THE CINEMA OF ME

The Self and Subjectivity in First Person Documentary

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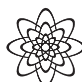

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The Camera as Peripatetic Migration Machine

Alisa Lebow

> El gusanito va paseando
> y en el pastito va dibujando un dibujito
> que es igualito al gusanito.
>
> – Jorge de la Vega[1]

When UCLA film professor Teshome Gabriel went back to his native Ethiopia, after a 32-year absence, he armed himself with all manner of 'memory aids' – a video camera, a still camera and a miniature tape recorder – none of which he could bear to use once he actually arrived at his mother's home. For him the technology, or rather the urge to use it, required a kind of outsiderness, a distanced vantage point from which to document – something he felt sure he had acquired in his years in the US, but when the time came to put his detached positionality to the test, he realised it had not been fully achieved. His self-professed lack of critical distance coupled with his desire to experience the full range of emotion available, translated into an inability to shoot. Moreover, the camera was deemed 'superfluous' – an unnecessary supplement, or as he calls it, 'a prosthesis' – which was incapable of capturing the nuances of the interactions or the mood; too inflexible to perceive the shifting parameters of the situation (Gabriel 1999: 76–7).

Argentine filmmaker Andrés Di Tella also arms himself with a camera, complete with crew, for his much-postponed visit to his mother's native India. In his film, *Fotografías* (2007, see Di Tella's own discussion of his film in this volume), he seems eager to have the camera serve as a kind of shield, a defence against the onslaught of emotions sure to arise in the encounter with his departed

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mother's family and culture, about which he knew precious little prior to his visit. The outsiderness that Gabriel insists would be necessary in order to document the scene is something Di Tella has in abundance. He confesses in the film that he is not only utterly uninformed about his Indian heritage, but that he is unsure whether he wants to know more. This is, of course, a dissimulation, the first of many in this complex film, which goes on to explore his Indian heritage in some detail. Nevertheless, and despite the camera crew and their requisite 'outsiderness', Di Tella's camera still manages to miss the salient details and meaningful encounters, or so claims the filmmaker in voice-over. Everything relevant seems to be happening when the camera is not rolling, a common enough frustration, but one that also points to the inflexibility or superfluity of the camera indicated in Gabriel's account.

For Gabriel, the urge to record the encounter via the filmic apparatus was a sign of his Westernisation and thus the inability to do so in the moment of encounter served as welcome evidence for him of the incomplete project of that identity formation. It was with great relief that this well-known Third World intellectual found that he had not been utterly subsumed by the cultural values he had spent a career critiquing. However, his inability to shoot is a highly atypical response. The three filmmakers whose work I discuss in this essay do not by any means experience the same paralysis with regard to the filmic apparatus. They all shoot, sometimes prodigiously, though to varying degrees the camera may indeed prove itself inadequate, as Gabriel warned, and may even serve as a kind of prosthesis at moments. Prosthesis or otherwise, it nonetheless emerges as a necessary accessory to the treatment of the subject at hand: family diaspora and migration.

The film camera and other related recording devices have been used by individuals and families to document the massive cultural and geographical shifts experienced around the world for decades. This is not to say that all migrations are documented. There are, of course, millions upon millions of undocumented migrations, even more than undocumented migrants. It is, relatively speaking, still a privilege to have the means to document one's journeys across borders – both legally and economically – and not coincidentally, those with the privilege to document are usually also those privileged with documents. Uncommon and class-based as the phenomenon may be, in those cases where motion picture self-documentation accompanies the movement of bodies across borders, that very act of videotaping (or filming as the case may be) has come to be thoroughly integrated into the migratory experience.[2] In fact it is my contention that this act of cine-documentation has particular effects of its own, even propelling some of these seismic geographcal shifts as it appears to simply record them. I am inspired by the image conjured by the epigraph

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to this piece, which suggests that the movement or flow of life leaves a visible trace that is art, and that art simultaneously propels the movement of life. The lyric is from a famous, semi-hallucenogenic Argentinian children's song (much like the English-language song *Puff the Magic Dragon*) from the 1960s, featured prominently in Di Tella's film. In essence it reminds us that the trail left by life's movements is not only artifact but art; and that the image is not a mere reflection of life but also gives momentum to and is catalytic of that life.

The three films discussed in this essay, *Fotografías* (Andres Di Tella, Argentina/India, 2007), *I for India* (Sandhya Suri, UK/India, 2005), and *Grandma Has a Video Camera* (Tania Cypriano, US/Brazil, 2007) form a subset, not only within the practice of first person filmmaking but of what has become known as transnational documentary. All three films foreground the cinematic apparatus, where the camera does not simply record, but actually enacts aspects of these family displacements, whether standing in as a sign of cultural destabilisation, a symbol of migration or indeed catalysing and/or miming a perpetual state of mobility.

To return to Gabriel briefly, he asserts in his essay that the camera is the quintessential sign of modernity, it is the very thing 'that allows the West to imagine itself as modern, and as different from its "premodern", "non-technological" others' (1999: 77). Of course Gabriel is not the only theorist to link Western notions of modernity to the cinematic apparatus. Much was made of it in the early twentieth century,[3] and more recently, Anton Kaes wrote compellingly about it, associating the cinematic apparatus not only with modernism *per se* but more specifically with the modern phenomenon of urban migration. As we know, the advent of cinema is roughly coincident with the first wave of mass urban migration in the West. The force of momentum, literally the engine-propelled movement of mass in time, can be said to have urged on a new sensibility, a new way of perceiving, that was equally well expressed in the scenery of a landscape as seen from a speeding train window as it was in the imagery screened through the rapid shutter of a projector (Kaes 1998: 182). In considering the imagery of trains and scenery seen from trains in the opening scenes of Walter Ruttmann's *Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (*Berlin, Symphony of a Great City*, 1927) Kaes notes that motion pictures are an apt metaphor for migration and modernity (1998: 179).

It is not modernity *per se* that my attention is drawn to here, but rather the movement and migration ushered in by the modern era; the wheels it set in motion, as it were. There are many potential avenues of analysis here, and scholars have considered, for instance, the interpenetration between cinema and colonialism, documentary and empire, and so on. But the direction I will take here is to look at some recent first person films that gain momentum, you

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might say, from the transformations in terms of travel, transnational capitalism and cinematic technologies of the intervening years.

MIGRATION AND TRANSMIGRATION

Early on in Di Tella's feature-length documentary, he looks at photos of his mother, recently given to him by his father. She is something of a cipher for him, having died when he was still a teenager. The photos are from the time of his own childhood and before. That same night that he looks at the photos, he tells us, he dreams of his mother. She is on a train, passing rapidly in one direction as the train he is on passes in the other. They are moving in opposite directions. The dream goes uninterpreted in the film but the contradictory forces, the back and forth momentum, the return to the place from which the mother comes, and the potent image of the train itself as a metaphor for migration and modernity, not to mention the resonances with the cinematic image, are all pertinent here. The modern (and postmodern) migrant finds her analogue in the first person journey film (though they do not always move in the same direction). The films themselves soon become, as we shall see later, a catalyst for migration as well.

By way of background, Di Tella's mother, Kamala Apparao, the daughter of a noble family, met Torcuato Di Tella, the son of a wealthy Italian-Argentinian industrialist, in India, where both were active in socialist politics. When Torcuato found himself expelled from the country, he left with Kamala, who despite their rocky relationship, was then pregnant with their first son. They moved to London, and eventually to Buenos Aires, where Di Tella imagines his mother to have been the only Indian ever to grace the Patagonian shores. The family was to migrate several more times, to the United States during the military *junta*, and once more to London, where Di Tella learns that his mother's difference is neither unique nor a mere curiosity, but rather a cause for considerable derision.[4] It is in London that he encounters discrimination for the first time on account of his Indian heritage – he is called a wog – and in his young mind, it is all his mother's fault. From then on he distances himself from all things Indian until well after his mother dies. The film is part of a process of reconciliation through discovery of '*la India*', as India is called in Spanish – a term that applies equally well to the country and to the Indian woman who was his mother. The film provides the pretence for the journey, not an uncommon trope for a documentary, first person or otherwise. Yet this journey is far from conventional in many respects. At moments it resembles something closer to a 'trip' of the hallucinogenic variety, both because his mother was very involved in the 'counterculture' of the 1960s[5] and because increasingly it ventures into

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semi-occult territory.

There are hints of this inclination in the first half of the film, where there is a great deal of talk of Ricardo Güiraldes, the famous Argentine author of *Don Segundo Sombra* (1926), a gaucho novel that every Argentinian school child will have read, whose character's journeys were heavily influenced by Güiraldes' Indian guru. Later, when Di Tella finds his way to India, his panic is such that he suffers first vertigo at the thought of going, and then severe insomnia upon his arrival, rendering his impressions 'dreamlike' – rather like hallucinations. And indeed, this is precisely the state the film eventually induces, with its elusive subject, Kamala, 'played' by herself and an actress, its slippages between archival and contemporary footage (often using Super 8 for present-day shots), and its multiple false endings that take us unsuspectingly back and forth between India and Argentina, all creating a disorienting effect.

Several times the film slips into a near dream state, as when unexplained, the filmmaker depicts his young son running off into the busy streets of an unspecified Indian metropolis, or when an actress, playing his mother, careens down a hill, in vertiginous close-up, a random memory that comes to the filmmaker towards the end of his journey. But never is the film so completely immersed in the irrational and hallucinogenic as when it takes us to a Hindu séance where a medium communes with Kamala's spirit from beyond the grave. Of all the migrations depicted in this journey of a film, this is without a doubt, the most 'far out'. In this transcendental moment, all is made clear: the mother, via the medium, tells her son that 'the whole concept of this movie was initiated by me. I am instrumental in your making this film and coming to India.' The woman who migrated so far away from her home eventually losing her way to the point of suicide, comes back from the spirit world to incite her filmmaking son to return to her homeland, camera in hand. From the migration of bodies to the transmigration of souls, the camera is recording device, catalyst and even in part conduit across time and space.

Coming down from these hallucinatory heights, we find a somewhat more sober manifestation of the relationship

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between movie making and migration in Sandhya Suri's impressive intergenerational, multi-format first person film, *I for India*.

FILM AS DIASPORIC APPARATUS

I for India is a film resonant with generations of voices and images that have travelled countless miles forming a celluloid link between continents, years and cultures. A small wonder of a film, *I for India* deftly integrates forty years of family home movie footage, audio letters and a deep well of family pathos into a broader consideration of socio-cultural phenomena. Suri's parents took part in the Indian mass-migration to England – the so-called 'Brain Drain' of the 1960s. We see the family's struggle to adapt to their adopted land alongside footage that reveals the highly ambivalent British response to its new residents. The clips from BBC programmes of the time are particularly hair-raising, ranging from the extreme condescension of *Make Yourself at Home*, a show broadcast in the 1960s targeting Britain's Indian and Pakistani immigrants (the unabashedly patronising English host explains: 'This is a switch on the wall, a switch. This is a light, a light. If I press the switch on the wall, the light will come on') to the explicitly racist and xenophobic displays in shows with titles such as *The Dark Million* (BBC 1966). One particularly revealing clip features Margaret Thatcher in an early 1980s interview on a current affairs show, saying: 'people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people of a different culture'. She pauses almost imperceptibly over the word 'culture' just long enough to allow it to resonate with the other 'c' word just uttered by the TV presenter, David Jessel: 'colour'. 'And you know, the British character', she intones imperiously, 'has done so much for democracy, for law, and done so much throughout the world that if there's any fear that it might be swamped, people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in.' Who counts as 'people' in this tacit approval of such demonstrations of hostility is fairly self-evident.

At the heart of *I for India* is the family archive, unusual for two key reasons: its sheer magnitude (hundreds of hours of Super 8 footage and reel-to-reel audio letters recorded over the course of forty years), and the dual archive. Realising the inadequacy of the written word to convey all of the distinct

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registers of this new situation, not to mention the unreliability of the postal system, Suri's father bought two Super 8 cameras, two projectors, two microphones and two reel-to-reel audio recorders and sent one full set of equipment to his family in India.

The Super 8 films are phenomenal, of course, but they are also inevitably conventional. The technology was famously marketed and promoted with very specific cultural and social, not to mention technical, conventions in mind, as Patricia Zimmermann, Richard Fung and Elspeth kydd, among others have duly noted (Zimmermann 1995; Fung 2008; kydd, in this volume). When, for instance, Fung describes the uncanny resemblance of his Chinese Trinidadian family's home movies to the white suburban American model as seen on the packaging, he recognises that his 'family's desire to inscribe themselves into the conventions of the technology, and all that this was associated with, means that the films are not always what they seem; their familiarity can be deceptive' (2008: 39). The situation is fairly similar with the Suri family treasure, but with a few notable differences.

The first difference is that the films sent to the family in India provide a kind of ethnographic record of the strange and unfathomable customs, climates and cretins to be found in England. This is 'reverse ethnography' at its best, when we see, for instance, the nurses with whom Yash Suri works, dancing some kind of jig at a holiday party. There is a very satisfying shift of address that these images effect, made all the more enjoyable for Sandhya Suri's audience, with the knowledge that the originally intended audience is the 'family back home.' There is an interest in the material shared by the family on both sides of the migratory divide, a mutuality of edification and emotional enrichment, augmented by the pleasures, surely not lost on the family in India, of occasionally poking fun at the supercilious yet easily lampooned British.

One can also imagine the satisfactions those audiovisual artifacts provided as they momentarily filled the gaping emotional holes left by the family members abroad. Film famously provides an illusion of presence unparalleled in other media, the motion picture far surpassing that of a static image or the written word in perpetuating a potent reality effect. Sound, of course, especially that of the human voice, adds something akin to 'dimension' to that image, despite the fact that neither image nor sound, nor their combined effect, can ever approximate the full dimensionality of the elusive human form. But that doesn't stop people from fantasising otherwise. The films coming from India are in fact taken up with documenting family events for the missing members – the Super 8 camera lens standing in, synecdochically, for the eyes of those who are absent, recording in effect what they would have seen, lived, been a part of, had they been there; filling their 'place.'

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The second major and related departure from the conventions that Fung identifies is the epistolary character of this audio/visual material. Sent back and forth between Meerut in northern India and Darlington in northern England, they were meant as envoys, or as Derrida would say *envois* – which also always involves a debt, like an invoice to be paid (see Derrida 1987). And indeed there is revealed in these films, as re-contextualised and re-presented by Suri, a formidable debt felt to be owed to the family back home, simply for having left. It is a debt that at first is promised to be paid by a return of the family to India, something they attempt but ultimately fail at, and in the end this debt can be only partially ameliorated through the effects of these audio-visual letters.

The letters cross a divide, speaking in voices – not written words – that people the void in strange and impossible ways. They speak of and through the gap, unbridgeable in theory, but with the play of light and waves, create this illusion of presence (see Naficy 2001: 103). We see a distinct disavowal in operation, intimated in Di Tella's film, but further developed here. Disavowal in psychoanalytic terms, as is well known, is a defence mechanism in which the subject refuses to acknowledge the reality of a traumatic perception, what might be called in Freudian parlance, the missing 'member'. It can result in the production of a fetish to help to gloss over the unwanted facts of the situation by performing a substitution or 're-placement' always inadequate, but nonetheless psychically effective. In this first person film and others, we see the disavowal of the absent family *member*, gone missing due to diasporic migration, a disavowal enabled by the technological fetish of the cinematic apparatus, used to make films to send back and forth, like emissaries, surrogates, envoys.

The epistolary film is a common trope in diasporic or so-called 'accented' cinema. Hamid Naficy writes about three types of such films, 'film-letters, telephonic epistles, and letter-films' (2001: 5), the first two of which appear in *I for India*. That film also deploys audio letters, not mentioned by Naficy, where they often displace the primacy of the Super 8 films. If the films can never fully overcome the dictated conventions of their use, then it is in the aural register that such conventions are upended. While the images show a happy, growing suburban family, rose gardens, seaside holidays and amusement parks, the audio, cleverly edited by the daughter, produces a powerful counterpoint – where the nagging ambivalences, ambitions, identity crises, longings, doubts and regrets are all expressed. One can imagine the more sombre of the recordings to have been made late at night, when the rest of the family is asleep, and the surroundings must have seemed at their most estranged. Unseen, often whispered or spoken in hushed tones as if issuing directly from the unconscious, these aural *communiqués* subvert the bright illusions of suburban bliss cutting to the core of the trauma and drama of displacement.

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In one heart-wrenching scene in particular, the audio virtually rips through the attendant visuals to reveal the extent of the identity crisis that this experience of migration has wrought. Yash, Suri's father and the amateur filmmaker responsible for this entire family archive, confides to his father and mother, at first in English, then in Hindi, ashamedly switching back to English when he cannot find the words to express his feelings in his own mother tongue. He is essentially admitting that he will not be returning home in the near future, his linguistic slide indicating a shift also in his centre of geographical gravity. His distress is palpable, as he babbles on about an equivalency crisis, unable to find commensurability between his longed-for native land, and his economically viable newly adopted one. He speaks with great sorrow of leaving his extended family and not being able to find his way back to them, while the images tell a somewhat rosier story.

The two modes of recording, audio and film, stand in contradiction to one another. Yet they are both part of a larger 'picture' wherein the cinematic apparatus not only records but forms a constitutive aspect of the migratory experience: the disconnect, the veritable cultural dysphoria is revealed in the interval between aural and visual register.

A broad array of visual recording and telecommunicative devices are represented in this film: Super 8, reel to reel, digital video cameras and toward the end of the film, even webcams and internet video-telephony. In the penultimate scene there is yet another migration in the family and it tellingly ushers in new modes of recording and communicating across the absences acrued. As the middle daughter, the filmmaker's older sister, emigrates from England to Australia, diasporic dispersal is re-enacted by the next generation, making it seem almost habitual, a repetition with no end in sight, the only difference being the audiovisual envoys lose their delay. The audiovisual recording devices here become the very prosthesis Gabriel warns about

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– necessary appendages for the mass migration and ceaseless hypermobility of the actors performing in the 'theatre' of global capitalism.

We return inevitably to questions of motion and migration – watching in awe as people swiftly adapt these changing technologies to their needs. To borrow and modify a phrase coined by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in her article 'Spaces of Dispersa,' I will call this phenomena 'the shifting technologies of connection'. When the film adjusts its register from Super 8 to webcam, we see an escalation of the 'presence' already implied in the film's earlier epistles. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes, the 'instantaneity of telecommunications produces a vivid sense of hereness and interactivity the feeling of presence' (1994: 342). Here, ever more effectively, the audiovisual technologies mask a disavowal of that which is nonetheless operating upon the actors (or should we call them 'users'?) namely: distance and separation. The medium is used even more efficiently than before as a force to condense time and space, and consequently to minimise the role of memory as constitutive of the migrating subject. Memory's vicissitudes are traded in for the fragile fibre-optics that allow the virtual presence of our missing loved ones on our computer screens.

Once upon a time, not that long ago, diasporic memory was implicitly cut off from its origins – as Andreas Huyssen claims (2003: 152). Generations of migrants, like my grandparents, never saw their homelands again once they had left. Leaving was final, permanent, irreversible. Home became a memory and a metaphor, awash in unchecked nostalgia or obscured by terror, depending on the terms of departure. Letters and still photographs were the only link to the past, and these, though perhaps fiercely cherished, could not as effectively engender the vivid technicolour disavowals enabled by the moving image and related recording technologies. What has changed in the contemporary experience of migration is the heightened – and reversible – mobility. Tellingly, the recorded images themselves are no longer static but 'on the move', an almost bionic enhancement. And as diasporic experience becomes less a matter of resettlement and more a matter of transnational transience, the back and forth movement itself has become not only a central theme of migration, but the subject of several first person films.

With the '*shuttling* of whole migrant populations between host nation and homeland', the notion of diaspora requires 'some new conceptual language' (Huyssen 2003: 151; emphasis added). It clearly also mobilises a whole host of new visual and aural devices to simulate presence and thus give a semblance of unity to emphatically fractured identities. Diaspora, it seems, can no longer be imagined without its attendant cinematic technologies. The shuttling back and forth of these contemporary migrations could easily bring to mind, in a kind of Vertovian visual analogy, the shutter of a camera, constantly in motion.

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But if hypermobility and technologies of connection are inextricably linked in *I for India*, I want to conclude by looking at an even more itinerant diasporic first person film to see the near-total interpenetration of the human shuttle and the cinematic shutter. Remember, the shared etymological roots of the words 'shuttle' and 'shutter', both deriving from the Old Germanic *skeutanan* (and later the Anglo-Saxon *sceotan*), which also means to shoot. In Tanya Cypriano's *Grandma Has a Video Camera* the eponymous Grandma Elda is perennially shooting her camera, as she shuttles back and forth between São Paolo and San Francisco. Her video camera serves a veritable peripatetic migration machine.

PRESS PLAY TO START

In Cypriano's film, the grandmother – the *vovó* – anchors the story, though she turns out to be quite an unmoored character herself. The film essentially begins and ends with the grandmother leaving her city of residence, but in the intervening fifty-plus minutes, we see her videotaping her migrant life as she makes her way back and forth – seemingly inadvertently and with the pretence of permanence each time – between Bahia and California. These are not your average tourist visits. Cypriano's grandmother, Elda Rosa de Jesus, migrates to San Francisco to take care of her latest grandchild, stays on with only a tourist visa for ten years, goes back to São Paolo reluctantly with her daughter and granddaughter, and then both together with them and alone proceeds to migrate back and forth for another ten years.

Grandma Elda is an inveterate videographer, taping all manner of events and non-events, including a virtual catalogue of apartments they lived in and various household consumer items they bought. The camera moves from hand to hand, in a new kind of 'shared textual authority' (Renov 2004: XXX?) that we might call *immigrantitis*: the mania to document one's first impressions of a new place in which one intends to live. Beyond documenting immigration of the family, as they come one by one and in pairs, Grandma's camera practices are a vehicle, a kind of shuttle mechanism – by granddaughter Tania's reckoning – bridging the distance between her two homes, neither of which she ever fully privileges. 'Back and forth we live, back and forth images are recorded', Cypriano tells us in voice-over, with a tinge of weariness. It is not merely a

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matter of sending video letters back and forth, which Grandma does with alacrity, nor just documenting others' comings and goings. Grandma herself is in seemingly constant motion. The continuous filming becomes an obvious metaphor for continuous migration. It is as if once the process of migration was set in motion, once the motion picture camera was switched on, and once Grandma hit the record button, there was no stopping the movement either of Elda or her camera.

Admittedly, Cypriano's own movements tend to follow a more linear pattern both in life (she migrated from São Paolo to San Francisco and from there to New York, where she has settled permanently) and in her shooting style. Her more 'professional' camera work serves as a visual reminder of another, steadier, more predictable, path. Yet it is not Tania's trajectory which propels the overarching narrative of the film, nor is it her ironically old-fashioned migratory pattern that reflects the new 'shuttle/shutter' migration.

Grandma's camera is witness to, and perpetrator of, a repetition compulsion that brings grandma migrating back and forth between Brazil and the US no less than seven times. Though the editing of this personal documentary does not detail every upheaval, it does indicate that each move was duly documented. As suggested, Grandma's camera becomes not just synecdoche for migration, it becomes a veritable migration machine itself, without which Grandma's migratory exploits would no doubt have to come to an end. In fact, this is precisely what occurs. The trauma of migration is relived, re-experienced, and re-imaged over and over again via the video camera until what we are led to believe is Grandma's final migration back to Brazil. As Grandma's aging body can no longer take the wear and tear of shuttle migration, she determines to go home to São Paolo, essentially to die. And how do we know this is the final chapter? Grandma leaves her beloved video camera behind. The migration machine is thus disabled, and Grandma can finally rest in peace; her shuttle mechanism switched off for the last time. In truth there is one more round of migration, but it is more like a last gasp than a forthright act.

Of course, not all films are quite this explicit about the relationship between migration and the moving image, but this documentary forcefully articulates that which many transnational diasporic first person films merely imply: the camera is not simply a recording device that captures the experiences of the

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displacement, it can be a symptom of that very displacement. Here the process of documenting a displaced subjectivity via the cinematic apparatus, or as it used to be called, the motion picture camera, reveals within it the seeds of its own destabilisation. And in some way, the camera in this film and in the previous two discussed here, resonates with the little worm, the *gusanito*, in the Jorge de la Vega song in Di Tella's film: like the *gusanito* the camera is simultaneously the trace of the movement that it records.

Notes

1 This lyric is from a very well known Argentinian song from the 1960s and translates roughly as follows: 'The little worm draws a little drawing as he worms through the grass and the little drawing is identical to the little worm' (translation my own). The song goes on to reverse the image in the next stanza by saying, 'the little drawing worms its way along and in its worming it makes a little worm that is identical to the little drawing'. The little worm asks itself later in the song whether the whole world isn't a drawing in reverse.

2 I am clearly asserting here that it is a class privilege to document one's migration and indeed all three films discussed here benefit from some measure of this privilege. Despite any possible claims to the contrary, video has not yet become the great democratising medium for most migrants, still less for undocumented ones. A notable exception to this rule is the work of the Palestinian refugee filmmaker, Osama Qashoo, who's trilogy *A Palestinian Journey* (2006) includes a segment on the exploits of an undocumented political refugee, attempting with difficulty to gain residency in the United Kingdom.

3 I refer here to studies within the Frankfurt School, by Sigfried Kracauer and also Wilhelm Stapel, though their writings refer strictly to intra-national migration, as industrialisation created a magnetic urban forcefield to which the peasantry of the countryside seemed irresistibly attracted. There is a high degree of cultural homogeneity in their somewhat agitated accounts that generally dwelt upon the incompatibilities between the urban cultural elite and the uneducated rural masses descending on the modern cities with little in the way of preparation for the new cosmopolitan lifestyle. These studies are, of course, not infinitely adaptable to the various and polysemic post-colonial, post-industrial and post-modern migrations and transitions enacted in the century to come.

4 The migrations of the Di Tella family in relation to the political events in Argentine history is the subject of his impressive prior film, *La televisión y yo* (*Television and Me*, 2002).

5 Kamala appears to have been very involved with the avant garde artists of the Instituto Di Tella (for a time the leading centre for contemporary art in Buenos Aires, closed in 1970) as well as having been heavily influenced by her friend and mentor R. D. Laing, an early experimenter with hallucinogens as therapeutic aids.

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