

INTIMACY AS A POLITICAL ACT: ABOUT GREY GARDENS AND CHANTAL AKERMAN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CINEMA

SERGI SÁNCHEZ

ANA AITANA FERNÁNDEZ

POLITICS OF THE INTIMATE, HISTORY AS A SYMPTOM

Can intimacy be considered a political act? We here approach personal history as a realization of the collective experience. "The truth of history does not lie in intimacy, it is rather the way – today privileged – of understanding history as a symptom" (CATELLI, 2007:9). Intimacy, as Nora Catelli states, is the autobiographical space that transgresses the opposition between the public and the private (2007). It is an interstice where the remnants of the historical transformations are traced. We approach here the symptom following Georges Didi-Huberman's terms. The symptom as the core of those tensions that convulse in the filmed intimacy: "The unceasing convulsion of layers that always act upon each other, in tension and polarity: impressions of movement, latencies with crisis, plastic processes with non-plastic processes, oblivion with reminiscences, repetitions with

reversals... I suggest to call the dynamic of these structural convulsions a symptom [...] The symptom will designate the heart of the tense processes that, after Warburg, we attempt to understand in the images: heart of the body and the time" (DIDI-HUBERMAN, 2009:248).

This paper aims to show how the symptom of history can be materialized in an intimate field, and be developed within as the account, more or less successful or frustrated, of a political gesture. The object of study are films linked by the thread of traumatic maternal-filial relationships. What does that trauma consist on? In 1942, Edith Bouvier Bale, Grey Garden's matriarch, was disinherited by her father for having an eccentric behaviour. She was condemned as a pariah between the aristocrats, as a marginal figure who dragged her own daughter to the void of confinement. Meanwhile, her niece was getting married to John Fitzgerald Kennedy and would become the first lady of the president whose murder would mark,

with fire, the United States political history until the late seventies, time when the Maysles brothers decided to film the Bouviers in their decadent mansion almost in ruins. In January 1945, Nelly Akerman was one of the Auschwitz survivors liberated by the Soviet troops. Five years later her daughter Chantal was born. She literally grew up bewitched by her mother's silenced wounds of the Holocaust, until committing suicide the 6th of October 2015.

The aim, therefore, is to analyse the filmmakers' political gesture when history is filmed as a traumatic symptom gangrened in the body of a maternal-filial relationship, whether it is done from the presumed objectivity of The Maysles' *direct cinema*, leading an external perspective which penetrates until the depth of intimacy both alien and exhibitionist; or from the internal and withdrawn perspective of a filmmaker such as Akerman, who works within the limits of the autobiographical essay, proposing herself as the object of analysis.

DOMESTIC ISOLATION AS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE

When David and Albert received the proposal of making a documentary about her childhood in East Hampton by Lee Radziwill in 1972, Jacqueline Onassis's youngest sister, they never imagined they would get to know the dark side of the Bouvier family – Lee and Jacqueline's maiden name. Edith Bouvier Beale and her daughter Edie Bouvier Bale (known as Big Edith and Little Edie), aunt and cousin of the former first lady respectively, lived entrenched in a decrepit 28-room mansion, full of garbage, fleas, cats, and at least two raccoons. That same year they received an eviction order because of unsanitary living conditions and it was Jackie who avoided it by paying the cleaning expenses. Against Radziwill's refusal to make a film exclusively about the Beale with the footage that was shot in *Grey Gardens*, the Maysles decided to wait. They started shooting in 1974.



Grey Gardens (Ellen Hovde, Albert Maysles, David Maysles, Muffie Meyer, 1975)

Grey Gardens (1975) ascertains that the evident decadency of the two women, both descendants of the American aristocracy, and their apparent insanity, is displaced by an unwavering artistic spirit¹ and their resistance to leave the house, their family insignia, fortress and at the same time jail of their own story – the only property owned by Edith Bouvier Beale. It is, precisely, in the absolute exposure of their intimacy where the political nature of history revisited from the margins is revealed, because its consequences are manifested in the field of intimacy. "It's very difficult to keep the line between the past and the present", Eddie confesses at the beginning of the documentary. A precept that, in a certain way, warns the spectator about the terrain in which the documentary is framed. Here, the temporal continuity disappears² and the film swings between two types of truth: the one that is filmed and the one that comes in 'extracting and juxtaposing the raw material into a more meaningful and coherent storytelling form' (LEVIN in BRUZZI, 2000: 277), as Albert Maysles sates. But the film also introduces the way in which both women are related and complement each other, constructing their identity within their lineage. The resistance to abandon the *belle époque* arises among the constant nostalgic references and leads them to avoid



Grey Gardens (Ellen Hovde, Albert Maysles, David Maysles, Muffie Meyer, 1975)

the filthiness of their present. Paula Rabinowitz, regarding the concept of history as an excess of documentary coined by Bill Nichols, states: "Film's relationship to historical meaning and history's dependence upon, yet refusal of, film's form leave a space for active viewing. Both construct political subjects, whose self-consciousness about their positions lends itself to an analysis of the past and of the present" (RABINOWITZ, 1993: 128).

One of the first moments of nostalgia arises with the family photos, where the splendour of the past is revealed. The scenery is one of the rooms of the house, turned into their headquarters (living room, kitchen and bedroom), presided by two twin beds where mother and daughter sleep. "I wanted to be a singer, you know, a professional singer", regrets Edith Bouvier, while the camera zooms-in to allow a detailed observation of the portrait of her wedding day. "Remember this?" Her daughter asks off-camera. "The villain of the piece", Edie mutters while a close-up of a framed picture of her father and the dedicatory to his wife is showed. The excessive interest of Edith to show to the camera the beauty of her young mother and the distinguished origin of her family in one of the pictures, is stopped by her mother's denial to show it, which results in a fight between them. Edie ends up tearing apart a piece of the pa-



Grey Gardens (Ellen Hovde, Albert Maysles, David Maysles, Muffie Meyer, 1975)

per frame that protected the image. She holds the picture in front of the camera, showing the damage it has suffered in the struggle as well: the bite in the thin cardboard that covers it, as the hole that reveals the symptom of their history. Once again, the difficulty to articulate past and present with the eternal question 'How did we get here?' that remains underneath every reproach made to one another. The constant references to social restrictions over the artistic aspirations of both of them, or the impossibility of the daughter to freely choose between her suitors accomplishes its climax in a sentence: "The seal of aristocracy is responsibility, isn't it?" The reverse shot of the mother in absolute silence confirms an unquestionable truth.

Initially, the Maysles brothers appear as mere observers who keep a distance and do not judge the main characters in their arguments. Their intimacy seems not to be committed. Nevertheless, the presence of the camera substitutes any question they want to formulate; they are integrated through the camera, they take a side³. Because their intention is not to create a simple portrait, but rather to show "aspects of our world that in other times would have been obscured from view; in this there is a gain. In the gain perhaps a loss" (ROSENTHAL, CORNER, 2005: 194). The unavoidable

loss of the objectivity established by the *direct cinema* they are based upon.

In this point it is important to highlight the acknowledgment of the two editors, Elen Hovde and Muffie Meyer, as co-directors in the credits of the film. Because if the place of the Maysles when filming the two women in their intimate space captures a latent and constant tension between them, the editing work by Hovde and Meyer translate this tension into a *between-the-images* where the political aspect of their resistance is intuited. "We think the story has very much to do with the society, and the place, and the contrast of the way they lived with the way people live around them, the class they come from and how they derivate from that. We think it's critical" (ROSENTHAL, HOVDE, 1978-79: 7). Hence, the transition from the dark interior of the house, where we discover Big Edith complaining about the raccoon who broke her new wall, to the perfectly neat mansions and corners of East Hampton in the prologue of the film, until arriving to the façade of the dilapidated Grey Gardens – where the tittle in big letters is superimposed. The daughter's voice is added to the dissolve of those idyllic postcards: "You know, they can get you in East Hampton for wearing red shoes on a Thursday [...] they can get you for almost anything". The exterior remains silenced by the main character's voice-off, an evidence of the political tone that was essential for the editors. For Hovde, it is a political documentary "in the sense that it is dealing with human relationships, a very modern situation, where people were living in intimate contact with maybe only one other person [...]. Intimate relationships are very complicated that way, they are power transactions." (ROSENTHAL, HOVDE, 1978-79: 16).

The relationship of intimacy in *Grey Gardens* is not exclusively a result of the mother-daughter relationship. It is also a result of the level of integration of the Maysels in the house. The principle of no intervention that characterizes *Cinéma Vérité* is broken as much with the commentaries of

the filmmakers as with the women's self-awareness about their place in the story and their way of self-representation. "The Maysles forsake any attempt to separate the person from the persona. Instead of feigning an impossible objectivity, the Maysles acknowledge their complicity in the performance. They celebrate the subjectivity of the filmmaker without permitting it to become intrusive or self-indulgent." (ROBSON, 1983: 53). Thus, two of their constant fights stand out because the presence of the filmmakers becomes evident not only through their voice but also through their image, aware of their impossibility to be simple spectators and of their transformation as political actors. In one of the fights, Albert films the mirror where he is reflected. Edith is behind him in her usual place in the bed, he asks: "Who is the man that took care of you for 25 years?" The question tigriss Edie's rage and she starts yelling at the filmmaker. Maysles decides then to reframe the image in the mirror and focuses on the face of the mother who, puzzled, tries to soothe the emotion of her daughter. This moment is interrupted by the unfocused face of Albert reflected in the mirror. Once Edie is calmed, the filmmaker opens the shot until having again the reflection of all three. But, the image of both the subject that films, and is filmed, is brutally cut with the insertion of a frontal close-up of Edie, who suggests the repetition of the scene in order to shoot it again. The complicity of the performance is not only demonstrated in the inclusion of the filmmaker in the frame, but in the editing as well, in the creation of that second truth where the filmed subject becomes aware of their representation for the camera⁴.

Postulated as an observational documentary, *Grey Gardens* overcomes the barrier between the exterior and the interior, the public and the private. It shatters the paradigmatic image of the conservative society, paladin of appearances and conventionalisms. The harmony between the work of the four directors has its paradigm in the final sequence, which reinforces the cyclic character of

the whole footage. At the beginning, a succession of newspapers clippings explained the eviction due to health standards and Jackie Onassis' help, with the soundtrack of Cole Porter's theme *Night and Day* as a symbol of the exterior world. The reverse-shot is the final sequence where the interior of the house is shown with the same music playing (this time in a diegetic fashion). The raccoons take over the rackety parts of the mansion, while Edith hums Porter's theme, almost dozing, surrounded by cats and waste. Edith's great painted portrait⁵ also stands there looking from the past – the representation of what she was and what she is. The music plays and Edie dances in the entrance of the house. She is filmed from the stairs. The camera clumsily tries to follow her steps while she sings "the magic of dreams come true". Thus, the exterior is silenced. Inside, time is blurred whilst the distance between them and the world only seems to be shortened by cinema. Art is the vanishing point of the resistance of the women of *Grey Gardens*, of the reconstruction of their own identity and their projection as active actors of the society that marginalizes them.

POLITICS IS A MATTER OF PHANTOMS

What happens when one's own intimacy is that which is filmed? Worried about the tensions that are raised in the domestic space, Chantal Akerman transgresses the everyday life through her self-representation and thus displaces the political act to her own body. In a crucial moment of *No Home Movie* (2015), the last film by Chantal Akerman, the Belgian director speaks with her mother's carer. The woman asks her about her roots, and Akerman tells her about her Polish grandparents and parents, their Belgian exile, their later internment in Auschwitz. "That's why my mother is the way she is", she comments towards the smile of the woman. Nevertheless, Auschwitz never appears in the moving conversations that she maintains with Nelly Akerman in



No Home Movie (Chantal Akerman, 2015)

the same table where she speaks with the carer. Only the *surroundings* appear. It is relevant that the devastating effects of the Holocaust gravitate over Akerman's filmography, and specially in her autobiographical essays: that void invoked by the silence of her mother, so verbal and loving in the relationship with her daughter, is the trigger for a whole filmography which obstinately looks for its political position in the confinement, in the violent dialectic of the interior and the exterior that results from it, and in the rejection of the conventions of the shot/reverse-shot. This political position consists on denouncing the absences of history in the construction of the self, and therefore, in the constitutive discourse of the present.

Mostly filmed in her mother's house in Brussels, *No Home Movie* is not a domestic film as its title points out. It is in the look of its format, in the formal roughness of its images and in its will to be placed in the family field. It is not in the sense that it is a denial of the ontology of domestic films, which attempt to perpetuate an idealized image of the family. (ODIN, 2010). "No home" is a word game to designate, as well, the feeling of exile, not of refuge, that Akerman pursued in great part of her life, especially after that day in 1984 when she was given by her mother, the diary of her grandmother who died in Auschwitz: "She said: 'it will protect you'. She gave it to me when I was in need



No Home Movie (Chantal Akerman, 2015)

of being protected and she felt me powerless. She gave it to me instead of talking” (POLLOCK, 2010). That operation of transference between mother and daughter is translated, according to Griselda Pollock, into a process of transposition, which subverts completely the ordinary notions of time and space between parent and child. In words of the psychoanalyst Judith Kestenberg “Since the parent’s past occupies the psychological space that would ordinarily belong to the current life of the child, the child must give up his right of existing in its own present”⁶. It is the opposite of what happens to Edie Bouvier regarding her mother, with whom she lived in Grey Gardens since 1952. Both Akerman and Edie see a mirror in their mothers, but in the second case the operations of *transposition* or transference has transformed into possession and substitution. In Akerman there is a distance in between, a security distance, which only becomes shortened in *No Home Movie*; instead, in the daily life of the Bouvier, who share a malodorous bedroom in a 28-bedroom mansion, there are no distances.

On the occasion of the presentation of the film in Locarno’s Festival, two months before her suicidal, Akerman confessed to the critic Daniel Kasman that *No Home Movie* was originated in the necessity to accept her mother’s silences regarding Auschwitz. In this sense, it is interesting

to compare this film and *News From Home* (1976), the meditative elegy that Akerman shot during her second stay in New York, reading the letters from her mother over long shots of the streets, the diners, the port and the subway of New York with a monotonous voice, allowing the ambience sound of the images devour intermittently the maternal words. In that time, strongly influenced by the cinema of Michael Snow, Yvonne Rainer and Stan Brakhage, Akerman had not realize until what point her work was going to be perceived filtered by the personality of her mother by *refraction*, like a ray of light that changes direction when penetrating water⁷.

In *News from home* the dissociation between voice and space is absolute, inasmuch as the image and the voice-off are independent vectors until touching; and they touch in the disembodiment of exile, longing and alienation. In one of her letters, Nelly Akerman recriminates her daughter for always writing the same letter: “And I get the impression –she says- that you say nothing”. The images of New York are that ‘same letter’ which can be read as the desire of separation of a daughter who does not know how – or does not want – to decipher the petition of a mother who is anxious for belonging and possessing; of a survivor of the Holocaust, at last, who considers home as the only possible world. We could then state, following Bellour, that in *News From Home*, that home is rejected, “releasing the words of the absent mother only to return them more efficiently, with a kind of calculated sadism, to solitude” (BELLOUR, 2009: 145). Hence, there is a rebellion against silence which is transformed in *No Home Movie* into comprehension and bond.

The conversations that Akerman and her mother keep in the film, whether in her apartment or on skype, have two reverse-shots: on the one hand, the empty images of the rooms of the house that are also divided in frames according to the usual static and symmetric compositions of Akerman’s cinema; on the other hand, images of

the Israeli desert, long shots of windswept trees, and dunes and mounds seen from the car. Still impregnated with the structuralist spirit that goes through a big part of her filmography, and which the Belgian filmmaker acknowledges to the precision of the rituals of her Jewish education, the film set the background of the maternal-filial relationship in a *between-the-images* where Ackerman keeps denying to herself to be the reverse-shot of the maternal image – The camera films her, relegating the director to a voice-off or a figure that slips, careless, into the frame – but where distances are abbreviated, almost against her will, by deed and grace of the digital. “Why do you film me in that way?” the mother asks in the computer screen. “Because I want to show that in this world there are no distances”, answers Akerman. The operation of transposition that Kestenberg referred is finished. In his elaborated theorization of the construction of selfhood as narration, the philosopher Paul Ricoeur explains this process of transference as the unfolding of the enunciator: ‘One-self as another suggests, from the beginning, that ipseity of oneself implies the alterity in such an intimate level, that one cannot be thought without the other’ (RICOEUR, 2001, 250). Akerman, who had always claimed herself as a member of the

second generation (“The generation of my parents narrated itself: we are going to hide you what happened to us. And as they did not transmitted their stories, I looked for a fake memory, a kind of an imaginary, reconstructed memory rather than the truth” [POLLOCK, 2010]), eliminates the distance that separates her from her mother, which is also the one separating her from her legacy, the world and History itself. In the moment in which she brings her digital camera near the screen of the computer and turns the image of her mother into a formless tide of pixels, she knows that the intimate act of filming is the only possible way of turning silence into a cry against the illegibility of the present.

Between *News From Home* and *No Home Movie* an interval, occupied with the forcefulness of a question, is opened with *Là-bas* (2006). Between the image that concludes the first, the Twin Towers and the last, the image of the empty apartment of Akerman’s mother, the Belgian filmmaker invokes her internal demons without naming them. One gets the impression that the film is, secretly, the dialogue between those two final shots, as if in a strange exercise of clairvoyance, there was a common thread between that monumental relic, which in 1976 was a symbol of American Imperialism, and the death of a survivor of the Holocaust and the future suicidal of her daughter.

In an excellent article, Greg Youmans exposes his doubts about Akerman’s political position regarding the project. How to make a documentary about contemporary Israel without talking about Palestine? How can the presence of the Jews be reduced to cut shadows through the window blinds of the apartment where the filmmaker is confined in Tel-Aviv or to some figures in the beach shot during her brief walks to the exterior? The producer Xavier Carniaux was the one who suggested Akerman the idea of making a film about Israel. She resisted at the beginning. She was afraid of the obstacles that her own subjectivity could bring to her. “I do not feel I belong”, she says. “I am disconnected. Partially deaf, partially blind. Some-

No Home Movie (Chantal Akerman, 2015)



times I sink, but not completely". And, nevertheless, filming that paralysis which, as she affirms in off, makes her look and withdraw into herself to turn the exterior into the interior, is a way of politically redeeming her broken and contradictory identity, inasmuch as politics is not debated in a collective or militant way but rather in a negotiation between the construction of the self and the historical path. "I survive to the yellow star, it is engraved in myself", Akerman states. To which she adds: "Suicides are like exiles". In her mother's absence, in absence of her own image, *Là-bas* shows that, for Akerman, all politics, are in fact, a matter of phantoms. The past that remains in the reign of the shadows can only dialogue with silence, with the out-of-field, with the empty field.

CONCLUSIONS

The silenced ghosts of a traumatic past lay both beneath *Grey Gardens* and Akerman's autobiographical cinema. Definitively, the irruption of the camera in the domestic field – someone else's in the case of the Maysels and oneself's in that of the Belgian filmmaker – constitute a tool to understand the historical transformations that Catelli refers when reflecting on intimacy (2007). The difference and the common threat between the two cases consist on how cinema transgresses that intimacy. If the trauma of Holocaust, buried by Nelly Akerman, is demonstrated – among other moments – in the security distance that her daughter settles while filming her, in the case of the Bouvier, their wound arise as a result of the Maysels' apparent attitude of mere observers while registering both women. Nevertheless, it is with the rupture of those spatial barriers – during the Skype conversation between Akerman and her mother, or in the participation of the Maysles in the Bouvier discussions – that the filmmakers get awareness of their position in history, thus inviting the spectator to enter this space too, thus turning the intimate into a political matter. ■

NOTES

- * The images illustrating this article have been contributed voluntarily by the authors of the text, who were liable for locating and requesting the proprietary rights of reproduction. In any event, the inclusion of images in the texts of *L'Atalante* is always done by way of citation, for their analysis, commentary and critical assessment. (Editor's note).
- 1 Besides the constant demonstrations of singing and dancing, there are two posters where «The Great singer Big Edith Bouvier Beale» and «The great dancer Little Edie Bouvier Beale» can be read.
- 2 The shooting took six weeks, but any temporal reference is avoided in the film and the editing, where there is no temporal *raccord*.
- 3 Their presence is exposed from the beginning: in the newspaper clipping about the shooting of the film and in the portrait of the two filmmakers. Over this picture we hear the voice of Edie shouting "It's the Maysles!", which corresponds to the following sequence of the Maysles arriving to the house.
- 4 Ellen Hoyde also states in an interview that, even if the Maysles did not direct the gestures or dialogues, they did ask sometimes, both mother and daughter, to reproduce exactly the same dialogues that they had said before to better register the moment.
- 5 A *leit-motif* throughout the footage. The portrait, symbol of the magnificence and social position of the Bouvier Bale family, turns into the cats' toilet.
- 6. This paper, because of evident limits of extension, does not contemplate the large and fructiferous artistic work by Akerman, which includes several video installations based on the maternal-filial relationship.
- 7 The importance of the maternal figure and her experience in the camps is not limited to the documentary and essayistic work by Akerman. The Belgian filmmaker considered her *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), as a love letter to her mother, who, after surviving to the Holocaust "turned her home into a jail".

REFERENCES

- BELLOUR, Raymond (2009). *Entre imágenes*. Buenos Aires: Colihue.
- BRUZZI, Stella (2000). *New documentary: A critical introduction*. London: Routledge.
- CATELLI, Nora (2007). *En la era de la intimidación*. Córdoba: Beatriz Viterbo Editora.
- DIDI-HUBERMAN, George (2009). *La imagen superviviente, historia del arte y el tiempo de los fantasmas*. Madrid: Abada Editores.
- KAPLAN, Judith (1995). *Lost Children: Separation and Loss Between Parents and Children*. London: Harper Collins.
- KASMAN, Daniel (2015). Chantal Akerman discusses "No Home Movie". *Notebook*. <<https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/chantal-akerman-discusses-no-home-movie>>.
- KORESKY, Michael (20/01/2010). *Eclipse Series 19: Chantal Akerman in the Seventies*. Recuperado de <<https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1351-eclipse-series-19-chantal-akerman-in-the-seventies>>.
- ODIN, Roger (2010). El cine doméstico en la institución familiar. En E. Cuevas Álvarez, *La casa abierta. El cine doméstico y sus reciclajes contemporáneos* (39-60). Madrid: Ocho y Medio.
- POLLOCK, Griselda (2010). The Long Journey: Maternal Trauma, Tears and Kisses in a Work by Chantal Akerman. *Studies in the Maternal*. 2(1), 1-32. <<http://doi.org/10.16995/sim.82>>
- RABINOWITZ, Paula (1993). Wreckage upon Wreckage: History, Documentary and the Ruins of Memory. *History and Theory*, 32(2), 119-137. <<http://doi.org/10.2307/2505348>>
- RICOEUR, Paul (2001). *Si mismo como otro*. Madrid: Siglo XXI.
- ROBSON, Kenneth J. (1983). The Crystal Formation: Narrative Structure in "Grey Gardens". *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 22, N. 2, 42-53.
- ROSENTHAL, Alan, HOVDE, Ellen (1978). Ellen Hovde: An Interview. *Film Quarterly*, 32(2), 8-17. <<http://doi.org/10.2307/1211936>>.
- ROSENTHAL, Alan, CORNER, John (2005). *New Challenges for Documentary*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- YOUMANS, Greg (2009). Ghosted Documentary. *Millennium Film Journal*, nº51. Recuperado de <<https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-1825364231/ghosted-documentary-chantal-akerman-s-l-bas>>.

INTIMACY AS A POLITICAL ACT. ABOUT GREY GARDENS AND CHANTAL AKERMAN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CINEMA

Abstract

Can the documentary filming of intimacy become a political gesture? If in the intimate, as Nora Catelli states, lies the way to understand history as a symptom, this article aims to show how this gesture is translated into images from seemingly opposite methods: the Maysles brothers' gesture affiliated to the exteriority of direct cinema in *Grey Gardens*; and Chantal Akerman's interiority in her autobiographical essays, being the filmmaker herself an object of study. What is the connection between these two examples? They are both based on the traumatic experiences of history, manifested in the singularity of troubled maternal-filial relationships.

Key words

Intimacy; Symptom; History; *Grey Gardens*; Chantal Akerman; Auschwitz.

Author

Sergi Sánchez (Barcelona, 1970) is PhD in Film and Media Studies (2011) by Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), where he is teaching digital cinema and television history. He is also Head of the Film Studies department at ESCAC. He is the author of *Hacia una imagen no-tiempo. Deleuze y el cine contemporáneo* (Ediciones de la Universidad de Oviedo). Contact: sergisssss@hotmail.com.

Ana Aitana Fernández (Alicante, 1980) is predoctoral researcher in the Department of Communication at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, where she is currently working on a thesis on the reconstruction of individual memory through the image-object. She is assistant lecturer in the Degree in Journalism and a member of CINEMA (Colectivo de Investigación Estética de los medios Audiovisuales, in its Spanish acronym). anaaitana.fernandez@upf.edu.

Article reference

SÁNCHEZ, Sergi, FERNÁNDEZ, Ana Aitana (2016). Intimacy as a Political Act. About *Grey Gardens* and Chantal Akerman's Autobiographical Cinema. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 22, 77-86.

LA INTIMIDAD COMO ACTO POLÍTICO. SOBRE GREY GARDENS Y EL CINE AUTOBIOGRÁFICO DE CHANTAL AKERMAN

Resumen

La filmación documental de la intimidad, ¿puede convertirse en un gesto político? Si en lo íntimo, como dice Nora Catelli, reside la vía para comprender la Historia como síntoma, este artículo pretende demostrar cómo se traduce ese gesto en imágenes a partir de métodos aparentemente opuestos: el de los hermanos Maysles, afiliado a la exterioridad del cine directo, en *Grey Gardens*; y el de Chantal Akerman, afín a la interioridad del ensayo autobiográfico, con la propia directora como objeto de estudio. ¿Qué une a ambos ejemplos? Partir de la experiencia traumática de la Historia, manifestada en la singularidad de conflictivas relaciones materno-filiales.

Palabras clave

Intimidad; síntoma; historia; *Grey Gardens*; Chantal Akerman; Auschwitz.

Autor

Sergi Sánchez (Barcelona, 1970) es Doctor en Comunicación Audiovisual (2011) por la Universitat Pompeu Fabra, donde enseña cine digital e historia de la televisión. Es jefe de departamento de Estudios Filmicos en ESCAC y autor, entre otros ensayos sobre cine, de *Hacia una imagen no-tiempo. Deleuze y el cine contemporáneo* (Ediciones de la Universidad de Oviedo). Contacto: sergisssss@hotmail.com.

Ana Aitana Fernández (Alicante, 1980) es investigadora predoctoral en el departamento de Comunicación de la Universitat Pompeu Fabra, donde desarrolla una tesis sobre la reconstrucción de la memoria individual a través de la imagen-objeto. Es profesora asistente en el Grado en Periodismo y miembro del grupo CINEMA (Colectivo de Investigación Estética de los Medios Audiovisuales). Contacto: anaaitana.fernandez@upf.edu.

Referencia de este artículo

SÁNCHEZ, Sergi, FERNÁNDEZ, Ana Aitana (2016). La intimidad como acto político. Sobre *Grey Gardens* y el cine autobiográfico de Chantal Akerman. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 22, 77-86.

Edita / Published by



Licencia / License



ISSN 1885-3730 (print) / 2340-6992 (digital) DL V-5340-2003 WEB www.revistaatalante.com MAIL info@revistaatalante.com