suggests that the image and voice are actually in different places (image is on-screen, and voice off-screen). In video 'to-camera piece' situation, whether it is confession or not, it seems more appropriate to think of the voice as 'on-screen soliloquy', since the soliloquy is a technique often used in theatre when the 'actor downstage speaks to every member of the audience individually'.[24] However, it is worth noting that in the theatrical soliloquy, as a means of expression for the plot, while the character may seem as if he/she is talking to him or her-self, he/she is actually directly addressing the audience offstage (it is the same with the TV news anchor, who does not talk to his or herself, but to the audience in front of the TV). In the video 'to-camera piece', the diarist's 'on-screen soliloquy' is at the same time addressed to his and herself (the mirror reflection) and to the implied audience, or, to the virtual presence of a 'partner' as the confessor in confessional sense. Therefore, when I use the term 'on-screen soliloquy', it has different implications from theatrical and TV use (it is also important to note that whether in theatre and television, the role of the character and the anchor can always be substituted for another), and I use it here

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[24] Dovey, *Freakshow*, p.73.

exclusively for the 'to-camera piece' in the making of the video diary-film. Sue Dinsmore argues in her article 'Strategies for Self-Scrutiny: *Video Diaries* 1990–1993' that the video LCD viewfinder functions both as 'mirror, in which the writer's mind is reflected, and as a window through which he "perceives and observes the world around him"'.[25] Here the viewfinder is playing an important role. Not only does it provides a channel from which the diarist can see and perceive the world around them, but it also becomes a reflecting surface from which the diarist is able to see his/her own reflection and get instant feedback. In *Weather Diary 5*, Kuchar adopts the 'on-screen soliloquy' technique several times and also makes variations of it – an 'off-screen soliloquy' – by placing his body behind the camera. In the beginning of the diary, Kuchar makes an on-screen appearance and places an ice blue tablet into his mouth in order to show what blue looks like without doing the white-balancing and colour correction first on his video camcorder. The ice blue tablet dissolves on his tongue, falls out on the bed sheet, and is then picked up again. Kuchar, then, produces an on-screen soliloquy: 'Ice blue. Sticky iced blue' (01:20-01:38). Another example comes in about in the middle of the diary, when Kuchar is watching a television show. He sees an actor with an exuberant but funny hairdo. Then the camera turns to Kuchar. He touches his hair as if he is jealous of that actor's hair and says: 'Take a look at mine' (12:47) [**Figure 5-2**].

| Kuchar's mouth | Watching TV | Hair |

Figure 5-2: Stills from *Weather Diary 5*

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[25] Sue Dinsmore, 'Strategies for Self-Scrutiny: *Video Diaries* 1990-1993', in Duncan Petrie and Colin MacCabe (eds.) *New Scholarship From BFI Research* (London: British Film Institute, 1996), p.43.

It seems that Kuchar cares about his hair very much. Near the end of the diary, when Kuchar visits Gloria's beauty salon, Gloria takes him for a little tour and shows what kind of products she has in store. Gloria introduces a special shampoo for swimmers which can take the chlorine out of the hair so it won't turn green. The next inserted scene is of Kuchar staying in his hotel room. The camera turns to him and he touches his hair again and says: 'I think grey and green match though' (16:32-16:43). These three 'on-screen soliloquy' examples show that the video viewfinder does function as a mirror; it enables the diarist to see him or her-self on the screen with immediate playback, and at the same time reveal private, personal aspects of the filmmaker's body (mouth, tongue, hair) and express feelings (Kuchar's grey hair as a symbol of growing old). The private thoughts and secrets of the diarist can be revealed within the space which the viewfinder creates between the diarist and the screen, and by the fact that during video diary-film production, there is no need for a film crew to be on the spot and the diarist does not need to acquire the professional techniques of filmmaking. More importantly, there is no need to send the video tape to a laboratory for processing. The results can be seen immediately without the intervention of a third party; hence, it creates a certain private and safe space for the diarist to explore his or herself. As Maria Pini points out, during the making of the video, 'there is no film crew present, people act as though they were not being watched or as though the camera were not actually there'.[26] In this safe space, secrets can be revealed, intimacy can be disclosed.

More examples of private revelations happen later in *Weather Diary 5*: there is a scene where Kuchar uses athlete foot spray on his left foot in front of the camera and says: 'I need something to combat fungus' (15:35-15:47). This is the kind of scene that is unlikely to happen in home movies, to return to Chalfen: 'Several other characteristics of appropriate on-camera participants further reveal the pattern….On-camera participants

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[26] Maria Pini, 'Video Diaries: Questions of Authenticity and Fabrication', *Screening the Past* (2001), p.4.

are almost always in good health. People who are ill and bedridden with a communicable disease or a broken limb are generally not included. One does not see a person vomiting in home movies'.[27] More characteristics are provided in Chalfen's discussion on the appropriate behavior in relation to the home movie, in which certain negativities are hidden (or deleted) in order to answer to expectations of the home as harmonious and unified. This is, however, not the case with the video diary-film. When deliberately exposing his limb (the foot) and showing his disease (athlete's foot) on screen [**Figure 5-3**], Kuchar breaks the taboo of home movies and enters the private sphere of video diary-keeping, where a safe space is provided by the video camcorder (for more extreme examples, there are more intimate scenes which Kuchar is not afraid to share in *Weather Diary 3*, in which he shows himself masturbating in the shower and his own faeces in a toilet bowl).

'I need something to combat fungus' (15:35-15:47).
Figure 5-3: Still from *Weather Diary 5*

Later in the diary, Kuchar shows his nipple to the camera as he is reading a book about a flying saucer suggesting this is 'more stimulating reading' (29:10). One might find this scene interesting because the analogic resemblance between the flying saucer and Kuchar's nipple (they are both round in shape). However, this scene is more than just a little joke that Kuchar is trying to make, and a further contextual reading is necessary to understand the intention behind the scene. In Scott Trotter's interview with Kuchar, he asks Kuchar about the repeated themes in his diaries: 'Weather comes up a lot in your

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[27] Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, p.59.

work, as do UFOs and sex?' Kuchar answers: 'Well, sex [is a] thing you can't help; it's the driving force to make movies. You can't dampen that or you lose the desire to make pictures. It's a fueling thing that helps give you the energy to make pictures…It's a motivation'.[28] This piece of information links together Kuchar's fascination with the weather and flying saucers, his sexuality, and his filmmaking practice. As Kuchar explains in the interview, the desire to make movies is the same as sex and his other interests (weather and UFOs), which are all combined together in his *Weather Diary 5*. Nevertheless, it is also these desires that provoke his frustration in making his video diary-films. Before the scene when he shows his nipple, he is reading a book about a flying saucer [**Figure 5-4**]. Soon he closes the book and looks outside (where there is nothing happening). It is obvious that the flying-saucer book does not satisfy his need for distraction. In *Weather Diary 5*, he has never actually chased tornados (or witnessed a flying saucer); instead he stays indoors and watches/listens to weather broadcasts. Moreover, he obtains sexual pleasure from peeping at young men from his room, but he never has physical contact with them. The frustration of Kuchar's desire is everywhere in *Weather Diary 5*. Kuchar pursues his desires yet they will never be fully fulfilled – it is as if he operates a constantly moving car that always consumes and requires fuel at the same time.

'more stimulating reading' (29:10).
Figure 5-4: Still from *Weather Diary 5*

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[28] Trotter, 'George Kuchar: Interview by Scott Trotter':
http://www.eurounderground.org/filmmaker/kuchar.htm [accessed 20 January 2014].

5.1.4 Variation: Off-Screen Soliloquy

Aside from directly showing himself on screen and using on-screen soliloquy, in *Weather Diary 5*, Kuchar also makes an 'off-screen soliloquy' as a variation of the on-screen soliloquy by switching his place constantly around the camera. In the beginning of the diary, it is raining heavily outside, and Kuchar stays in the hotel room and aims his camera at the empty parking lot. The off-screen soliloquy of Kuchar comes in: 'It looks like blue Monday, but it isn't. It's Friday' (00:48-00:51). Later in the diary, when Kuchar is observing the clouds in the sky, another off-screen soliloquy comes in: 'It's over there in the East! But, ah...happened all over the place…' (04:38-04:43). Also, near the end of the video diary, Kuchar stays in his room, videotaping outside after a thunderstorm has just passed and the sky is clearing up. An old lady comes out, and Kuchar says behind the camera: 'Everybody is coming out to do their thing. Stop raining. Oh great! She's got some mail' (37:08-37:13) [**Figure 5-5**].

'Blue Monday'   'Over there in the East!'   'She's got some mail'

Figure 5-5: Stills from *Weather Diary 5*

In these three examples, Kuchar is no longer the object of observation (in front of the camera), but an observer and a commentator behind the camera. The video camcorder simultaneously records what he sees (on-screen images) and what he says (off-screen voice), for the sound recording device is already built-in to the camcorder. Sounds (voices) and images are not printed on the film strips, but are transformed into magnetic signals and locked immutably together on the video tape. The apparatus enables Kuchar to

maintain his authorial presence: even when his image is not on-screen, the already visualized voice (it is confirmed from the beginning when Kuchar first uses the 'to-camera piece' technique on-screen) functions as the image-double of Kuchar, and at the same time, for it is recorded simultaneously with the images, preserves the continuity and the unity of the space and time of recording. Therefore, despite being visually absent from the screen, Kuchar's physical presence is replaced by the presence of his off-screen soliloquy and it is this off-screen soliloquy that connects his body behind the camera and maintains the authorship of Kuchar as the video diary-film maker. Here a comparison can be made between the film voice-over and the video soliloquy by using again the breakfast scene in Mekas's *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* as an example. In the breakfast scene, as I have discussed earlier in this chapter, Mekas's authorial presence is felt but incomplete. For in the scene, the images are shot in Marseilles, but the voice-over (the song Mekas sings: 'I am searching for nothing. I am happy…') and the background music are added not only later but somewhere else. Here the 'I' in the song and the 'I' who is adjusting the camera 'may' not belong to the same person, for their identical relation is not guaranteed but suggested. In the video soliloquy the connection between the diarist and the camera is well-maintained and more straightforward for the following reasons: first, the easy access and operation of the video apparatus allow the diarist to turn the camera at him/her-self and, at the same time, the video-maker can record images without the need of continuously pushing the button. Furthermore, the video also allows the diarist to simultaneously see his/her images while recording. Second, the sync-sound recording with the images does not break the connection between the body of the diarist and the video camcorder, and hence guarantee the identification of the voice 'I' and the 'I' who is recording.

5.1.5 The Mirror Machine and the Imagined Audience

It is interesting that in the 'watching television show' scene (12:47), Kuchar not only talks to himself at the camera, but also 'invites'[29] the audience to join him by saying: 'Take a look at mine (hair)'. Here the viewfinder functions not only as the 'mirror' that provides Kuchar's self-exploration, but also as a 'window', as Dinsmore suggests, which both perceives the world around Kuchar, and also projects to 'someone else' out there. A question immediately emerges: to whom is Kuchar talking? Is the video diary-film (as well as the diary film) made not just for oneself or as a private activity? Or is there always an invisible someone else for whom the diary is made for? Kuchar was asked the same question in an interview he gave to Felix Bernstein in 2011 in 'George Kuchar's Otherworldly Humanity'. The question is 'Do you feel like you're making your films for a certain audience? Like your diary films, who are you making those for?' Kuchar answers: 'I make them for me so I can remember the friends, the places, the time I had. Good times…And to see if you can *relay* that to an audience, the public. The paying public. See if they can get a *feel* for the place, a feel for the mood, for the people'[30] (my italics). This interview exemplifies that Kuchar, when making his video diary-films, is aware of the existence of the audience. Through the 'window' of the viewfinder, Kuchar 'relays' his feelings to the audience. Coincidentally, Ruth Holiday, in her article 'Reflecting the Self: Video Diaries, Identity Performances and Queer Methodologies', also identifies the camcorder not only as a mirror machine but also an *confessional* mirror which can 'further explains the candour with which the diaries are made, since one cannot (and should not desire to) have secrets from one's self'.[31] Her argument adds another level

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[29] As I have mentioned in Chapter Two, in the diary film, the diary filmmaker 'invites' the audience to enter the diary, sharing the diary rather the communicating with them. For more discussion, please see Chapter Two.

[30] Charles Bernstein and Susan Bee, 'George Kuchar's Otherworldly Humanity', *The Brooklyn Rail*, 10 December 2011. http://www.brooklynrail.org/2011/12/film/george-kuchars-otherworldly-humanity [accessed 18 January 2014].

[31] Ruth Holiday, 'Reflecting the Self: Video Diaries, Identity Performances and Queer Methodologies', in Caroline Knowles and Paul Sweetman (eds.) *Picturing the Social Landscape* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.5.

to the video diary-film soliloquy: the diarist talks to him or her-self indeed, and at the same time reproduces a situation similar to the confession, and talks to an apparently religious listener behind the curtain as if it were a priest. It is not important who is listening, what matters is that there is a listener. Hence, the viewfinder becomes a confessional mirror, where the diarist confesses his/her feelings, fears, and thoughts to us (the invisible listeners) as if we were his/her confidante (Kuchar's confidantes also include his portable weather radio, which he calls Jack, as well as a little bug that stays with him in his hotel room during his stay. Near the end of the diary, before Kuchar leaves the hotel room, he says to the bug: 'Hey, listen, take care of yourself. And don't eat too much, alright?' [32:47-32:51]) [**Figure 5-6**], even though this confidante, as Tony Dowmunt describes in 'Dear Camera: Video Diaries, Subjectivity and Media Power', 'would never answer back'.[32]

Jack.   The bug.

Figure 5-6: Kuchar's Confidantes

However, as discussed in the Introduction, the concept of the imagined audience is somehow contradictory to the diary genre, which is personal and private, and is not meant for public viewing. Lynn Z. Bloom, in her article '"I Write for Myself and Strangers": Private Diaries as Public Documents', distinguishes the difference between the truly private diaries and the private diaries as public documents. She argues that the truly private diaries are 'written for (primarily) to keep records of receipts and expenditures…and written with neither art nor artifice…They exhibit no foreshadowing

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[32] Dowmunt, 'Dear Camera', p.10.

and scarcely a retrospective glance expect to keep score…'[33] On the contrary, the private diaries as public documents are always 'artfully shaped…broader in scope and more fully developed they admit of far greater variation in form and technique'.[34] Here I would like to expand her argument in order to legitimize the premise that the video diary-film (and diary film) does have an imagined audience. From her observation we can sum up that the truly private diary is terse in form and style, whereas in the private diary as public document, there is a more embellishment in terms of narrative techniques. Two examples are provided in Bloom's article: the first one, a truly private diary – written by an anonymous Michigan farm wife in 1949:[35]

> Friday February 4, 1949 – 3 eggs.
> Little snow fell. I sent letters to Norali and Mrs. Smith. Got one from Betty.
> I did my ironing, While Roy and Jack went to the sale. Roy bought another
> calf there at 8:30 C and C came. Brought the grocery's $2.66. They stayed
> until mid-nite. had a nice evening, had a lunch. Now jack went to bed. I'm
> going soon.

The second example, the private diary as public document, is Anne Frank's entry for 30 September 1942:[36]

> This morning we were glad that the plumber didn't come, because his son
> who was in Germany and had returned, was having to go back again because
> he had received another call-up. Mr. Levinsohn came instead, he had to boil
> up test samples for Mr. Kugler. It wasn't very pleasant, because this person,
> just like the plumber, knows the whole house, so we had to be as quiet as
> mice.

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[33] Lynn Z. Bloom, '"I Write for Myself and Strangers": Private Diaries as Public Documents', in Suzamme L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff (eds.) *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), pp.25-26.
[34] Ibid., p.28.
[35] Bloom, '"I Write for Myself and Strangers"', p.26.
[36] Ibid., p.30

The diary of the Michigan farm wife is terse and over-simplified (omission of the subject in a sentence, and the word 'night' becomes 'nite'). Events are condensed into incomplete sentences, and there are also a few grammatical mistakes ([w]hile, [H]ad). A coded name 'C' also appears, as she does not wish to uncover C's identity, or simply because she does not think it is necessary to uncover it. More importantly, there is only one adjective used in the entry (had a 'nice' evening). On the other hand, in Anne Frank's diary entry, it is clearly more of a public document. Many adjectives are used in the entry (glad, pleasant, quiet), and a literary technique of metaphor is used ('quiet as mice'). Generally speaking, the use of adjective, a technique, suggests that the writer is trying to express his/her subjective feelings, and furthermore, manifests the existences of the 'I' in the text and the 'other' who would 'receive' their address. This is what is lacking in the Michigan farm wife's diary, even though she does use one adjective, since it is not enough to confirm her unique authorial presence into the text. Here what I'd like to stress is that it is the intention of writing (private and public, domestic and artful), which makes these two diary entries different in the first place. By adopting narrative techniques, the private diary is transformed into a public document, as if the diarist is trying to tell a story to the 'other', an imagined audience, who hovers at the edge of the page, rather than merely document events without subjective intervention. Subjective intervention, whether in the written diary, the diary film, or the video diary-film, is accomplished through the use of narrative strategies: adjectives, metaphors, editing, flashbacks, and foreshadowing. Jonas Mekas and Hollis Frampton use retrospective voice-over to suture the past and also to manifest their authorships through voice-over; Saul Levine adopts subjective camera shots and idiosyncratic editing as narrative strategies. In *Weather Diary 5,* Kuchar directly appears on-screen and addresses both himself and the imagined audience (via the use of the 'to-camera piece'). From the above mentioned scene where Kuchar's soliloquy says: 'Take a look at mine', we know that he has already sent out his invitation to the imagined audience for his video diary-film. However, it is up to the diarist the extent to which

he/she wants to reveal his/her secret. The invitation is sent out to the imagined audience, but the content of the diary is still under the diarist's control. Kuchar's soliloquy 'take a look at mine' suggests that 'this is the part where I would like to share with you, my dear confidantes, and only this part, nothing more'. Thus, the relationship between the diarist and the imagined audience has an essentially ambiguous status, between public and private, a locked-up secret that is only revealed to those who hold the key.

5.1.6 In-Camera Editing: the Access Mode

In *On Diary*, Philippe Lejeune states that 'the diarist can neither *compose* nor *correct*. He must say the right thing on the first try'.[37] The correction or revision of the diary as text does not add any value to the diary. However, in the diary film, whether it is the perceptive mode or the retrospective mode, the revision happens in the process of post-production: that is, in the editing. Especially in the retrospective mode, when text, voice-over, title card, or music is added later, the diary film is transformed into a narrative. Yet, in the video diary-film, because of the technical possibility of immediate playback, a different method of revision may apply. George Kuchar's *Weather Diary 5* was shot and edited mostly in-camera. In the interview with Scott Trotter, Kuchar explains his editing technique: 'I enjoy working with it that way (editing in-camera), and made it totally independent. You don't have to go to the lab all the time and deal with all the people…You can do the whole thing right there for not only so cheap, but done right in the machine…that's what turned me on!'[38] Some music and special effects were added afterwards, but basically he does intercutting and image arrangement in-camera, and sees the results immediately. Some scenes are moved and taped over in a random and improvised manner, and create a dialectical effect between Kuchar and the camera and

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[37] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.182.
[38] Trotter, 'George Kuchar: Interview by Scott Trotter'.
   http://www.eurounderground.org/filmmaker/kuchar.htm [accessed 20 January 2014].

between the recorded images (shot/reverse shot conversation). According to Christine

Tamblyn, Kuchar's method is: 'First, he records a basic track. Then, like a Jazz musician

playing around with riffs, he punctuates this material by inserting new shots. This method

makes it impossible for the tapes to be assembled in strict chronological order; Kuchar's

compositional strategies thus differ markedly from those used in written diaries'.[39] In

Weather Diary 5, near the middle of the diary, Kuchar visits Gloria's beauty salon. After

saying hello to her, the film jumps to an outdoor scene of a deserted hotel vestige with

Kuchar's voice-over: 'I met Gloria when she used to run this hotel' (13:44). And then the

film returns to Gloria's beauty salon when Gloria's mother, Ruth, is doing Gloria's hair.

Gloria says: 'No, I just know the retailing. She (Ruth) knows the hair business. I know the

retail business' (13:53-14:01) [**Figure 5-7**].

Gloria's beauty salon   deserted hotel (inserted)   Gloria and her mother Ruth

Figure 5-7: In-Camera Editing in *Weather Diary 5*

The outdoor scene is clearly anachronistic. It was probably taped after the beauty salon

scene but inserted here to interrupt the continuity of the beauty salon scene. The old entry

(the salon scene) is overlaid with a new entry (the hotel vestige scene), and a connection

between what Gloria used to do and what she does now is made by the dialectic editing of

two different diary entries or scenes. Another anachronistic insertion also appears later in

the beauty salon scene. When Gloria is introducing her beauty products in the store, the

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[39] Christine Tamblyn, 'Qualifying the Quotidian: Artist's Video and the Production of Social Space', in Renov and Suderburg (eds.) *Resolutions: Contemporary Video Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p.19. Also noted that this is the third time the importance of Jazz music is highlighted in the process of diary filmmaking. Discussions of the relationship between the diary film and Jazz music can also be found in Chapter Three (Jonas Mekas and Spontaneity) and Chapter Four (Saul Levine's phonographic record).

following scene jumps to when Kuchar stays indoors and is using the athlete foot spray on his left foot. Kuchar says: 'They (Kuchar's feet) gonna smell like roses. What else you got, Gloria?' The next scene goes back to the salon, when Gloria continues introducing her products: 'Nail care, lipstick liners, outliners, hair lotion…' (15:24-15:50) [**Figure 5-8**].

Gloria's beauty products   Kuchar's athlete foot (inserted)   Gloria's beauty products

Figure 5-8: In-Camera Editing in *Weather Diary 5*

Here, again the foot scene is inserted between two salon scenes. It seems likely that Gloria's continuous introduction of her product display is deliberately interrupted. By inserting the foot scene and placing it between two introduction scenes, Kuchar deliberately revises the original scene and tries to create a conversation (a question and a response) between Gloria and himself with the insertion of a new scene taped at a different time and location. Here, the in-camera editing provides another level of temporality into the video diary-film. It is different from the retrospective mode (Jonas Mekas) and the perceptive mode (Saul Levine). I shall call it the 'access-mode' of the video diary-filmmaking. The foundations of the access-mode lie in the video apparatus ability for instant playback and fast-forward and rewind. The viewfinder gives the video-maker the access to enter/leave the diary entry and manipulate it at will. In the second example, when Kuchar visits Gloria, there are three layers of footage and temporality in the final outcome: the first layer of footage is recorded during Kuchar's visit to Gloria's shop (Layer 1), the second layer of footage is recorded when Kuchar uses the foot spray (Layer 2). L2 was then used (the application of the in-camera editing) as an insertion in L1 and created a whole new scene and temporality (Layer 3) [**Figure 5-9**].
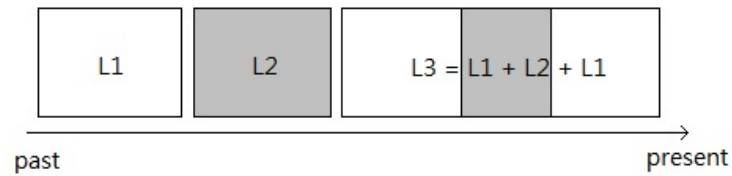
Figure 5-9: Three Layers of Temporalities of Kuchar's In-Camera Editing

From the illustration, it is clear that the L1 footage was recorded first, and then was the L2. The L3 was not recorded but *created* by the in-camera editing technique, and positioned in the last of those three. The temporality here in the L3 is complex, because of it consists of two different temporalities (the temporalities of the L1 and the L2), and furthermore, by placing the two different temporalities in achronological order (L1→L2→L1), Kuchar creates a dialogical relation across time and space (Kuchar's question 'What else you got, Gloria?' actually took place and was recorded *after* Gloria's answer 'Nail care, lipstick liners, outliners, hair lotion…'). The access mode of the video diary-film, in which the diarist freely enters, leaves, and manipulates the footage with the help of technological novelties, leaves the trace of the diarist and at the same time challenges the chronology of the conventional diary form.

5.1.7 Conclusion

George Kuchar's *Weather Diary 5* demonstrates the characteristics of the video diary-film. With the various capacities of the apparatus, the video camcorder is able to record sound and image simultaneously and instantly transmit them onto the screen/monitor. It guarantees and reinforces the authorial presence by establishing a strong connection between the body of the diarist and the camera (the *paluche*, the handycam*)* and, moreover, consolidating the voice 'I' and the image 'I' of the diarist in the on-screen soliloquy situation. Different to the film voice-over, video's on-screen soliloquy is completed *on the spot* as the image is being recorded. Video's on-screen soliloquy

transforms the video camcorder into a silent interlocutor who sees and listens, and provides the diarist with possibilities to confess, explore, understand, analyse and release. Furthermore, Kuchar's in-camera editing technique challenges the conventional concept of linear editing. The arrangement of audio-visual materials is now no longer edited on the editing table, but completely within the video camcorder (on the spot). Video technology gives a greater freedom and editorial control to the diarist to accumulate the footage (move, re-arrange, or erase scenes in a non-linear fashion). At the same time, the attached viewfinder provides the diarists access and they are now able to: see his/her own reflection (camera as a mirror), or address the imagined audience through on-screen soliloquy (camera as a window), to switch places (as the diarist appears on-screen and off-screen), and to move freely in time (as in the access-mode). It is also important that in the access-mode, the concept of image should be considered as blocks of imagery signals rather than a film strip or frames, and as non-linear achronology rather than linear chronology. By entering the space created by the video apparatus and the video diary entry, the diarist can now manipulate the imagery blocks through fast-forwarding and rewinding, and therefore create a unique temporality that specifically belongs to the access-mode of video diary making.

5.2 Digital Video Diary-Film: Shine Lin's *Blues Biyori*[40]

5.2.1 Analogue Video and Digital Video

As discussed in the first section of this chapter, I am interested in underlining similarities shared by analogue and digital video. However, when talking about 'video', it

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[40] *Blues Biyori*. [diary film, DVD], Dir. Shine Lin. Taiwan, 2007, 27mins 30secs. [Shih Hsin University, 2007]. In Shine Lin's description, the film title 'Blues Biyori' has multiple meaning: 'blues can be interpreted as 'blues music' or 'melancholy'; 'biyori' is Japanese, written as 「日和」in Japanese kanji, meaning 'a good day for…' (Shine Lin, 'Creation Description of *Blues Biyori*', Master thesis, Shih Hsin University, Taipei, 2007, p.63).

should be noted that 'video' is a general, broad, and sometimes vague term. It is a catch-all for different formats of video technology, as well as various kinds of art works, including movies made on video, video art for gallery exhibition purposes, and general every day domestic use. From a technical perspective, 'video' could mean both analogue video and digital video. However, the distinction between analogue and digital video is not clear-cut (we call both kinds of artists who use digital or analogue formats 'video-makers'). In her article 'Visible Scan Lines: On the Transition from Analog Film and Video to Digital Moving Image', Catherine Elwes suggests that for film/video makers, the transition from analogue to digital is not as difficult as it was initially anticipated. On the contrary, the technical transition is made easier because of the shared similarities of the two media – the encoded information and the transmission of image and sound, the simultaneous recording of image and sound, the long recording time, its portability, and the opportunity for immediate feedback through the apparatus. Analogue and digital video technology as creative production tools, automatically generate, store, encode, decode, and play the image and sound. The whole process is completed or contained within the video camera. Both analogue and digital video have also one more thing in common; that is, the inaccessibility of the frame and the image itself to any form of physical contact, meaning that, unlike celluloid film, video images cannot be manually or physically manipulated. When the film-maker looks at the magnetic tape or the digital storing device (memory card or hard drive), he/she does not see the images and the frames, he/she sees nothing. The audiovisual material is already encoded into electronic signals and can only be read and decoded by the video device. As the video artist Chris Meigh-Andrews says when dealing with the transition from the analogue to the digital video practice: 'we did it in steps, but we are already working with a malleable signal that was stored and processed electronically, and displayed electronically'.[41] Meigh-Andrews's statement suggests that,

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[41] Catherine Elwes, 'Visible Scan Lines: On the Transition from Analog Film and Video to Digital Moving Image', *Millennium Film Journal*, No. 58 (2013), p.62.

from the perspective of the user, analogue video and digital video are not distinctively clear-cut in image producing and processing. It is from this perspective that I frame my argument in this section: rather than discussing the differences between analogue and digital video, which could easily shift focus away from the concept of the diary, I shall focus more on how the diarist adopts the technology in his/her diary video-filmmaking practice, and how the technology achieves what celluloid film format could not. From a technical point of view, Kuchar's *Weather Diary* series includes and exploits several characteristics of the analogue video diary-film: self-sufficiency (it is a low budget, one-man production), the direct address or 'to-camera piece' (the soliloquy), and the potential to play with different temporalities (the access-mode). In Shine Lin's digital video diary-film, *Blues Biyori*, the same characteristics remain obvious but with a few variations.

5.2.2 A Route from North America to Taiwan

In the first section of this chapter I have discussed the analogue video diary-film of George Kuchar, *Weather Diary 5*, in which Kuchar fully utilizes the inherent capabilities and the potentialities of the analogue video technology. On his annual journeys to chase tornados (even though he never *actually* chases tornados), Kuchar completes his *Weather Diary* series. The first one of the series, *Weather Diary 1*, was completed in 1986, and the last one, *Weather Diary 6*, was completed in 1990. From these serial video diary-films, certain characteristics of the video diary are highlighted. From a thematic point of view, Kuchar's *Weather Diary* series is not only a documentation of weather reports, but serve as records of his journeys to search and face his own fantasies, discontent, and desires. The annual visit to Oklahoma for Kuchar is an escape from his busy city life to quiet, unfamiliar countryside. The process and experience of the journey, whether it is geographical or mental, seems to be the universal theme in diary filmmaking practice. For example, in Na'Ou Liu's *Man with a Camera* (1933) series discussed in Chapter Two, he kept his diary

of a trip to Japan. In Chapter Three, Jonas Mekas's *The Song of Avila* is a diary of his day in Avila in Spain in 1967. In a broader sense, the diary itself is an on-going process, one entry after another entry without knowing the end, just like the experience of a journey, which takes the traveller from one place to another place, one stop after another.

In 21st Century Taiwan, there is a digital video diary-film maker, who has probably coincidentally followed a similar path to George Kuchar. In her Master's thesis film *Blues Biyori*, Shine Lin (Chien Lin) adopts a low budget, minimal approach to production by using a simple low-definition digital camera to document her diary and the journey from Taiwan to Japan, and her quest for a sense of self and home. The video diary-films of Kuchar and Lin have many similarities, although they use different video formats, and can be aligned in the discussion of the characteristics of the analogue video diary-film and the digital video diary-film. The completion of Lin's *Blues Biyori* is significant. Firstly, it is the first Master's thesis film that adopts the form of the diary film in Taiwan, where previously most student productions had concentrated on the feature film and documentary. Secondly, it connects and continues the legacy of diary filmmaking in US in the 1960s, as Lin's supervisor Yung-Hao Liu[42] undoubtedly inspired Lin through his Home Movie Studies course in the department in Shih Hsin University in 2005 (the first draft of the film *Blues Biyori* was completed as the assignment for the same course). Finally, and most

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[42] Prof. Yung-Hao Liu, finished his PhD in film and literature in Université Paris VIII, came back to Taiwan and started his teaching career in Shih Hsin University in 2003. During the Home Movie Studies course, Liu introduced researches and studies on home movies and diary film of Roger Odin, Eric de Kuyper, Patricia Zimmermann, Jean-Pierre Esquenazi and American Avant-Garde Cinema movement during the 1960s; he also introduced experimental films made with/in home movies form, such as *Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania* (Jonas Mekas, 1972), *Trying to Kiss the Moon* (Stephen Dwoskin, 1994), *Before You Go: A Daughter's Diary* (Nicole Betancourt, 1995), *La Pudeur ou l'impudeur* (*Modesty and Shame,* Hervé Guibert, 1992), etc. This course opened up the mind of the young generation filmmakers born around 1980s.

importantly, the Taiwanese filmmakers Chung-li Kao[43] and Tony Chun-hui Wu[44] joined the teaching faculty in the department of Radio, Television and Film in 2006, enabling a connection between the 1960s avant-garde film movement in Taiwan and a new generation of Taiwanese filmmaker. For Kao was directly influenced by the first wave of the *Theatre Quarterly* in the 1960s and the Golden Harvest Award in the 1970s in Taiwan, whereas Wu, studied his filmmaking from Kuchar and other experimental filmmakers from the 1960s and 1970s in the San Francisco Art Institute and Bard College, and he was therefore directly influenced by the American avant-garde film tradition. Kao and Wu respectively represent the descendants of the avant-garde film in Taiwan and in North America, and furthermore, act as a point of merger between the two traditions. As Prof. Jay Shih (Chang Jay Shih),[45] who is also an experimental film and animation filmmaker, says: 'Fortunately, a number of young filmmakers (Shine Lin, Ming-Yu Lee,[46] Shu-ting Jiang,[47] Ellen Pan,[48] Ming-yan Su,[49] Jeng Ru Ying[50]) from this department and National Taiwan University of Arts (Ellen Pan) have produced innovative and experimental works drawing on the legacy of earlier Taiwanese and American filmmakers, proving that the tradition of Taiwanese experimental filmmaking is never distinct' (my translation).[51] Shih's comment recognizes the emerging young experimental filmmakers in Taiwan, starting from Shine Lin, as they

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[43] Chung-li Kao, born in 1958. He started working with photography and experimental film-making in the early 1980s. He is the important figure in the history of Taiwanese experimental filmmaking after the *Theatre Quarterly* generation. More discussion of Kao and his *Home Movie* (1988) can be found in Chapter Two.

[44] Tony Chun-Hui Wu, born in 1970. He graduated from San Francisco Art Institute and Bard College. He is one of the co-founders and the curators of Image-Movement Cinematheque, which was founded in 2002. More discussion of Wu can also be found in Chapter Two.

[45] Jay Shih (Chang jay Shih), born in 1960. Taiwanese independent and experimental animation filmmaker. He had won several awards in the Golden Harvest Award in the 1970s. His *A Fish with a Smile* also won the Special Prize of the Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk for best short film at the 56th Berlin International Film Festival in 2006.

[46] Ming-Yu Lee, born in 1980. He graduated from Shih Hsin University, Graduate Institute for Radio, Television, and Film in 2008. He completed his Master's thesis diary film *Going Home* in 2008.

[47] Shu-ting Jiang graduated from Shih Hsin University, Graduate Institute for Radio, Television, and Film in 2008. Her Master's thesis film *Animagemalanguage* was completed in 2008.

[48] Ellen Pan (I-Chieh Pan) graduated from National Taiwan University of Arts, Graduate School of Applied Media Arts in 2010. Her Master's thesis experimental film *Body Phenomenon* was completed in 2010.

[49] Ming-yan Su graduated from Shih Hsin University, Graduate Institute for Radio, Television, and Film in 2011. His Master's thesis diary film *Daylight Developing* was completed in 2011.

[50] Jeng-Ju Ying graduated from Shih Hsin University, Graduate Institute for Radio, Television, and Film in 2012. His Master's thesis experimental film *Body at Large* was completed in 2012.

[51] Wu, *Stranger Than Cinema*, p.11.

not only re-connect to the heritage of avant-garde film since 1960 (both in Taiwan and in America), but also bring new life to the future of the Taiwanese avant-garde film. However, I'd like to point out that among the six young filmmakers Prof. Shih mentions, three of them, Shine Lin, Ming-Yu Lee, and Ming-yan Su, are diary filmmakers. In this section, I will start my discussion by looking at one film, *Blues Biyori*, by Shine Lin, because she was the first of the new generation of Taiwanese avant-garde film, and to underline how there are clear connections between Lin and Kuchar.

First, from technical perspective, Lin works as a minimalist in her process of filming the digital video diary-film. All she has is a small, simple 'point-and-shoot' digital camera with two 1G SD memory cards. More interestingly, this digital camera can only record thirty seconds of moving images at one time. In Lin's own description, since the camera (Casio Z3)

> can only record 30 seconds in the video mode, under the 30-second restriction (not including the saving time of 5 to 10 seconds), I have to give up many long shots. Instead, I use collage to construct the image composition. In this way I am able to grasp the lively fluidity of the image, and how to record more precisely accidental events within 30 seconds. The other thing is the grainy quality of the image, 3-megapixel digital camera works perfectly fine on a sunny day…but not at night, indoor, or cloudy day…Even so, in the making of the home movie and the diary film, this poor quality contrarily gives a sense of reality. The sense of reality and the naturalistic freehanded style is something that the high definition DV and HDV could not accomplish (my translation).[52]

The technical limitations (30 seconds recording and low resolution) do not stifle the creativity – on the contrary, they enable an innovative means of expression in diary-filmmaking. Lin's 30-second-limitation replicates a kind of urgency in the diary filmmaker to capture life that is familiar in Jonas Mekas's manifestation: '[i]f I can film ten seconds –

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[52] Lin, 'Creation Description of *Blues Biyori*', pp.58-59.

I film ten seconds'.[53] Both of them are, in some way, conscious of the fleeting nature of time and its limitations in their diary filmmaking.

Second, from a thematic perspective, like *Weather Diary 5*, *Blues Biyori* is a journey of Shine Lin moving geographically (from Taiwan to Japan in 2006 to 2007) and mentally (a journey to search for herself and a readjustment of her relationship with her mother). The opening scene of *Blues Biyori* clearly suggests the fluid quality of Lin's outer and inner journey: a train apparently moving backwards with sounds of people talking and other noises in the background. The place where this footage was shot is not identified (it is probably in Japan, but Lin intentionally leaves out any description). The unconventional shot of a train moving backwards and the unidentified location give rise not to a clear destination, but an escape from the familiar into the unknown.

5.2.3 The Home: Friends, Bands, and Music

The film *Blues Biyori* consists of three chapters: 'Shifting at Rest, Rest in Shifting', 'Outsider and Infinity Drifting', and 'Mother and I, Past and Present, Self Portrait and Family'. From these three chapters, a route can be drawn on a map. The journey starts from Taiwan (the first chapter), where Lin warmly invites her Japanese friends from a music band called Marikov to her home. Lin introduces them to Taiwanese friends, traditional food, and together they start a music tour (the Drunk Tour) from the north of Taiwan to the south of Taiwan in 2006. In the first chapter, Lin plays her role as a cameraman/woman, who stays behind the camera most of the time and documents the activities of the members of her band Peppermints and the Japanese band Marikov. In a scene in which Lin travels with her friends in a car, she sits in the backseat and points her camera at the driver (05:15). The man sitting next to the driver asks Lin what she is doing,

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[53] Mekas, 'The Diary Film', p.190.

Lin answers: 'I am making home movies' (my translation). This statement is fundamental throughout the first chapter. It not only defines Lin's role as a home movie-maker, rather than documentary filmmaker, but also implies that her authorial position is replaced by her friends as 'family members', as in home movies, there is no singular author.[54] Instead, the whole family participates in the process of home movie-making and viewing. Therefore, in the first section of the film, we see a conventional home movie situation, or, as Chalfen describes in the 'home mode',[55] a film where every member of the family gets to speak and is filmed in front of the camera. They are aware of the existence of Lin and her camera and feel comfortable about it. They deliberately act in funny ways (the members of Marikov imitate robots and dance) and undertake mundane daily activities (playing with her cat, shaving, eating) in front of her camera [**Figure 5-10**].
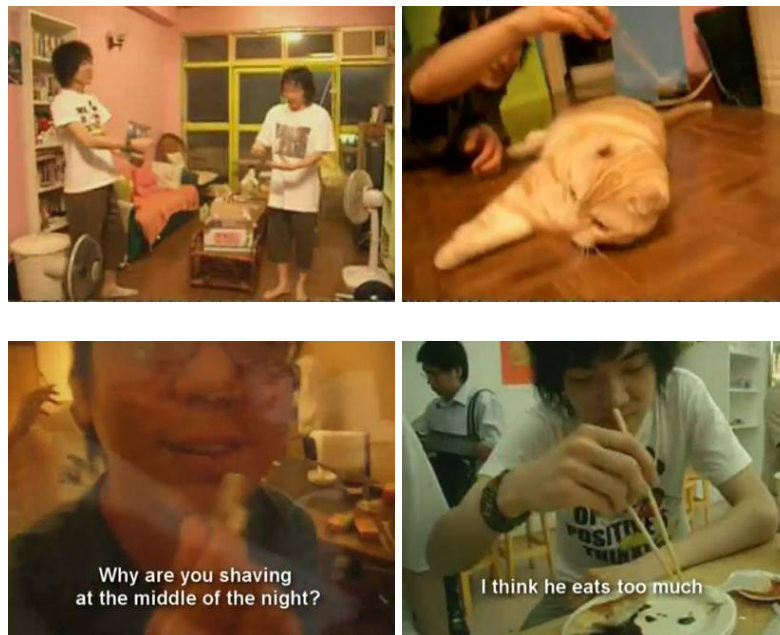
Figure 5-10: Stills from *Blues Biyori*

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[54] The authorship in home movie is collective rather than singular one. As Roger Odin argues that '[even] before existing as a film, the family film has already produced collective and individual effects. What happens during shooting is often more important than the film itself' (Odin, 'Reflections on the Family Home Movie as Document', p.258). Also in my interview with him, Odin emphases that 'the narration of home movie is not inside the movie. It is done by the members of the family looking at the movie. The family gets together. It is during the projection that the narration exists for the home movie' (Roger Odin, Interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 12 December 2012, unpublished material).

[55] Chalfen defines the 'home mode' as 'a pattern of interpersonal and small group communication centered around the home' (Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, p.8). In Lin's case, this small interpersonal and small group equals her music-band friends, and the notion of 'the home' can be seen as a sense of togetherness enforced by their music.

Furthermore, Lin's home movie also includes their music tour (the Drunk Tour): there is one rehearsal and three live performance scenes recorded in the first chapter. Although the actual locations are not annotated, according to Lin's thesis description, the Drunk Tour in 2006 took place dispersedly from the north to the south of Taiwan.[56] Despite the language barrier between Lin and the members of Marikov, they share the same background and interests as underground and independent music bands, and they communicate to each other through music. They live together in Taiwan, share expenses, and go on a music tour together. It is part of Lin's 'Arimitsu commune' project,[57] which according to Lin, is inspired by Marxism and the Hippies in the 60s. The members of this project include filmmakers (mostly Lin's classmates) and musicians from the bands. In this commune, each member contributes his/her specialty, helping each other in the creative process.

5.2.4 Video Selfie

Although the authorial position is mostly subsumed to the community, there are three video-selfie scenes in the first chapter. However, they are different from Kuchar's 'to-camera piece' technique, in which Kuchar speaks directly to the camera. In the first video-selfie scene, Lin holds the camera with one hand and points the camera lens to herself (01:43). In the background there are two other people (probably members of the band but due to the poor image quality they are unrecognizable). Lin walks around in circle, trying to include her friends in the frame, and smiles at the camera, as if she is singing a happy tune (she is the vocalist of her band) [**Figure 5-11**].

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[56] Lin, 'Creation Description of *Blues Biyori*', p.50.
[57] Ibid., p.14. 'Arimitsu' is a Japanese word, 「明るい」. The roughly translation is 'light'.

Figure 5-11: Lin's First Video Selfie (01:43)

The second video-selfie scene takes place in the classroom in the RTF (Radio, Television, and Film) building in Shih Hsin University. During the class break, Lin sits on an armchair with wheels, pointing the camera at herself, and at the same time using her feet to move the chair backwards, as the dolly shot in cinematography. By circling the classroom, Lin also includes her classmates in her home movie footage (thereby capturing her other family – filmmaking partners) [**Figure 5-12**].

Figure 5-12: Lin's Second Video Selfie (04:27)

The third video-selfie scene also takes place at the square outside the RTF building, where Lin takes the same armchair outside and asks her classmates to spin her. It creates a kind of 360-degree pan shot effect. On the sound track we hear Lin talks to her classmates: 'come spin with me!' [**Figure 5-13**]

Figure 5-13: 'Come spin with me!' (05:14)

The last two selfie scenes are especially interesting, because they show that how home movie-maker tries to achieve a professional filmmaking technique through a Do-It-Yourself approach, which does not require high technology and abundant money (by using only a chair). These video-selfie scenes differ from Kuchar's 'piece-to camera' soliloquies for the following reasons: first, Lin is neither talking to herself, nor to the camera. The intention is different. Lin is not seeking approval, understanding, or sympathy as in a video confession. On the contrary, she is inviting and incorporating (literally and figuratively) her friends and family to join her party. Though there are three scenes that take the form of selfie, the first chapter's focus is on the 'family' rather than Lin herself. The concept of 'family' or 'home', for Lin, is constructed in a broader sense, in which the members of it include members of her band, Japanese friends (members of the Marikov band), her classmates and filmmaking partners, and her cat (Baby, three years old).

5.2.5 Drifting Self-Portrait

However, Lin's extended family faces radical changes in the second chapter. At the end of the first chapter, the Drunk Tour members arrive at a beach. They stand in line and look into the distant ocean, and then the image dissolves into black. Lin deliberately chooses it as the final image of the first chapter clearly as an implication of the unknown future for her big family and also as a bridge to connect to the second chapter. As the Drunk Tour comes to an end in Taiwan, Lin decides, for her video diary-film project, to travel to Japan and document her Japanese friends from another perspective, the perspective of an outsider, a shift of position from a host to a guest.[58] Lin travels alone to Japan (in December in 2006), where she is supposed to meet the members of Marikov band there. When she arrives, Lin's friend shows her a text message from the band: 'Lin sent us a Youtube clip, it is

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[58] Lin, 'Creation Description of *Blues Biyori*', p.51.

bloody, and makes us sick…we don't want to meet her' (my translation).[59] The unexpected turn of events has great impact on Lin. This impact, first and for most, is the betrayal by her family. These people, who she thought as part of her family, turn out to be strangers, and even suggest that she makes them sick.

At the beginning of the second chapter, 'Outsider and Infinity Drifting', Lin wakes up alone on the beach in Japan. Different from the first chapter, which consists of portraits of her family, the second chapter consists mainly of Lin's video selfies (sixteen in total). These selfies are not as merry as in the first chapter: in the second chapter, Lin is no longer surrounded by friends and family and she no longer smiles at the camera [**Figure 5-14**].

Figure 5-14: Lin's Video Selfies in the Second Chapter (10:05 and 14:56)

In the second chapter, Lin travels alone in Japan, since her Japanese friends have abandoned her. Now, Lin's position moves from behind the camera (in the first chapter) to in front. She sometimes holds the camera with one hand and points the camera at herself (the same as in the first chapter), or places the camera on a stable plane and points the camera towards her (as she does this in the restaurant eating and in the hotel room). Lin's selfies here are different from the conventional video selfie. First, her portable point-and-shoot digital camera does have a viewfinder but it is fixed to the back of the camera. Hence, Lin cannot see the image of herself while taking a selfie. In this sense, what Michael

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[59] Lin, 'Creation Description of *Blues Biyori*', p.53. According to Lin's thesis, the clip she sent to the Marikov was called *Nightmare*, which was made before 2006 and has already removed from Youtube. The content of *Nightmare* might be the same, or similar to, the automutilation scene from the second chapter of *Blues Biyori*, however, Lin does not give more detail about this in her thesis.

Renov describes as the video apparatus as a 'screen-mirror'[60] is not applicable here for Lin. The image of Lin does not reflect back through the mirror structure and form a circuit: a tautology of Lin and her image double. On the contrary, Lin's image appears on the back of the camera and therefore opens up to the opposite direction. It displays to an absent gaze rather than constructing a dialectical relation between her image and herself. Beside the absence of the mirror structure, Lin's selfies also lack a clear narrative function, and thus veer toward a self-portrait. In the discussion of the self-portrait, Raymond Bellour suggests that in self-portrait the first thing is '…the body. The visible body'.[61] And then he points out that there's so little autobiography contained in the video self-portrait, for the self-portrait does not 'develop any consistent, chronological narrative, even in fragmentary form'.[62] The video self-portrait, as in the photo booth picture, the photomaton, shows only the images of the subject. These images of self, as different photographs and close-ups of the body, are combined together through referrals, repetitions, and superimpositions of various elements, and together march towards a thematic heading – the question of 'who am I'. In experimental cinema practice, there are examples demonstrating that the self-portrait film does not depend on narrative. In her short film *Autoportrait* (1982), Cécile Fontaine uses a Super 8 camera to film her face in close-up. There is no dialogue or voice-over throughout the film. All we see is Fontaine displaying her eyes, ears, mouth in front of the camera. In Jun'ichi Okuyama's *La face et le dos en même temps* (*At a Same Time Expose Both Sides,* 1990), he uses his own specially designed 16mm camera, which has two lenses attached separately to the front and the back of the camera, to capture the images of himself from the front and back at the same time. It results in two images of his body, front and back, superimposed on the film strip. The spectator will struggle to recognize details from these striking images, and sees only the silhouette of Okuyama's body. It is, as Bellour states, as if in the self-portrait, the subject announces: 'I will not tell

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[60] Renov, 'Video Confession', p.90.
[61] Bellour, *Between-the-Images*, p.346.
[62] Ibid., p.355.

you what I have done, but I will tell you who I am'.[63] Instead of telling a story about oneself ('what I have done'), the self-portraitist declares that, through the presence of his/her images, 'this is how I look like. This is me'. From the examples above, the same question is raised again: do they really answer the question of 'who am I'? From the images of Fontaine's mouth, ears, and eyes, from the superimposed images of Okuyama's bodies, can we really tell who they are? Perhaps, even with the excessive information provided in terms of intimacy and proximity, we still know nothing about them.

In the sixteen video-selfie scenes in the second chapter, Lin does not say a word in front of the camera, nor does she add any voice-over. We see her eating alone (placing her camera on the table, 10:48), smoking alone in the hotel room (13:10), doing her laundry alone (recording the reflection of herself on the laundromat machine, 15:54), and traveling alone (recording the reflection of herself on the train window, 18:13) [**Figure 5-15**].

Figure 5-15: Lin's Video Selfies in the Second Chapter (10:48, 13:10, 15:54 and 18:13)

Lin's sixteen video selfies combine various elements and different cinematic techniques to establish a visual theme, which is being lost and loneliness. They lack any consistent verbal narrative. In the second chapter, we know nothing about Lin except the sixteen video selfies. The sixteen video selfies are discontinuous in terms of narrative and

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[63] Bellour, *Between-the-Images*, p.337.

fragmentary in form, they are as imagery blocks (literally they are separated digital files) which merge and juxtapose with each other. The strategies[64] include: a *metaphor* of loneliness in the eating scene, where Lin is surrounded by crowds when she is eating alone; a *comparison* in the smoking scene, where compared to the scenes in the first chapter where all the friends are having fun in Lin's living room, Lin is now alone in a hotel room smoking; a *superimposition* and a *metaphor* in the laundry scene, where the image of the whirling clothes in the tub is superimposed with the image of Lin, as if the never ending whirling is the metaphor of Lin's arduous life; a *metaphor* in the travel scene, where the fleeting train and landscapes suggest the homeless status of Lin. As Bellour states 'the self-portraitist goes directly from dearth to excess, without knowing exactly where he is going or what he is doing'.[65] Because of the lack of information provided by the video selfies, this prompts us, perhaps, to make such excessive interpretations. From the sixteen video selfies, we know Lin's feelings, her sense of being lost, her sadness, and her loneliness, but still we cannot get close to her even in the most striking scene in the second chapter, which is Lin's automutilation (13:42).[66] In this scene [**Figure 5-16**], we see the close-up of Lin's arm, the blood dripping on the floor. Still there is no voice-over or any kind of verbal and textual narrative in this scene. Therefore, in order to understand it, we must take a different path.

Figure 5-16: Lin's Automutilation in the Second Chapter (13:42)

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[64] Bellour argues that self-portraiture is nearer to analogy, metaphor, and the poetic than it is to narrative. The self-portrait 'attempts to cohere via a system of referrals, repetitions, superimpositions, and correspondences between equivalent and interchangeable elements, such that it is principally manifest through discontinuity, anachronistic juxtaposition, montage' (Bellour, *Between-the-Images*, p.337). Bellour's argument is applicable here in Lin's video diary-film in terms of the subordination of the narrative to the 'assemblage of elements' in these self-portrait scenes.

[65] Ibid.

[66] This scene is obvious different from the *Nightmare* clip, which Lin sent to the Marikov band before her trip to Japan, since it was recorded in the hotel room in Tokyo.

From psychological point of view, automutilation is often considered as a coping mechanism, in order to ease an overwhelming emotion. Through self-blame and self-punishment, the subject is able to escape from their feelings of dissociation and lack of control. The cause of automutilation might come from traumatic childhood experience, personal crisis, and other social factors. Lin's self-harming, in the context of this film, would seem to have been provoked by the betrayal of her Japanese friends and the destruction of her ideal 'family'. Although from the *Nightmare* example, we can presume that Lin has used this coping mechanism before, obviously more than once, which, perhaps, relates to her mental situation.[67] Being left alone by her supposed family members, Lin starts to wander, or drift (as the title of the second chapter suggests) in a strange land, searching for herself and her home. Lost through her inability to speak (doesn't want to, or unable to, because of the language barrier), Lin becomes an outsider. It seems that the only way to express herself, to release the pain, is through automutilation, in which the pain, at least, is simple and understandable. As Lin states in her thesis: 'I refuse any physical violence others do to me. No one can damage my body so easily, and if there is, it would be come from me and my desire of self-destruction…The impulse of automutilation comes from the fact that I could not hurt anyone but myself…And to record the process of automutilation is, I believe, a self-healing gaze' (my translation).[68] It is only through the extra-textual information from Lin's thesis that the automutilation scene can be better understood.

This negative atmosphere – the absence of communication, the loss of narrative, and the presence of destructive self-portraits – is everywhere in the second chapter. However, we do hear Lin's voice-over in a song from a background music insertion. In the scene where Lin walks along the Sumidagawa River in Asakusa, Tokyo, her camera pans across the tents of vagrants by the river [**Figure 5-17**].

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[67] In Lin's thesis, she bravely admits that she has suffered from bipolar disorder and minor obsessive-compulsive disorder since she was 18 (Lin, 'Creation Description of *Blues Biyori*', p.6).
[68] Ibid., p.62.

Figure 5-17: Vagrants by the Sumidagawa River, Tokyo (12:29)

It is the moment when Lin projects and connects with them as an outsider from society and from family. During Lin's gaze, the background music starts. It is a song written by Lin called 'Documentary', from the album *Taxi Room*, released in April, 2005.[69] As we see images of vagrants sleeping in tents in the cold morning, Lin sings in the background: 'The unscripted plot keep happening in life. I always want to start all over again, but I can't undo the wrong. I always want to pull out the film, but my life is exposed in front of camera. Written in my journal of youth, every sloping and destructive day' (my translation).[70] The song continues until the end of the second chapter, when a train leaves a station, and dissolves into black image.

5.2.6 Going Back Home: Mother and I, Past and Present

As the train leaves the station at the end of the second chapter, in the third chapter 'Mother and I, Past and Present, Self Portrait and Family', Lin takes us back to her home in Kaohsiung, the north of Taiwan. At the beginning of the third chapter, Lin's mother, Chiu-bing Ma, has just graduated from college (College of Design and Arts, Tung Fang Design Institute) and attends her graduation exhibition. Lin is invited as a special guest to sing a song for the exhibition. After her performance, Lin uses her digital camera to document her mother and her painting. Lin's mother's painting is entitled *Past and Present*. It is a portrait of two people, one is Lin's mother herself when she was young, costumed as a

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[69] 'Documentary', *Taxi Room* [music track, CD] Perf. Peppermint. White Rabbit Records, Taiwan, 05/2005. [WWR, WWR007, 2005]

[70] Lin, 'Creation Description of *Blues Biyori*', p.79.

Chinese opera (Pingju) character, and the other is Lin singing with guitar on stage [**Figure 5-18**].

Figure 5-18: *Past and Present* by Chiu-bing Ma, Lin's Mother

Using this footage as the beginning of the third chapter is significant for Lin for the following reasons: first, her mother's graduation is a calling to Lin, not only as an invitation to perform in the exhibition, but also as a tender summons of a mother calling her daughter to come home. Second, her mother's painting performs an important function here. It is a gaze of a mother both to herself and to her daughter, and furthermore, when recorded and used in Lin's film, it transforms to a gaze of a daughter, who stands in front of the painting and records its detail, connecting with and responding to her mother's gaze and with the image of her mother and herself. During this double gazing and looping process, a journey back home is re-illustrated and presented clearly for Lin. It is no longer a home in a broad sense, but a genetic home that is established by a blood relationship. By appropriating a scene from a Korean TV drama *Jewel in the Palace* (also known as *Dae Janggeum*) [**Figure 5-19**], where the main character Janggeum finds out her master is actually her late mother's best friend, and through superimposing it onto her mother's painting, Lin deliberately tries to create and enhance a feeling of reunion between mother and daughter (23:45).
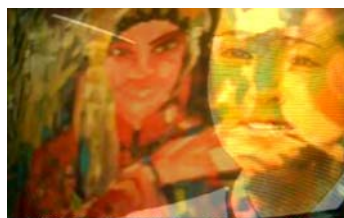

Figure 5-19:

Superimposition of the Painting and the Image from the Korean TV Drama (23:45)

After the graduation scene, an analepsis is inserted. It is the scene when Lin cuts her arm in the hotel room in Japan, but this time, it is superimposed with the image of Lin's cat, Baby, licking itself (23:56) [**Figure 5-20**]. As the two scenes from different temporalities superimpose together, it seems that the cat is licking itself and at the same time, healing Lin's mental and physical wounds.

Figure 5-20: Superimposition of Lin and Her Cat, Baby (23:56)

5.2.7 Conclusion

After analysing Lin's *Blues Biyori*, some conclusions can be made which may also connect it to George Kuchar's *Weather Diary 5*. I would like to conclude this section by focusing on the similarities and differences of the two video diary-films from the perspectives of theme, technique, and narrative strategy. First, from the thematic perspective, despite the fragmentary structure caused by the discontinuous imagery blocks of video, both *Weather Diary 5* and *Blues Biyori* deal with the notion of a quest in a rather obvious and integrated way. In *Weather Diary 5* it is the quest of Kuchar's childhood fascination with nature and weather, whereas in *Blues Biyori*, it is the quest of Lin's self-discovery and self-realization. However, in a different way to Kuchar, by making this video diary-film, Lin somehow completes her quest and reconciles with her mother and herself through the process which is akin to the tradition of the video confession. Second, from the technical perspective, both Kuchar and Lin adopt the potential characteristics of video camcorder in their video diary-making. Kuchar uses in-camera editing to create a unique temporality and a dialectic relationship between the materials and himself, while Lin constructs her film within the 30-

second limitation of her digital camera. Lin's approach creates numerous imagery blocks in the form of digital files. These imagery blocks contribute to a clear sense of, or suggest a strong link with the notion of diary entry, since each entry is independent by itself, and yet connected to each other in the service of a unified theme. In Lin's video diary-film, the accumulation of digital diary entries (the imagery blocks) is achieved by collage, superimpositions, and dissolves. Finally, both Kuchar and Lin show how to use the video apparatus to incorporate diarist's own image in a rather convenient and subjective way – turning the camera to themselves. However, when facing the camera, Lin clearly adopts a different approach than Kuchar's on/off screen soliloquies and 'to-camera piece' technique. In *Blues Biyori*, Lin seldom speaks directly to the camera, instead, she shows us various self-portraits. In these silent self-portraits, Lin does not provide a voice-over or a consistent verbal narrative, and instead creates a complex situation showing images of herself that tell nothing and yet, at the same time, reveal everything.

5.3 Mixed Formats and the Incorporations in the Digital Age:

Ming-Yu Lee's *Going Home*[71]

> Stayed up all night. It's five o'clock in the morning. Still don't feel like sleeping at all. No progress in thesis writing. Extremely anxious.
>
> In my dream father came to see me again. It's different this time. There he was, with sickly pallor face, and blood came out from his mouth, just as the way he looked a year before he passed away.
>
> I woke up with great sorrows. He left me again
>
> – Diary, 17 November 2007[72]

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[71] *Going Home.* [diary film, DVD], Dir. Ming-Yu Lee. Taiwan, 2008, 19mins 55secs. [Shih Hsin University, 2008].

[72] This is from one of the dream diaries, which I keep for years. I would put a pen and some papers on the night stand, and when I wake up, I would write down what I just dreamt.

5.3.1 Amateur, Personal, and Diary Filmmaking

My father sits on the couch in the living room watching television. He complains about me spending too much money in college. My mother, trying to be a peace-maker, explains for me to my father that I would study harder and make him proud. Then there is silence, no one speaks afterwards. My father arranges his hair with right hand (a kind of natural and unrestrained gesture), looks directly at me (and the camera), then walks away to his room. This less-than-30-second footage of my father was shot on 18 November 2000. I borrowed a low-end and cheap mini DV camera from a friend and took it home. There was no clear purpose or any filming project, I borrowed it just for fun, trying to play with what was, at that time, a new technology of recording. I was not a filmmaker ('filmmaker' is an interesting term, since I was not trying to make a film), the best way to describe what I was, perhaps, is what Jonas Mekas describes himself as 'a filmer'.[73] As the word suggests, a filmer films for film's sake, without the clear purpose of using material to make a film. On a certain level, it is similar to the diarist who writes down thoughts and feelings without thinking of publishing the manuscript.

This footage of my father was then stored in the damp-proof case for many years after he passed away in 2002. I unconsciously forgot about its existence as I repressed the traumatic memory of my father's death. Until 2006, in Prof. Yung-Hao Liu's Home Movie Studies course, I finally had the courage to unveil both the DV tape and the unspeakable memory and used it as the material for the final assignment for the course – the short film *Time Variations*.[74] The first time I reviewed this footage, it was seriously damaged because of poor preservation. The image of my father is constantly destroyed by noise interruptions. In *Time Variations*, I use digital special effects (reframing, cropping, slow motion, reversed motion) in the editing process to manipulate the footage. The 30-second footage

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[73] I have discussed the notion of 'filmer' in Chapter Two. Here I'd like to emphasize again that a 'filmer' does not film to make a film or convey ideas; he/she films as a way of living.

[74] *Time Variations*. [diary & experimental film, DVD], Dir. Ming-Yu Lee. Taiwan, 2006, 6mins. [Shih Hsin University, 2006].

was extended into a six-minute short film. And in this six-minute duration, the image of my father is lingering between the visibility and the noise interruption, between an image and the destruction of the image. There is also a tension, which I was trying to imply and emphasize, between memory and forgetting and also between life and death [**Figure 5-21**].

Figure 5-21: *Time Variations* **(2006)**

Time Variations refers to an important characteristic of the visual recording of people as moving images. In written documents, a person can be brought to life and back to life through the act of writing (biography, memoir, fiction, and novel). With the description of what they have done, a new life or a version of a life can be *created* in reader's mind. While the memoir may depend on letters and diaries the person does not have to be there for creation (or re-creation) to take place. In image-making (both photography and film), it is only possible to *capture* someone's images when he or she is still alive, or, *there*. After my father passed away, it became impossible to have new images of him anymore; all images of him are in the past tense, since there will be no more images of him available in

the future, for he is simply no longer *there*.[75] After my father's death, the footage of him in *Time Variations* keeps him at the age of fifty-one, forever. Nonetheless, the experience of watching this footage of my father is something else, something strange. Barthes, when discussing a photograph of Lewis Payne taken by Alexander Gardner, suggests that there is a new punctum in the photograph, which is 'Time'.[76] The new punctum pricks Barthes by telling him that Payne will be dead and Payne has been dead. Barthes's discussion of punctum is useful mainly for photographs, not for cinema. However, the strangeness I experience, in Laura Mulvey's discussion, comes from the uncanny nature of the cinematic image, in which the animate and the inanimate, life and death, become confused. As Mulvey writes: 'The inanimate images of the filmstrip not only come alive in projection, but are the ghostly images of the now-dead resurrected into the appearance of life'.[77] The uncanny in cinema, according to Mulvey, triggers questions of 'the nature of time, the fragility of human life and the boundary between life and death'.[78] This reflects the dilemma I confront when I watch this footage. On the one hand, I mourn my father, who is 'resurrected into the appearance of life' after his death, on the other hand, I shudder over the fact that, without the physical connection, without the *thereness*, this is and will be the only footage I have of my father. This is probably the reason why I started to make diary films about my family and friends. I guess, deep down inside, I was afraid to lose someone I love again, physically and visually. This was probably the time when I finally understood why ancient Egyptians preserved the body of the dead. It is just too frightening that the person you love disappears from the world without leaving anything behind. Therefore, I

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[75] This *thereness*, the indexical quality of image, has been emphasized by Bazin in 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' as 'the photographic image is the object itself' (Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, p.14) and '[t]he photograph as such and the object in itself share a common being, after the fashion of a finger print' (Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, p.15). While Bazin focuses on the physical connection between the image and the filmed object, Barthes, in *Camera Lucida*, also elaborates on the *thereness* by saying the photographic referent is 'the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph' (Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p.76).

[76] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p.96.

[77] Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, p.36.

[78] Ibid., p.53.

turned from an amateur filmer to an amateur diary filmmaker, an amateur who makes diary film.

5.3.2 From Amateur to Digital Video-Diary Filmmaker

The history and the transition of the amateur film and the diary film have been discussed in Chapter Four. The route of this transition can be drawn from Deren, Brakhage, the New American Cinema group, and Jonas Mekas. However, key principles can be highlighted here again: first, the emphases on individuality and creativity; second, the prioritizing of artistic and physical freedom over conventional and professional restrictions; third, 'working at home'[79] where the self is most at ease; fourth, abolishing the 'Budget Myth';[80] And finally, adopting a 'personal'[81] filmmaking approach. These principles draw an outline of how the transitions from amateur filmmaking, home movie, personal filmmaking, to diary film, work. However, in the case of *Going Home*, I shall point out that there is a further transformation in the digital era. Hence, it is important to ask how the digital amateur diary filmmaking works and how is it different from its predecessors? In her discussion of Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation* (2003), Laura Rascaroli offers insight into the production of the digital diary filmmaking. She argues that Caouette's film, incorporating both home movie and digital footage, and edited completely on computer by Caouette, is 'a myth of DIY moviemaking…and…it was also…one of the most inexpensive films ever to be made'.[82] It was shot via Super 8, Hi 8, and mini DV cameras (amateur film equipment), and edited on Apple's iMovie software (a free build-in software that comes with Apple computer, in contrast to the professional and expensive Final Cut software). The theme of

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[79] Stan Brakhage, 'In Defense of Amateur', in Robert A. Haller (ed.) *Brakhage Scrapbook: Stan Brakhage, Collected Writings 1964-1980* (New York: Documentext, 1982), p.144. See Chapter Two for more discussion.

[80] Sitney, *Film Culture*, p.81. From 'The First Statement of the New American Cinema Group'. See Chapter Two for more discussion.

[81] Ibid. From 'The First Statement of the New American Cinema Group'. See Chapter Two for more discussion.

[82] Rascaroli, 'Working at Home', p.203.

the film *Tarnation* includes home movies of Caouette's mother and himself when he was a child, Caouette's film diaries footage, performative autobiographical documentary, and confessional self-portrait. These features are all similar to the previous amateur diary filmmaking, except for one important technological characteristic: the editing on computer. As Rascaroli points out, in the digital era, '[d]esktop editing platforms…constitute the first ever attempt to make editing capabilities accessible at the non-professional level in history of audiovisual media at large'.[83] The contemporary personal computer (PC) is not only a necessity in almost every household, but it also serves as a part of the audiovisual artistic production process. The accessibility of the modern technology potentially allows everyone to engage with the filmmaking production process. The other aspect I would like to emphasize here, is the incorporative quality of the technology of the digital editing platform. In the case of *Tarnation*, Caouette *incorporates* images taken by different formats (Super 8, Hi 8, and mini DV) by the use of digital editing software, and exports the final product into a digital copy (DVD).

5.3.3 *Going Home*

Leaving from Taoyun international airport, transferring at Amsterdam, and arriving in Geneva. This is the first time I go abroad by myself, to a completely strange country. Professor Chi[84] said to me that it is okay to speak English there. I really hope so. Before leaving, mother was worried: she was not sure if I would go back home safely. I never think of that.

Diary – 10 October 2005.

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[83] Rascaroli, 'Working at Home', pp.230-231.

[84] Lung-zin Chi. He is the Professor of Film Studies at Shih Hsin University. He was also the supervisor of my Master's thesis *Going Home* in 2008.

Just came back from Paris. Got a call from aunt. She told me that the landlord asked us to move immediately. Packed all my stuff again as fast as possible and found a new place through internet. Now I live near the university by myself in a small room near the Metro station. The place has no mailbox because the room is a rooftop addition and was illegally sublet. This is to say, that no one could send me anything by mail, for there is no recipient address.

Diary – 20 March 2007.

The film *Going Home* was completed in 2008 as my Master's thesis film. It was also the second Master's thesis film, which adopted the form and content of the diary film in Taiwan (the first one is Shine Lin's *Blues Biyori* in 2007). *Going Home* consists of three parts: 'Travel', 'Family Portrait', and 'To the Sea'. In the production of *Going Home*, several visual formats were used including Super 8, 16mm, Hi 8, digital camera and mini DV. The time span of the diary footage started from 2002 (after my father's death) and ends in 2007. They include: three journeys of going abroad by myself ('Travel'), interactions between family members on special holidays and occasions (Grandma's 75th birthday and mother cooking on Chinese New Year, 'Family Portrait'), and a day trip with friends on the beach ('To the Sea'). The diary footage was arranged by themes but not in chronological order in each part. By doing so, I hoped to present the chaotic and unorganized nature of the diary film in *Going Home* (as Lejeune puts it when describing Anne Frank's diary: the diary is a highly 'heterogeneous'[85] text), and more importantly, to highlight the in-between-ness of different film materiality (film and video), of leaving and going home, and of past and present. The narrative strategy of *Going Home* contains neither story lines nor voice-over narrations: there is no concept of the *story* in *Going Home*: no beginning and no end, no on-screen soliloquy and no confession. Title cards were only added in order to divide chapters of the film in the post-production. It is a first-person diary film without the visual and verbal presence of the diarist. The diarist is

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[85] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.244. According to Lejeune's study of Anne Frank's diary, there are four stages, or systems, in the development of Anne's writing plan: notebooks, the book of quotations, the account book, and the loose pages. In each stage, Anne invented a different system of writing either in style or in a different physical medium (Lejeune, *On Diary*, pp.238-244).

somewhere else, in the filming process (as the perceptive mode) and in the post-production (as the retrospective mode).

The amateur film equipment I used in *Going Home* includes Super 8, 16mm, Hi 8, digital camera, and mini DV. Among them, the Super 8 takes the largest part in the whole production. The importance of using Super 8 here is not only its significance as typical amateur film equipment since the 1960s, but also because it offers total control over the image-making process: from filming, processing, and editing. In his article 'Antidote for a Virtual World: Hand Processing Reversal Motion Picture Film' (translated into Chinese by the Taiwanese experimental filmmaker Tony Chun-Hui Wu in the special issues he organized, 'Bilateral Sprockets □□ New Century 8mm Cinema↓', in the *Film Appreciation* magazine[86] in 2001), Ken Paul Rosenthal questions the standardization of visual industry and argues the importance of hand-processing film by yourself:

> Whereas commercial film labs are chemical chameleons yielding consistently inconsistent color and contaminated costs, hand processing is a mercurial and serendipitous mixture of control and non-control. Plus it's remarkably economical…ignoring the instructions about the number of rolls per run and 'exhausted' chemicals…The idea is to get what we didn't pay for. Hand processing grants you SOUL CONTROL. It inspires an attitude of non-, if not anti-intention; an embracing of the gesture rather than a prescribed result. *It requests disregard for expectation.* THAT is the throbbing heart of this pulsing push and pull PROCESS which breathes and breeds between inspiration and form. To be specific, *expect the unexpected* and learn to appreciate it! (italics and capitals in origin).[87]

Industrial standardization regulates the exposure range of film stock, the correct and precise temperature and time for developing, and at the same time minimizes and excludes the concept of individuality, as described in the famous Kodak slogan: 'You push the

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[86] Tony Chun-hui Wu, 'Bilateral Sprockets □□ New Century 8mm Cinema ↓', *Film Appreciation*, No. 107 (2001), pp.8-51.

[87] Ken Paul Rosenthal, 'Antidote for a Virtual World', *Cinematograph vol. 6 – Big As Life: An American History of 8mm Films* (San Francisco Cinematheque/Museum of Modern Art, 1998), p.93.

button, we do the rest'. By resisting these official principles,[88] I hoped to gain freedom and control. All the Super 8 footage in *Going Home* was hand-processed by myself in my bathroom. I made a developing tank, which has enough space for two rolls of 50-feet Super 8 film. The chemical solution kit was purchased in a small store on the Bo'Ai Street (also known as the Camera Street) in Taipei. Other equipment, such as gloves, thermometer, timer, wires, and hangers, were available in the hardware store. It was easier than I thought it would be to build up a fully-equipped amateur darkroom. It was certainly not a professional developing process: there were always scratches and cracks on the film surface. The over-lapping of film strips also created large lumps of colours. But this was what I wanted: images born from my amateur hand-processing practice. They are imperfect and unique, as the time has imprinted itself on the images and corrupted them. The textual quality also resonates with the theme of the film *Going Home*. The images are floating on the surface of the film, as fragile and unstable as the memory of the past [**Figure 5-22**].
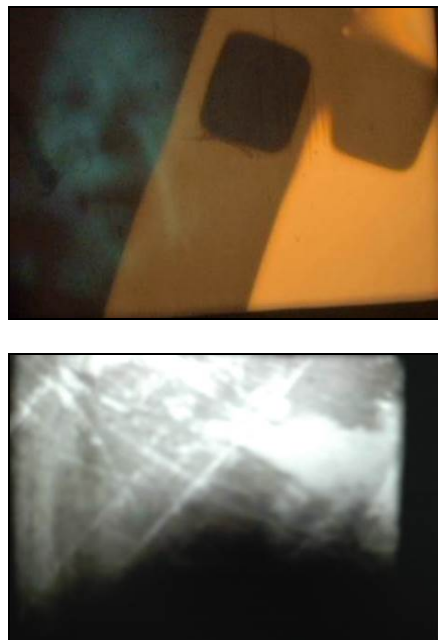

Figure 5-22: Hand Processing Super 8 Images from *Going Home*

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[88] Liu, 'Snorkelling and Dancing in the Dark', p.82. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, the Film theorist Claudine Eizykman defines experimental film as 'anti-N.R.I.' (Narrative, Representative, and Industrial). The hand-processing for the amateur filmmaker is certainly a gesture of anti-industrial in this sense.

5.3.4 Wandering and the Absence of Home

> After the funeral I went back home. As I stepped inside the house, a strange and alienated feeling came toward me. The floor and the furniture were all covered with dust, the light in the living room was dim. This was my house, my home, and at the same time it was not. Father was gone, so was my home.

> Diary – 7 February 2002.

The theme of *Going Home* can be described as follows: I am going home on the train (the countless travelling shots in the first section of the film), and yet this train will never reach its destination. It focuses on the present continuous tense of the verb 'go'; a state of being constantly on the move, a 'filming while moving,' between the past and future. However, the experience and the recording of fleeting images are, as Barthes would describe, always a 'that-has-been' – an 'absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred'.[89] It is an on-going journey, in which the present moment is always deferred once it has been reached/captured. Though I am 'going', I will never really be 'back home'. The status is very similar to diary writing, where it is an act of 'continuous present'[90] without the sense of closure. In other words, it is always in progress with no ending. It is obvious that I am trying to connect the death of my father to the absence of the metaphorical home in *Going Home.* The time always moves ahead as in the moving train, and the past (and death) are irreversible. The other theme of *Going Home* is, therefore, the quest for the absent father figure. This quest was first realized in the digitalization of the hand-processed Super 8 film footage. After hand-processing, I loaded the film onto the second-hand film projector that I bought from eBay and projected it on the white wall of my room, and then I placed the mini DV digital camera next to the projector and re-filmed the images. This amateur transfer method from analogue to digital was not about the quality of the film, but

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[89] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p.77.

[90] Jackson, *Diary Poetics*, p.19. Anna Jackson argues the structural quality of the diary text as the 'continuous present'. I have identified that the 'continuous present' is the key notion of the diary genre (both in written diary and diary film) which separates it from other genres. See Chapter One for more discussion.

about evoking the ceremony of projection and exhibition, a home movie ritual of a happy family reunion, to demonstrate the destruction of my home. It is exactly the opposite to what Wim Wenders does in *Paris, Texas* (1984), when the projection of Travis's home movie footage brings Travis closer to his son Hunter. The process is actually closer to that which Patricia R. Zimmermann discusses in her study of amateur filmmaking of the American avant-garde filmmakers in the 1960s, that '[t]he amateur camera does not idealize the nuclear family but rather fetishizes its malfunctions, its breaks and fissures'.[91] The use of home movie and amateur film approaches do not constitute the union of the family, instead, they intentionally emphasize the ruins of the home. In *Going Home,* the wreckage of my home can actually be seen in the second section of the film. In 2007, my mother, my older sister and I went back to the old house we had lived in fifteen years ago. The building has long been torn down because of the road widening construction. There was only a wooden bathroom left there, still standing amid the wreckage. On the bathroom door there were two big letters written in oil paint by my father: 'WC' (water closet). Before leaving, we took a group shot in front of the old house, but this time there were only three of us, my mother, my older sister, and me. A still photo of the whole family including my father was inserted right after the group shot in front of the old house [**Figure 5-23**].

Figure 5-23: 'Revisiting the childhood house' Scene (12:10-13:20)

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[91] Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, p.147.

The 'malfunctions, breaks and fissures' of the family are again emphasized in the 'Grandmother 75th birthday' scene. Conventionally speaking, the birthday celebration should be a happy gathering of all the family members. However, with the absence of my father, this birthday party seems less joyful than it should be. I kissed my grandmother's cheek and asked her to make a birthday wish. She smiles, blows out the candles, and then, as my father did in his living room footage, she looks directly at me and the camera. There is something melancholy in her gaze [**Figure 5-24**].

Figure 5-24: 'Grandmother 75th birthday' Scene (09:34 and 10:10)

In 'Memory and Forgetting', Paul Ricoeur writes that '[m]ourning is a reconciliation… With the loss of some objects of love…in melancholia there is a despair and a longing to be reconciled with the loved object which is lost without the hope of reconciliation'.[92] In 2007, the car my father left us was too old to drive and my sister and I decided to discard it. It was in that car that my father taught us how to drive. There were so many memories of my father. I still remember that when I was 18, my father drove me to a desolate road and then he switched seats with me. He told me: 'Now I will show you how to drive a stick. That's what a man does – driving a stick'. I got my driver's licence a few years later, but I had never had the chance to give him a ride. When the liquidator came, my sister and I both held a camera in hand; we tried to record the whole process. It was shocking: the

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[92] Paul Ricoeur, 'Memory and Forgetting', in Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (eds.) *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Continental Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.7.

crash of the window screen being broken and the distorted car body. I never stopped filming; I couldn't keep my eyes away from it. After the liquidator left, I shut down my camera and turned around, there was my sister, standing there with her camera still filming, tears running down her face. I guess, on some level, this was a way to say goodbye to my father, to mourn for his death, and to reconcile with it [**Figure 5-25**].

Figure 5-25: 'Car liquidation' Scene (14:01 & 14:17)

5.3.5 The End of the Journey: 'To the Sea'

> Woke up from a dream that my father and I were swimming in the sea of The Green Island. I was maybe 13 or 14 years old. The sun was shining, the water was warm and comfortable. We dove. Under the sea there were tropical fishes and corals and seaweeds. Vivid colours and exuberant vitalities. After diving, my father rode me home with his motorcycle. I sat behind my father and my arms crossed his waist. Gentle breeze in the afternoon. The dream ends here. About that summer, I couldn't remember more. The memory freezes there, in the sea.
>
> Diary – no date.

Going Home ends with the 'To the Sea' sequence during which I spend a lovely day with friends on the beach in Keelung, the north side of Taiwan, in 2007. This beach trip scene is an implication of returning to my childhood, and also returning to that summer I spent with my father on The Green Island. That was the best time I had shared with my father. On the beach, I noticed that there was a father trying to teach his son how to swim. I was fascinated by the scene. During the editing, I deliberately manipulated this father-and-son scene in slow motion. Perhaps I was projecting my own desire onto them: I wished I was

the son. The film ends with the scene of me floating alone in the sea: a recreation of my

dream, and of course, my father is not there [**Figure 5-26**].

Figure 5-26: 'To the Sea' (17:57-19:55)

5.3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I started my discussion of the video diary-film from George Kuchar,

who was one of the earliest and most representative figures in the video diary-making

in America since the 1980s. By including in the discussion the two video diary-films

from young Taiwanese video-makers, Shine Lin and myself, my aim was to connect

the diary filmmaking tradition from America to Taiwan, and to excavate the

differences of the video diary-film from the previous diary-filmmaking modes. By

adopting the 'to-camera piece' approach (confession and self-portrait), both Kuchar

and Lin add an interactive aspect to the perceptive mode of the diary film, which I

established in Chapter Four. In the 'to-camera piece' approach, the camera, the

paluche, extends the body of the diarist and also builds up a stronger connection

between the camera and the diarist, creating an authorial presence. Moreover, in the

video diary-film, the audiovisual material is no longer imprinted on the film strip, but

stored as imagery blocks in the form of signals and digital files. The imagery blocks

not only refer to the constitution of the diary as the assemblage of separated entries,

but also allow the diarist to freely access the material (Kuchar's in-camera editing and

Lin's collage) to create a unique temporality in the access mode of the video diary-

film. In her discussion of Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation*, Rascaroli states that 'new

technologies are affording both artists and amateurs the means to express and represent themselves in ways that seem radically novel'.[93] This novelty, which new technologies bring to the diary filmmaking in the digital age, is realised in the coexistence and the incorporation of different media, as I did in *Going Home*. With the spirit of amateurism in the context of avant-garde film, *Going Home* incorporates diary footage made by amateur film equipment such as Super 8, 16mm, Hi 8, digital camera, and mini DV. The incorporation was achieved by the 'Do-It-Yourself' approaches from filming (amateur film stock and digital video), film developing (the 'hand-processing' method proposed by Ken Paul Rosenthal), digital transferring (re-filming the projected images on mini DV), to editing (Apple computer). To this end, Brakhage's 'working at home' formula is now reinvigorated by new technologies. The easy access of the personal computer as desktop editing platform and portable digital camera constitute a new generation of amateur diary filmmaking in the digital age.

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[93] Rascaroli, 'Working at Home', pp.229-230.

Conclusion

As this thesis has travelled along different routes, the so-called journey has now come to an end. We may now consider the paths we took: in the first path we initiated a literature review and considered the historical development of the diary film in Chapter One and Chapter Two. Along the way within the thesis, the origins of the diary film and the development of its origin have been identified. Much of my discussion has centred on Jonas Mekas, and from Mekas, on the one hand, dating back to Marie Menken and her innovative filmmaking approach and, on the other hand, connecting to the later generations of diary filmmakers adopting different media formats. Although Jonas Mekas plays an extremely important role in the history of the avant-garde film and experimental film, here I would like to emphasize that the focus within the thesis concerns his contributions to the diary film. There is a common misconception that the diary film equals personal filmmaking or experimental film. From the second path this thesis provided, which includes the analyses and discussions of the unique aesthetics and characteristics of the diary film (from Chapter Three to Chapter Five), I aim to establish the uniqueness of the diary film in relation to its narrative and specific temporal structure. The diary film has its own path and should not be confused with other cinematic genres. I can't express it more clearly than to say that the key determinate is that the diary filmmaker does not film 'to make a film' but simply 'to film'.[1] This key difference has to be acknowledged first before starting the discussion of the diary film and other subjective and personal filmmaking practice. Therefore, the ways of approaching the diary film provided by this thesis are crucial, for they help the establishment of the diary film as a unique and independent genre. As we approach the final destination of this thesis, the original contributions that this thesis has achieved can be listed as follows (they are arranged by themes rather by chapters):

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[1] Odin, 'Reflections on the Family Home Movies as Document', p.256.

1. The establishment of the origins and the development of the diary film. This development is at the same time historical and transnational. With the evidences provided in this thesis, the development of the diary film in America followed a specific route, which starts from Marie Menken, Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage, and Jonas Mekas, and gradually takes shape. It combined with home movie-making, amateurism, personal filmmaking, and finally became an act/re-act mode of diary filmmaking. The development of the diary film in Taiwan, however, can be located in three different phases: Na'Ou Liu in the 1930s, Lin Chuang (the *Theatre Quarterly*) and Chung-li Kao (the Golden Harvest Award) from the 1960s to 1980s, and with the younger generation in the 21st Century. Although they might seem dispersed across different periods of time, they are closely bound up with the development of the European avant-garde in the 1920s (for Na'Ou Liu) and American avant-garde film in the 1960s (for others).

2. The identification of the essential structure of the diary film – the entry – which is caused by the act of writing as a series of 'continuous presents'.[2] The notion of *writing* penetrates both the literary diary and the diary film. Most of the studies of the diary film place the focus on the act of filming every day, and how the subjectivity of author manifests him/herself through this act, with which I agree.[3] However, through the discussion and analyses offered in this thesis, it is perhaps more important to ask if the fundamental principle in the diary film is generated by the act of filming every day, what special effects in relation to narrative and temporality does the entry structure give to the diary film? And this is also one of the main concerns of this thesis.

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[2] Jackson, *Diary Poetics*, p.19.
[3] In P. Adams Sitney's discussion of the autobiographical film, he effectively separates the diary film from autobiographical film according to its temporal: the autobiography reflects upon the past, while the diary film offer series of presents. See Sitney, *The Avant-Garde Film*, p.245.

3. Instead of focusing on the two phases which David E. James proposes – the film diary and the diary film[4] – according to the perspective of the audience, I have argued that we should take the intention of the diary filmmaker into consideration. By doing so, the diary film can be divided into two modes: the *perceptive mode* (Peter Hutton's *July '71 in San Francisco* and Saul Levine's *Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2*) and the *retrospective mode* (Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)* and Jonas Mekas's *The Song of Avila* and *Zefiro Torna or Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas*). The perceptive mode emphasizes the moment of filming and the perception of the diary filmmaker on the spot. It resonates with the tradition of Azaïs's notion of 'writing while walking', and further transforms it into 'filming while walking'. The retrospective mode, on the other hand, considers Jonas Mekas as the representative figure, adopting the voice-over as a narrative strategy to reorganize the diary film footage, granting another level of complexity to the narrative and a more complex temporal structure to the diary film. As for the audiovisual relationship in the diary film, I proposed using the concept of a *parenthetical structure* as an analytic tool. It combines the montage theory of Eisenstein, Bazin, the concepts of 'Poetry and Film' proposed by Maya Deren, Mekas's spontaneous cinema, and Rascaroli's sonic interstices. Understood within this parenthetical structure, the relationship between the image and the voice-over is no longer hierarchical, but arbitrary, complementary, and inter-changeable (the voice-over/image-over), and thus, I believe, can be applied more effectively to the understanding of the relationships between the voice-over and the images as they exist independently and at the same time apparently respond to each other.

4. As technology advances, the diary film is transformed in both content and form. In my discussions of Kuchar and Lin's video and digital video diary-films, I have identified that the images of the video and the digital video diary-film exist as

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[4] James, *To Free the Cinema*, p.147.

image blocks rather than as film strips, which makes the structure of entry even more evident and tangible. Meanwhile, through the free manipulation of the image blocks (the access mode), the diary filmmaker can go back and forth between the past and present (Kuchar's in-camera editing and Lin's collage), creating an anachronically discontinuous continuity in their films, which is accompanied by a stronger authorial presence (Kuchar's confessional soliloquy and Lin's silent self-portrait). The incorporation of mixed formats is also possible due to the contribution of the personal computer as a desktop editing platform and exporting device. In the age of the video and the digital video, the metaphor of the pen in the diary keeping and filmmaking that originated with Azaïs and Astruc returns as *paluche*[5] – the handycam, according to Raymond Bellour. Operating as paluche, the filmmaker films with his/her hand instead of his/her eyes. It changes the mode of a conventional perception of reality, and at the same time enhances the mobility and the inscription of the diary filmmaker's body.

Coda

On 20 January 2015, the famous University of Glasgow cat, Miller, passed away at the age of eighteen. He was a good friend and lovely company for numerous students and staff for many years. I first met him on 27 October 2011, at the intersection of the Hillhead Street and the Great George Street. It was then I decided to make a diary film about him. The project was called 'George Street Cat Diary Project'. Two diary films were produced in 2012: *Great George Street Walking* and *Great George Street Sleeping*. The films are quite simple and straightforward, the film titles explain them all: the first one is about Miller walking (or wandering) on the street, and the other is about Miller sleeping in a small garden next to the library. Miller was my confidant, as a

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[5] Bellour, *Between-the-Images*, p.346.

diary book to its owner. He had never responded to me, he was simply there. However, as Miller passed away, this diary film project has come to an end. He was already fourteen years old when I first met him, so in a sense I knew this day would come. Now, when I go back to the street corner where he used to be, I will never see him again. I have many videos and photos of him, which means, I can always make a film about him. But, the important thing is, they are memories in the past, a memoir, and they are not diary entries. From now on every attempt to make a new diary entry of him is doomed to fail, for at any moment of filming he is simply not there anymore. There will be no more new diary entries of Miller, ever again. I can't help wondering that besides being private, shy, and boring, the diary (and the diary film) is in fact *fragile*. The openness of the diary makes it turned toward the unknown future, but unfortunately, we all know that this 'unknown future' is referring to death – the death of the author of the diary/diary film, or the death of the diary/diary film. I visited the Chinese Taipei Film Archive (restructuring to Taiwan Film Institute in 28 July 2014) in 2013 for data collection. However, there were only four diary films to be found in the archive: Na'Ou Liu's *Man with a Camera*, Lin Chuang's *My New Born Baby*, Shu-chen Liao's *Home Movie* and Hung-i Chen's *Penetration Between Hard and Convex No.3 Impotence*. Chung-li Kao's *Home Movie* did not appear in the Chinese Taipei Film Archive, but in his own personal archive. The result was somehow not surprising, for in Taiwan for a long time the study and the preservation of alternative cinema (the diary film, experimental film, and so on) have been overlooked. The diary films of Liao and Chen were selected and preserved in the archive (in VHS format) simply because they won awards in the Golden Harvest Awards (Liao's *Home Movie* won the 16mm Short Film Honorable Mention in 1981, and Chen's *Penetration Between Hard and Convex No.3 Impotence* won the Best 8mm Experimental Film). In interview, Chung-li Kao pointed out that there are still many diary filmmakers who are ignored

and their films are not available for audiences until now, for they 'very likely didn't submit their films to the Golden Harvest Awards in the first place' (my translation).[6]

On 31 August 2013, Cardinal Tien Cultural Foundation hosted a seminar called '*Theatre Quarterly* and an Era of Image Translation – Revisiting the Historical Site' at the Tien Educational Center in Taipei, where *Theatre Quarterly* had their first public film screening in 1966. In the seminar they invited the founder of *Theatre Quarterly* Mr. Kang-chien Chiu (pre-recorded interview via Skype), Lin Chuang and others to talk from their personal experience about the establishment of the magazine in 1965. In the seminar they came to an understanding that the preservation of this valuable historical heritage is urgent, and the digitalization and the re-publication of the nine issues of *Theatre Quarterly* is necessary. It seemed then that the disappearing history of Taiwanese avant-garde film movement will be revisited and preserved. However, in the same year, on 27 November Mr. Kang-chien Chiu passed away of heart attack in Beijing at the age of seventy-four. This sad news somehow made everything go back to square one. Aside from the nine issues of *Theatre Quarterly* and the discussion from this seminar, the information we have about the *Theatre Quarterly* and the Taiwanese avant-garde film movement in the 1960s is extremely limited and scarce, with little information on the diary filmmakers and their films at that time. Aside from Lin Chuang, who else was making diary films at that time? Huo Kuang (pen name) translated more than one articles of Jonas Mekas into Chinese and published in *Theatre Quarterly*, including 'Open Letter to Film-Makers of the World'[7] (Issue 9). Who was Huo Kuang? (I did ask Lin Chuang, but he didn't know who Huo Kuang was, either). These puzzles may never be resolved, and the study of the diary film in Taiwan remains deficient. As I mentioned in the previous chapters, the diary film is usually

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[6] Liu, 'The Early Development of Experimental Film in Taiwan', p.233.
[7] Mekas's original article 'Open Letter to Film-Makers of the World' was published in 1967 in *CINIM*, 1, pp.5-9.

screened within a certain group of people, such as family or close friends, and in particular venues. In this respect, the diary film is not only inapproachable and exclusive, it is also difficult to preserve as well as to circulate. Take Marie Menken's lost short films (the flood in the studio) for example, or Joseph Morder's private and personal diary film footage which he will 'never show to other people'[8]; Shine Lin's *Nightmare* is no longer available after showing to her Japanese friends.[9] In fact, issues of preservation and circulation of the diary film did cause problems for me at the beginning of writing this thesis and the data collection phase. In *Le je filmé*, Yann Beauvais systematically organizes a list of the diary films from 1895 to 1995[10] across different countries. His diary film list provides support for the overall study of the diary film. However, many films from the list still face the same obstacles. These significant diary films, due to the lack of distribution, are simply unavailable, and some are lost as time goes by. It is perhaps the destiny of the diary film. As I considered the ending of the Miller diary film project, I realised that the diary is indeed moving toward the future, and yet at the same time, it is gradually approaching death, approaching its own disappearance. There has been one thought recurring to me during the whole process of writing this thesis: it is from Lejeune's discussion of the distinct function of the diary – to freeze time – 'to build a memory out of paper, to create archives from lived experience, to accumulate traces, prevent forgetting, to give life the consistency and continuity it lacks'.[11] For me this thesis somehow can also be seen as a kind of diary writing, a journey of self-discovery and self-exploration. By the discussion of the historical development of the diary film and the close reading of the diary film texts, the primary contribution I make in this thesis is perhaps to provide foundation for the future academic research and practical application within this field. And more

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[8] Joseph Morder, interview by Ming-Yu Lee, 4 July 2013 (unpublished material).
[9] See Chapter Five – 5.2.5 'Drifting Self-Portrait' – of this thesis.
[10] Beauvais, *Le je filmé*, pp.1909-1902.
[11] Lejeune, *On Diary*, p.195.

importantly, even when most of the diary films keep being forgotten by the world, I offer a way of preventing them from disappearing.

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(nostalgia) (Hollis Frampton, 1971)

*24 Hours × 12 Months =365 Days/*24 小時×12 個月=365 天 (Chung-li Kao, 1985)

365 Day Project (Jonas Mekas, 2007)

A Few Notes on the Factory (Jonas Mekas, 1999)

*A Fish with a Smile/*微笑的魚 (Jay Shih, 2005)

A Kiss in the Tunnel (George A. Smith, 1899)

A Study in Choreography for Camera (Maya Deren, 1945)

Andy Warhol (Marie Menken, 1965)

*Animagemalanguage/*動物私語 (Shu-ting Jiang, 2008)

Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat/L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat (Lumière brothers, 1895)

As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty (Jonas Mekas, 2000)

At a Same Time Expose Both Sides/La face et le dos en même temps (Jun'ichi Okuyama, 1990)

Autoportrait (Cécile Fontaine, 1982)

Baby's Dinner/Repas de bébé (Lumière brothers, 1895)

Ballet Mécanique/Mechanical Ballet (Fernand Léger, 1924)

Before You Go: A Daughter's Diary (Nicole Betancourt, 1995)

Berlin: Symphony of a Great City/Berlin-Die Sinfonie der Großstadt (Walter Ruttmann, 1927)

*Blues Biyori/*藍調日和 (Shine Lin, 2007)

*Body at Large/*晃遊身體 (Jeng-Ju Ying, 2012)

*Body Phenomenon/*身體顯像 (Ellen Pan, 2010)

Boston Fire (Peter Hutton, 1979)

Chronicle of a Summer/Chronique d'un été (Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, 1961)

Cinema is Not 100 Years Old (Jonas Mekas, 1996)

Commentary (Robert Cambrinus, 2009)

*Daylight Developing/*日光顯影 (Ming-Yen Su, 2011)

Diagonal Symphony (Viking Eggeling, 1924)

Diaries (Ed Pincus, 1971-1976)

Diaries, Notes and Sketches, aka *Walden* (Jonas Mekas, 1969)

Dog Star Man (Stan Brakhage, 1964)

Falling Notes Unleaving (Saul Levine, 2013)

Five Year Diary (Anne Charlotte Robertson, 1981-1997)

Geography of the Body (Willard Maas, 1943)

Glimpse of the Garden (Marie Menken, 1957)

Go! Go! Go! (Marie Menken, 1962-1964)

*Going Home/*回家 (Ming-Yu Lee, 2008)

Great George Street Sleeping (Ming-Yu, Lee, 2012)

Great George Street Walking (Ming-Yu Lee, 2012)

Guns of the Trees (Jonas Mekas, 1961)

He Stands in a Desert Counting the Seconds of His Life (Jonas Mekas, 1985)

*Home Movie/*家庭電影 (Chung-li Kao, 1988)

*Home Movie/*家庭電影 (Shu-Chen Liao, 1981)

Home Movies (Man Ray, 1923-1937 and 1938)

Hurry! Hurry! (Marie Menken, 1957)

*I Grew Up Eating this Brand of Milk Powder/*我就是吃這種奶粉長大的 (Chung-li Kao, 1986)

July '71 in San Francisco (Peter Hutton, 1971)

Le Filmeur (Alain Cavalier, 2005)

Leaving the Lumière Factory/La sortie des usines Lumière (Lumière brothers, 1895)

Letter from Siberia/Lettre de Sibérie (Chris Marker, 1958)

*Life Continued/*延 (Lin Chuang, 1966)

*Like a Virgin/*宛如處女 (Chung-li Kao, 1987)

*Liu Pi-Chia/*劉必稼 (Yao-Chi Chen, 1965)

Lost, Lost, Lost (Jonas Mekas, 1976)

Man with a Camera (Na'Ou Liu, 1933)

Man with a Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov, 1929)

Meshes of the Afternoon (Maya Deren, 1943)

Modesty and Shame/La Pudeur ou l'impudeur (Hervé Guibert, 1992)

*My Mentor, Chen Yingzhen/*我的陳老師 (Chung-li Kao, 2010)

*My New Born Baby/*赤子 (Lin Chuang, 1967)

New Left Note (Saul Levine, 1968)

New York Portrait: Chapter I to *Chapter III* (Peter Hutton, 1979-1990)

Note to Colleen (Saul Levine, 1974)

Note to Pati (Saul Levine, 1969)

Notebook (Marie Menken, 1940-1962)

Notes of an Early Fall, Parts 1 & 2 (Saul Levine, 1976)

Paradise Not Yet Lost (aka Oona's Third Year) (Jonas Mekas, 1979)

Paris, Texas (Wim Wenders, 1984)

*Penetration Between Hard and Convex No.3 Impotence/*在硬與凹之間穿插 No.3 陽痿 (Hung-i Chen, 1990)

Railway Trip over the Tay Bridge (Peter Feathers, 1897)

Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania (Jonas Mekas, 1972)

Return to Reason/Le Retour à la Raison (Man Ray, 1923)

Scorpio Rising (Kenneth Anger, 1964)

Seashell and the Clergyman (Germaine Dulac, 1927)

Shadows (John Cassavetes, 1959)

Silverlake Life: The View from Here (Tom Joslin and Peter Friedman, 1993)

Sink or Swim (Su Friedrich, 1990)

Sleepless Nights Stories (Jonas Mekas, 2011)

Tarnation (Jonathan Caouette, 2003)

*That Photograph/*那張照片 (Chung-li Kao, 1984)

The Blood of a Poet (Jean Cocteau, 1932)

The Flower Thief (Ron Rice, 1960)

The Haverstraw Tunnel (American Mutoscope Company, 1897)

*The Household Diary/*家屋日記 (Chien-Hung Lien, 2010)

The Mystery of Picasso (Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1956)

The Private Life of a Cat (Maya Deren, 1946)

The Sea Star/Etoile de Mer (Man Ray, 1928)

The Song of Avila (Jonas Mekas, 2006)

*Time Variations/*時間變奏曲 (Ming-Yu Lee, 2006)

Trying to Kiss the Moon (Stephen Dwoskin, 1994)

Video Album series (George Kuchar, 1985-1987)

Video Diaries (BBC, 1990-1993)

Visual Variations on Noguchi (Marie Menken, 1945)

Walking from Munich to Berlin/München-Berlin Wanderung (Oskar Fischinger, 1927)

Weather Diary 1 (George Kuchar, 1986)

Weather Diary 3 (George Kuchar, 1988)

Weather Diary 5 (George Kuchar, 1989)

Weather Diary 6 (George Kuchar, 1990)

Wedlock House: An Intercourse (Stan Brakhage, 1959)

Wild Night in El Reno (George Kuchar, 1977)

Window Water Baby Moving (Stan Brakhage, 1962)

Zefiro Torna or Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas (Jonas Mekas, 1992)