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## Familial Pursuits, Editorial Acts: Documentaries after the Age of Home Video

I think it's going to be very interesting . . . to see what happens with this digital generation of parents who have recorded their kids' every footstep. . . . People can just go back to the data bank and see exactly how little Jimmy spooned his peas into his mouth at age four. There'll be a record of it.

—Ross McElwee quoted in Lawrence F. Rhu,  
“Home Movies and Personal Documentaries”

**S**ince the 1990s a significant number of documentaries have been produced that rely heavily upon primary footage taken by the subject(s) of the documentaries over the course of their purportedly predocumentary lives. In films like *Tarnation* (Jonathan Caouette, 2003) the film's subject and director are the same. More often, as in *Capturing the Friedmans* (Andrew Jarecki, 2003) and *Grizzly Man* (Werner Herzog, 2005), the film's director employs footage that was taken by and of the documentary subject(s). In so doing, the documentary director assumes the role of editor and interpreter of a prerecorded, personal moving image archive that has already been edited, always conceptually and sometimes literally. This extensive use of home movies—home videos would be the more accurate term in most recent cases—signals a shift in recent documentary production, one that compels us to consider the implications of using home videos as narrative and illustrative tools, as conduits to history and memory.<sup>1</sup> The representational and ethical ramifications of this recent spate of documentaries that rely on home video have yet to be assessed. What follows considers these issues by focusing on the current generation of obsessive self-documentarians and the 35mm, feature-length, theatrically released documentary films that have been made, at least partly, out of their autobiographical video records.

A close but selective engagement with the aforementioned early-twenty-first-century films will aid in our

understanding of this phenomenon of lives lived seemingly in preparation for documentary exploration. As McElwee seems to suggest in the epigraph above, the prevalence, ease, and affordability of home video equipment have made it possible for people to create an expansive library of moving image material with which to illustrate their lives. Personal memory is made tangible—it is, in essence, authorized—when a visual record appears to substantiate it. However, as we suggest, the availability of these video records also informs the shape and scope of the histories and memories these documentaries represent. In other words, home videographers have already made a preemptive directorial intervention by virtue of their representational decisions, inclusions as well as exclusions, and these decisions impact the nature of the documentaries that employ this footage. The home video camera's presence not only affects the moment of recording (perhaps especially so when the subjects document themselves) but also provides seemingly irreplaceable evidence of that moment. These moments are, of course, partly dictated by the videographer's intentions, which guide the expenditure and focus of the primary video footage. The documentary filmmaker working with extant biographical or autobiographical video material performs, then, a kind of secondary editorial role in which relevant video footage is assembled before the commercial cinematic product is even undertaken.

McElwee's observations above also point, however obliquely, to a central concern arising in these films with regard to the state of the American family. Where he envisions a generation of parents with a “data bank” of video material documenting their children's lives, these recent films suggest a shift away from parents as the *producers* of photographic records to “children” as videographers who often take parents and parenthood as their *subjects*.<sup>2</sup> Considered alongside each other, the

films investigated here present a provocatively destabilized image of the contemporary American family and its organizing structure: from the nuclear (*Capturing the Friedmans*), to the extended and re-created (*Tarnation*), to the “families we choose” or invent (*Grizzly Man*).<sup>3</sup> This article, then, is also an attempt to confront a thematic convergence around the subject of family—both literal and constructed, traditional and alternative—in these at first seemingly disparate documentaries. The quest to understand or to achieve a sense of family pervades, indeed motivates, all of the amateur videographers examined here. The availability of these preconceived video materials also facilitates the narration of the domestically centered melodramas unfolding within each subsequently constructed documentary.

Where home *movies* have been characterized as providing highly selective, idealized glimpses of family life, as Patricia Zimmermann and Richard Chalfen demonstrate in their respective studies, home *videos*, particularly as they operate in these three films, provide an archival representation that goes beyond the iconography of picture-perfect birthday parties and Christmas mornings. This is not to make a technologically determinist argument, for clearly there are important cultural, ideological, and individual reasons for the video revelations we encounter in these documentaries. It is, however, crucial to acknowledge that the technology of the video age, which facilitates the core content of these recent documentaries, also makes possible some of these historically unconventional representational tendencies. In *There's No Place Like Home Video*, James Moran, who painstakingly lays out his theoretical rejection of essentialist arguments about medium specificity, argues that “home video continues a tradition of ideal family representation” (xiv). As the following pages demonstrate, we are less certain about this contention. Though no less performative, no less the product of authorial invention and intention, the home videos used in these three documentaries expose the family in various states of decay and dissolution, capturing the antithesis of domestic harmony in sometimes astonishingly clinical detail and in a fashion that undoes the myth of “ideal family representation” associated with home movies. What follows, then, focuses on the circulation and status of home video images in recent documentary practice, which first requires some consideration of the foundational, material object central to each of these documentaries: home videos.

## From Home Movies to Home Videos

In our lexicon a mediocre movie is one that only your family can enjoy. A good movie can entertain an audience that doesn't know the actors.

—Roy Pinney, “Better Home Movies”

Although it is unlikely that *Parents' Magazine* could have predicted the way that home movies would be seen by mass audiences in the context of documentaries made fifty years after it published its evaluative criteria, it is worth taking a moment to consider the public/private nature of home movies and the way this concept has shifted in the home video age. By the post-World War II era, home movie making was a significant hobby for American families, especially for those experiencing the nation's overall prosperity. Marketing strategies employed by major equipment producers as resources (equipment as well as film) were made available again in the postwar period pitched home movies as the ideal tool for parents seeking to document their family and their children in particular, a message that resonated with the baby boom generation.<sup>4</sup>

Working within the predetermined limits of three minutes' worth of 8mm or super-8mm, this generation of home filmmaker required adequate lighting for proper film exposure (especially indoors) and incurred the additional expense and wait-time involved in film processing. As home movie scholars such as Patricia Zimmermann and Richard Chalfen have indicated, this resulted in a necessarily selective filmmaking practice typical of the prevideo age. These particular, technologically rooted challenges were eradicated after the proliferation of home *video* technology, which surfaced in earnest during the 1980s, became more affordable over the course of the next decade, required no processing, was forgiving in less-than-ideal lighting conditions, and eventually benefited from user-friendly home computer editing programs.<sup>5</sup> By the 1980s and 1990s the skills—indeed, even the resources—needed to film and edit no longer appeared the exclusive province of adults, the former gatekeepers of the family iconography. Even kids could use a video camera, and a new generation of videographers was able to move outside of the parentally controlled patterns that dominated the home movie age.<sup>6</sup> We find evidence of this shift in the documentaries under discussion here, which support our claim that home videography lends itself to capturing the family in ways that are not consonant with earlier conventions of home

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Figure 1. This Bell & Howell advertisement depicts the mother of an American family filming the father's return, an apt iconography for the immediate postwar, homecoming period. Home movies were being pitched as the ideal way to preserve "adorable family incidents like this," and once the material needs of the war receded this technology would be made readily and immediately available to many a newly reunited or constituted American family. *Home Movies* July 1945:286.

filmmaking, earlier conventions, in fact, that occasionally appear, often by way of contrast, in these recent documentary films.

This is a significant change, for it begins to speak to the often unruly, invasive, and subversive nature of the home video footage surfacing in this crop of recent documentaries. Discussing the climate for home movie making in the 1950s, Zimmermann contends that "with leisure-time expansion, the nuclear family's most important recreation was itself. Home movies conscripted 'togetherness,' family harmony, children, and travel into a performance of familialism. . . . [H]ome movies preserved and evoked a residual social formation of families as important cultural and social agents through idealizing, indeed worshipping, its cloistered interactions" (133). Zimmermann's thesis is supported not only by surviving home movie footage but also by several decades of industrial and hobbyist publications focused squarely on the family as an idealized amateur cinematic subject. Three-minute memories were created to capture

moments of social and familial value, depicting an almost always positive conception of family and community.<sup>7</sup>

The video age carries over some of the same rhetoric (early video manuals hardly advise operators to *waste* tape and still instruct users in the basics of good composition), but the mechanics of the situation are fundamentally different, a selling point not lost on home video users. Although James Moran patently rejects a technologically determinist argument, "which confers upon a medium some autonomous and immanent force of inevitable social change," when he turns to defining the differences between film and video he inevitably encounters those material differences: affordability, ease of use, widespread availability, and, perhaps most critically, the comparatively enormous capacity of video, all of which conspired to allow a new generation of videographers to venture beyond the conventions established during the amateur film era (xv).<sup>8</sup> This is not to argue that home video changed the nature of the family but rather that home video made possible



a new, seemingly more “complete”—or at least more complex—and perhaps more critical way of capturing the family. Moran explains:

The basic differences of operation [between film and video] will precipitate differences of production and reception, which in turn may extend home videos’ range of content and space for interpretation beyond the limitations of home movies. . . . [R]ather than expose random moments from everyday life, which would require a much greater financial investment, home moviemakers generally film only the highlighted moments of ritual events wherein participants could be posed and conventions controlled in advance of shooting. (41)

Moran gets to the core of some crucial material facts: videotape was not only cheap but also rerecordable, and the time, cost, and inconvenience of processing had become, in the video age, the hurdles of a bygone era. Moran is right to point to these differences, as he is to tread carefully when suggesting the degree of influence these technological changes inspired in the realm of representation. What we mean to suggest in the following pages, then, is that these videographic records, marked by the tendencies and possibilities we’ve been discussing, offer both a representational gift and an equally important challenge for the documentary director opting to work with these primary materials. An awareness of the different layers of representation and indeed of argumentation at work here—the initial videographed moments and the selective use of these moments in the documentary that enfolds and recontextualizes this footage—suggests the ways in which authorship is complicated by this recent generation of mainstream feature documentaries.

Video footage in *Tarnation*, *Capturing the Friedmans*, and, in a different fashion, *Grizzly Man* functions to *unprotect* the family, thereby challenging the domestic idealization prevalent in the representational tropes of the prevideo age. “Togetherness” is not abandoned by this generation; rather, it is problematized, largely for its frustrating elusiveness. Moran insightfully argues that “home video reveals that families have always been more complex and contradictory than home movies have generally portrayed them . . . [representing] the fuller range of domestic ideologies already present in the culture, well before the arrival of home video” (43). The medium does not, in other words, determine the message so much as it allows the message to be recorded and revealed. Indeed, the films under discussion here capture and accentuate the gaps that Zimmermann suggests lurked in the *off-screen* space

of a previous generation’s moving documents. These fissures, present in and sometimes the focus of the original materials, are made visible by the initial representational decisions made by these particular videographers and are thereby accessible to the documentary director working with these initial renderings.

Paul Arthur has described this phenomenon as “the revenge of the home movie” (“Feel the Pain” 47), claiming that “in an age when practically no one is outside the media loop, every life is understood as intrinsically a production-in-the-making whose idioms are shaped by a spectrum of documentary practices from eyewitness news to cell phone cameras to ‘candid’ sex videos” (“Extreme Makeover” 19).<sup>9</sup> Ross McElwee offers the following, related diagnosis of this state of affairs:

This notion of constantly wanting to capture reality as much as humanly possible is a kind of neurosis. It’s also one that’s perhaps more pervasive than it ever has been. We have a proliferation of readily available digital, and now computer-based and web-based technology, where making movies has become much easier than writing a novel or a poem. Now, technically speaking, almost anybody can make a movie. It’s interesting to think about the pathological aspects of this addiction to filming, this desire to interact with reality by filming it. (Rhu 10)

Indeed, the pervasive mediation of experience McElwee identifies and, to some degree, participates in has produced a generation of individuals whose every move might be captured on film (though less frequently now) or video and shared via easy-to-execute duplication on VHS or DVD as well as via the Internet (think of portals such as youtube.com). Cell phones with moving and still photographic capabilities can store and transmit these documents of the moment, fostering a kind of pandocumentary culture for whom the recorded event has become a dominant form of communication.

Indeed, by returning to the epigraph with which we began this section we might posit that this recent documentary activity enacts both an inversion as well as a confirmation of *Parents Magazine*’s formula for judging the mediocrity or goodness of a home movie. This trilogy of films could hardly be “enjoyable” for the families depicted in them, divulging as they do so many elements of trauma, embarrassment, and untoward frankness, precisely that which—at least until fairly recently—has been considered the province of the private and not the public sphere. However, we must also acknowledge that the allure of these films partly hinges on their promise of a glimpse

beyond the surface, an invitation to see the unlovely elements typically concealed by the curtain drawn on private lives, and that these elements are made visible especially through the documentary director's use of primary home video footage. These documentaries function as not just introductions to but intrusions, however welcome, *into* the lives of these unfamiliar "actors," to use *Parents Magazine's* language; these intrusions, however, are made possible by the video footage that the film's subjects have, willingly or unknowingly, provided.

### Fly in the Face: *Capturing the Friedmans*

All of the films under consideration here turn to the idea of self-documentation because of something happening within the domestic universe, and all parade an array of disharmonies that are antithetical to the self-representation of family in the prevideo age. Of these three films, *Capturing the Friedmans* is the least reliant on home video for its overall visual content. In it the creation of home video footage is inspired by a dramatic familial rupture; in fact, the presence of the home video camera and its primary operator are motivated by and may even play a role in the further disturbance of the already-fragile Friedman family. Whereas fly-on-the-wall cinematography became the hallmark of the direct cinema movement, home video in *Capturing the Friedmans* might better be understood in terms of its "fly-in-the-face" politics, as both the video camera and its operator harass, provoke, and interrogate those on the receiving end of its gaze.

Directed by Andrew Jarecki, who came upon the Friedmans' saga while making a short documentary about clown entertainers in New York City, the film tells the story of a Long Island family whose lives are radically disrupted when the father, Arnold, and one of the sons, Jesse, are arrested and charged with child molestation. The film employs a number of media in the telling of its story: contemporary footage shot by Jarecki's crew, news footage, home movies (which introduce us to the members of the Friedman family under the credit sequence), and home videos (shot largely by one of the Friedman sons, David). In fact, the film is as much about access and recording as it is about anything (one need only think of the film's multivalent title), from the fact that the first time cameras are permitted in a Nassau County courtroom is for the Friedmans' indictment, to the eldest son, David's, decision to get a video camera at a certain point in all of

this chaos to document the unraveling of his own family and of himself.

The use of home movies and videos in *Capturing the Friedmans* supports the representational dichotomy discussed above. The home movies in *Capturing the Friedmans*—of birthday parties, children growing up—are typical of the genre: their visual register of cheerful familial togetherness offers a stark contrast to the contemporary images of this family captured by the video camera. Only Jarecki's editorial intervention in this home movie footage—both in terms of juxtaposition and narration—re-signifies the seemingly "innocent" home movie images. At one such moment, an interview with Elaine Friedman is intercut with home movie footage and still images of herself with one of her babies, as she explains, "I wasn't the most well balanced person myself." Jarecki's editorial act here—adding Elaine's present-day commentary to the otherwise innocuous home movie footage—questions the otherwise "innocent" image, implicitly casting some blame on the mother for the current state of the family.

Casting blame on Elaine Friedman is also the driving force behind the home video footage taken, primarily by David, during Arnold's and Jesse's trials and convictions. Indeed, it seems as if David's home video is made with the aim of proclaiming—perhaps somehow proving—his father's innocence and his mother's monstrosity. Paul Arthur discusses the scene in which the sons argue about their father's innocence and mother's culpability, writing that it presents "the hideous flipside of those picnic-y exhibitions of middle-class satisfaction" that predominate home movies of an earlier period ("True Confessions" 5). While this



Figure 2. Home movies appear to reveal a happier moment in the Friedmans' past. Seconds after this image appears, however, Jarecki intercuts a contemporary interview with Elaine Friedman: "I wasn't the most well balanced person myself."

is certainly true, more important is the fact that David's videography enables a certain interpretation of the family and its dynamics that is, at times, both provocative and sensational. As the recorder of these home video segments, David is aggressive, if not outwardly hostile, especially toward his mother. At several points he harangues his father about his mother, telling Arnold that he doesn't trust her. When he is on-camera David often seems on the verge of becoming unhinged. Arnold, on the other hand, usually appears overwhelmed by the video camera, sometimes staring away from its gaze or blankly out at the audience that was, at that point, only his son. David's desire to envision—and, one may presume, to eventually present—his family in this fashion is articulated by these moments in which the family performs at least partly in response to David and his camera's often-combative presence.

David's videography presents us with footage of two important familial meals, a Thanksgiving dinner and a Passover Seder. An unusual presence at the dining table, the camera appears to be autorecording from a stationary position just behind one of the chairs at the table, capturing at one point an ongoing argument as Arnold interrupts to declare what has, for the film's audience, become obvious: "Things are deteriorating here." That video is uniquely capable of rolling long enough to capture the deterioration is key, as is David's position as director. David's privileged access to this ostensibly private moment, the tacit trust between the cinematographer and his subjects, renders this scene of communal consumption and eruption all the more shocking for its exposure, for its unprotecting affect on the already-fragile family structure. David provides Jarecki with an infrequently realized view of intimate family life at a critical moment of crisis. This shift from celebration to crisis as a motivating factor for the home videographer, a shift that is also marked by a move away from the camera as "portrait-producer" to live-action video-journal, suggests the pivot between the film and video age.

Lauren Rabinovitz has noted the degree to which "documentary *vérité* seeks the spontaneous outburst that reveals the private person behind its public face. . . . If emotions are real . . . then film-makers must 'move in' with their subjects, must see them every day at home to know them" (136). David's videography makes this seamless inhabiting of the Friedman universe possible; he and his camera are both an integrated part of this domestic scene and an affecting element. When Elaine begs to find out why nobody in the family supports her, Arnold tries to quiet the yelling

family, however ineffectually, and the scene devolves into chaos. At moments such as this one has to wonder how much this display of disharmony was inspired by David's desire to capture and perhaps to provoke just this kind of domestic scene.

Jarecki's use of this video footage also begins to demonstrate the ways that contemporary self-documenters can shape their own eventual third-person presentations. David Friedman, for instance, provided Jarecki with seemingly intimate footage he took of himself in 1988, his "video diary," as the film terms it. Jarecki uses this footage at two key moments, the first of which finds David, at a point fairly early in the film, presenting a monologue in his underwear. Preceded by a video blue screen with a "play" icon in the lower left side of the frame, this scene alerts us to the complexity of both the Friedmans' home video record and Jarecki's film: "[sighs] Well this is private, so if you're not me then you really shouldn't be watching this because this is supposed to be a private situation between me and me. This is between me now and me of the future, so turn it off, don't watch this, this is private. If you're the fucking . . . oh god the cops. If you're the fucking cops go fuck yourselves, go fuck yourselves because you're full of shit."

David's definition of privacy is curious here. Clearly, Jarecki could not have obtained this footage without David's assistance, alerting us to either the seemingly disingenuous nature of David's videoed privacy claim or the impermanence of the idea of privacy in the video age. What purpose does this declaration—or its absence—serve (both David Friedman and Andrew Jarecki)? And why does David anticipate an audience, instructing them to turn the video off? There are, we would argue, no private situations

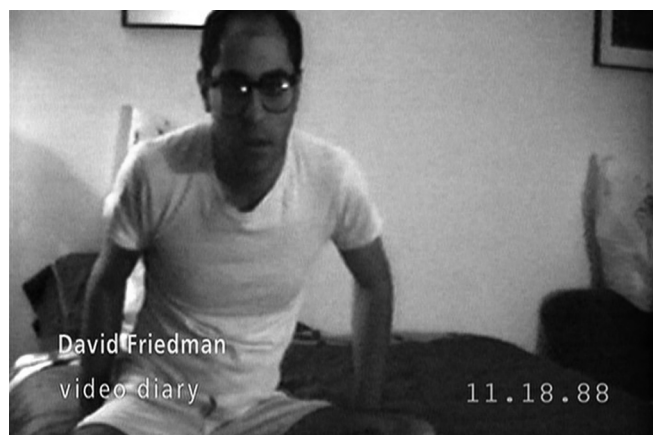


Figure 3. David Friedman's video diary: self-reflection or direct address?

in the presence of the video camera. In the context of videography, privacy is always a shifting conceptualization, one that can easily be invalidated. David's interrogational techniques, evidenced elsewhere in the film, seem to support the camera's deprivatizing capacities, even when he locates himself on the receiving end.

This scene also raises a larger ethical question, which will come to the fore in our discussion of *Grizzly Man*: what boundaries might exist for the home videographer, and how, if at all, do they extend to the documentary filmmaker? Does David's presumably exhibitionist desires—to share this footage, to “entertain” an audience by clowning, or to tell his family's story—make him a masochistic subject in need of protection from himself? His willingness to display himself at his most abject suggests, at minimum, a real insincerity to the idea of privacy in the modern media age. But there is also the larger question concerning Jarecki's decision to convey such a moment to a commercial moviegoing audience. Why record a moment if not to share it with others? And, more critically, to what end might this sharing be put? To some degree, of course, Jarecki's film offers a possible answer by involving the viewer in the drama of the Friedman family but ultimately refusing to take a clear stand on Arnold's or Jesse's guilt or innocence. Intimacy, in other words, is Jarecki's goal, and his film seeks proximity more than it does any notion of truth or justice. David's suggestion that the footage is private, in other words, is used by Jarecki as a deliberately placed teaser, drawing the spectator into this immensely intimate view.

Toward the end of the film, David offers two explanations for his introduction of the video camera into his family at this particular moment in their history. At one point he says, “Maybe I shot the videotape so that I wouldn't have to remember it myself,” and later, in response to video footage of Jesse clowning around on the courthouse steps on the day of his plea bargain, David claims, “I think it was about distracting ourselves.” There is a valid point to be made regarding the camera's ability to enable distance at moments of problematic proximity (one thinks of Margaret Bourke-White's well-known articulation of this in the context of her concentration camp liberation photography at the close of World War II). David's footage, in spite of his words to the contrary, functions differently. Bringing himself, the camera, and the disavowed but always implied viewer closer to the trauma, David's video acts effectively to disturb the various parts of the familial unit, factionalizing the group and, perhaps as a consequence, the audience

as well. Although joking about David's close-ups at one point, Arnold's statement, “I feel like I'm being dissected here,” seems especially to apply to Elaine, who at one point is shown getting angry about being videotaped. Elaine seems cognizant of the fact, as she implies in an interview with Jarecki's crew, that what David and her other sons really wanted was to capture her on video proclaiming her husband's innocence, something she refuses to do. Aggressive, confrontational, and propagandistic at the microscopic level, David's videography teases out familial chaos in search of an affirmation of his own beliefs. Where Jarecki's film obliquely examines the video camera's implication within a family about to disintegrate, Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation* purports, especially in its later segments, to use video to reconnect the dissolved family. The layers of performance in Caouette's film, however, are even more complex.

### A Self-Made Man in the Video Age: *Tarnation*

Though interestingly performative themselves, one of the defining characteristics of the Friedman family is their father's highly mediated and much publicized desire to look, perhaps inappropriately. Video intrudes rather late in the family's history, tipping the group in the direction of their divided destiny and providing a highly charged document of this process. Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation* is guided by another, though certainly related, impulse. Motivated more by a need to “show” (as opposed to the need to “see,” although the two concepts are linked), the footage at the center of *Tarnation* is clinically exhibitionist, helmed by a lifelong filmmaker operating under the assumption that his own cathartic self-exhibition will be as healing to those around him as it has been to him. Like David Friedman's lens, Caouette's is similarly drawn to the recording of familial crises.

We might situate *Tarnation* within Jim Lane's category of the self-portrait documentary, which “directly confronts the status of individuality in its attempt to show others why the self is the way it is” (120). The film, whose legendary microbudget of around two hundred dollars and iMovie provenance provided plenty of marketing fodder for its post-Sundance life, consists largely of a dizzying imagistic and sonic montage primarily captured by Jonathan Caouette of himself and of his family: home movies, video, news footage, photographs, and answering machine and tape recordings. Caouette bills himself in the credit sequence as editor, producer, and director (in this order), and his



long-term obsessive self-documenting combined with his often quite poetic, avant-garde use of this footage results in a complex and haunting portrait of a family—one far from the traditional, nuclear family of *Capturing the Friedmans*—that seems to exist almost in spite of itself. In fact, it is hard at times to draw the line in this film between the home videographer and the documentary filmmaker. In some ways, the commercial film we're watching has been in production since Caouette first got access to a video camera.<sup>10</sup> *Tarnation* is a necessarily narcissistic venture, although Caouette's decision to display his family and his own life in this fashion might lead us to understand this narcissism as a kind of therapeutic response to instability and disorder, especially of the mental variety.<sup>11</sup>

Where *Capturing the Friedmans* uses home video that was itself produced to document and perhaps even to exacerbate ruptures in the family structure, *Tarnation* employs home video in a palpably desperate attempt to understand and, ostensibly at least, to heal. Indeed, Jonathan's (first names refer to the "characters" in the film, although this gets complicated at times) video footage seems motivated by a desire to create a space away from the instability of his family; to document their eccentricities, their varying degrees of self-awareness; and to try to understand how and why his family turned out the way it did. One might argue that the film we know as *Tarnation* is the culmination of Jonathan's lifelong attempt to understand, aestheticize, and find his own place within this unconventional family. Jonathan's footage, in other words, appears to be organized around an attempt at *resolution*.

Caouette, whose mother, Renee, sustained an injury as a child that led to years of shock therapy and hospitalizations, explains—entirely in intertitles—that he was raised in and out of often-abusive foster care as well as by his grandparents, Adolph and Rosemary. Like his mother, Jonathan would also attempt suicide and be hospitalized on a number of occasions. But where Renee's life is depicted as a haphazard collection of barely successful attempts to survive, Caouette depicts himself as struggling to create order in the chaos of his situation. Throughout the film Jonathan exhibits an unusual awareness regarding the performative nature of video documentation and uses this knowledge to reinvent himself. In fact, the first sustained video segment in *Tarnation* is of Jonathan at age eleven, apparently taping himself. Jonathan performs this scene in the guise of a lower-class woman, wearing make-up and a headscarf. "She" speaks in a heavy southern accent about her trau-

matic family life leading up to the moment she killed her abusive husband, theatrically gesturing while talking with tears in her eyes as if appearing on a daytime television talk show. At this early point in the film, Caouette seems to be offering a kind of lesson on his *modus operandi*. Jonathan, already aware that he can transform himself on video, is here escaping from his all-too-immediate surroundings (faint voices are heard occasionally in the background throughout the scene), if only momentarily.

This scene and several others like it throughout the film affirm the degree to which the self might be both performed and transformed, a nice and perhaps necessary fantasy for someone surrounded by considerable unhappiness and confusion. Jonathan's recording impulse, pulled as it is both toward the "fictional" and the "factual," is also a critical response to a generation of familial silence and denial. Jonathan nurtures the urge to perform in all of his family members (even Rosemary is asked to do her Bette Davis imitation after she's suffered a stroke), but this is especially evident in footage featuring Renee. Renee at various points pretends to be wearing Elizabeth Taylor's old earrings, to be talking to someone nonexistent on a new phone, as well as to dance (throughout) and lip-synch (another recurrent mode of performance employed both by her and by Jonathan). However, Renee also *seems* to lack the awareness exhibited by Jonathan in the sequence just discussed. What becomes clear over the course of the film is that Caouette is curating these performances, allowing the subject—especially himself—to escape *into* actorly moments. Theatricality seems to be a kind of substitution for a painfully absent sense of normality, which the film never makes mention of but which seems always to be the elusive referent. Outrageous as they often are, these unsettling performances also remind us of a previous generation's attempts to display and perform its *normality* before the home movie camera.

Renee seems, for the most part, comfortable with this mode of interaction with the video camera; she typically exhibits a gleeful abandon whenever she gets the chance to perform in these situations, sometimes to our embarrassment. Indeed, at a point late in the film—after Renee has overdosed on lithium and returned to her father's disheveled Texas home—Caouette provides his audience with an excruciating long take of one of these performances gone wrong. Renee, who no longer seems to be simply playing along in an effort to please her camera-obsessed son, appears to have lost touch with reality. She rambles,



Figure 4. The climactic long take of Renee's pumpkin dance; note Adolph, in the deep field, ignoring the scene being played out for the video camera.

sings nonsense songs about pumpkins and dolls, straightens pillows, picks up props to play with, laughs hysterically, and seems trapped in this off-kilter performative mode. With her father glimpsed occasionally in the deep field sitting at a table and ignoring her entirely, Renee is revealed here as damaged, probably irreparably. Caouette's decision to subject viewers to a significant duration of this unedited footage, unlike earlier moments, which are always presented in a montage of other images, suggests his desire to create of this collection of sounds and images something approximating a narrative: Renee's tragic, postoverdose performance is this film's climax.

Renee's lack of self-awareness in this scene is painful to watch, in part because it seems that her performance is encouraged by the presence of her son's camera. Elsewhere in the film Renee demonstrates significant resistance to being in front of the camera when it appears to seek "the truth," which has become impossible for Renee to bear. On a visit to New York, Renee is interviewed by Jonathan about her past. This is the first time Caouette includes footage of this nature, rather than the heavily edited glimpses at Renee's more playful, if disturbing, behavior. Here Renee talks about being abused as a child by Adolph and Rosemary, saying earnestly that she hopes she "didn't bring over any of the abuse to my children." When Jonathan asks her about her childhood accident, however, she gets up from the seat in which she is being interviewed. Caouette cuts to another question he asks her about being hospitalized, and Renee again gets upset and walks away from the camera. After spinning his camera around the room, Jonathan shoots her from a distance as he tries to bring her back into the



Figure 5. When Renee walks away from an uncomfortable interview with Caouette in New York, the camera is left capturing Jonathan's frustration as Renee speaks from the off-screen space: "We can talk, Jon, we don't need it on film."

interview, pleading "talk to me" as he zooms in on Renee, who seeks refuge in the other room. Caouette then cuts to footage of Renee, presumably having returned to the conversation, talking about Jonathan's biological father. Again, Renee walks away, scolding Jonathan for bringing up the past on camera, refusing to participate not in the conversation per se but in the *recording* of the conversation. Jonathan's response to Renee's refusals is frankly self-interested: "Please help me with my stupid film. . . . I'd like to find out a few things about myself, too."

While purportedly intent upon investigating the history of his mother's neurosis, the film ends up exposing Jonathan's, suggesting throughout that video has become his primary way of knowing, interacting, understanding, and finding out. It is not just home video but video intended—now perhaps even produced—for public consumption. Fed up with the interrogation, Renee tells Jonathan, quite coherently, quite logically, "We can talk, Jon, we don't need it on film." The act of filming or of being filmed, watching films, and quoting films has overtaken familial interactions for Jonathan. Realizing this or not, the most painful moments in the film find Jonathan attempting to impose this inanimate surrogate family member on his literal family.

We would argue, then, that like the video footage used in *Capturing the Friedmans*, home video footage in *Tarnation* represents an attempt by the videographer to control and order the family. Jonathan, recognizing the disorder that surrounds him, attempts to aestheticize it, to (in the clinical language the film rehearses) *depersonalize* it. Nowhere is this more evident than in the literal reunion Jonathan stages

between his mother, his father, and himself. Renee is restless and uncomfortable in this scene of domestic rehabilitation; she repeatedly gets up and walks out of the frame. At this point it becomes clear that Jonathan has decided to live his life on camera. The camera's intrusion on this reunion (as the intertitle tells us, "It was the first time all three had been together . . . in 30 years") is palpable; there is no illusion that everyone is acting as they would without their knowledge of its presence. Renee's occasional discomfort—both here and in the interrogation scene just discussed—reminds us that Jonathan's desire to record might also interfere with his other family members' desires not to be recorded.

The opening and closing of the film offer a curious framework for the extensive visual archive that exists in between. In the opening sequence, shot in March 2002 in New York, Caouette assembles footage of his partner, David, coming into their apartment, turning off a snowy television, and waking up Jonathan, who begins to talk about a dream he's just had about his mother. Like the other performative footage in which Jonathan pretends to be someone other than he is (such as the southern murderess discussed above), this seems a highly staged and unspontaneous re-creation of something that *might* have happened without the camera's presence. Here Jonathan seems to be trying to order his 2002 life in a way that his actual home life never was. The shot is perfectly framed and timed; it is narratively sensible. Caouette is effectively creating a new family history for himself, one characterized by stability and order even in the midst of the inescapable chaos of his past. More critically, this and the film's other staged moments—captured on video, viewable ad infinitum, capable of being reorganized, edited, enhanced—become tangible, consumable, comprehensible objects. This is true for the viewer, certainly, but more critically for Jonathan, for whom the domestic images captured seem to make little sense prior to the act of capturing and ordering them.

This pattern is repeated at the end of *Tarnation*, during which a camera seems always to be waiting for Jonathan to appear. There is a shot of a video camera that Jonathan is preparing to shoot himself with, making it certain that at least two cameras are being employed to capture this moment. Jonathan tells us that he has closed himself in a bathroom at 5:00 A.M., takes things off the walls behind him, and confesses that he "wanted this scene to kind of be in the dark like it was when I was younger with the light, and the sun's about to come up so I have to

hurry up and do this." This formal staging—an attempt to re-create the mood of the past at the moment of the film's closure, even Jonathan's verbal acknowledgment that he is creating "a scene"—is a fascinating glimpse into the director's process. His reliance upon video to maintain or imitate self-awareness reminds us of the degree to which even these acts can be performed and controlled.

In this fashion, Jonathan's on-camera monologue in this scene resonates oddly with the earlier weepy disclosures of the characters he inhabited in his teenage role playing. With tears in his eyes he swears and states, "I don't ever want to turn out like my mother and I'm scared because, um, when I was little and she was my age that I am now, which is 31, um, she seemed a lot better than she does now. I love my mother so much, as fucked up as it is. I can't escape her. She lives inside me; she's in my hair; she's behind my eyes; she's under my skin; she's downstairs [Jonathan laughs]." Here Jonathan moves toward the camera, saying, "I can't do this," and presumably turns it off, concluding in a fashion that pinpoints most painfully the real subject of and motivation for his project. The curious and at times frustrating textual overload of the film's first half—which consists largely of a constant barrage of titles that try to narrate, however insufficiently, his mother's early life, accompanied by a rapidly moving, at times repetitive swarm of still and moving images—is answered by this comparatively minimalist monologue. In trying to unlock the mystery of his mother's fate Jonathan seems frustrated by the lack of *comprehensible* images and information, the revelatory magic footage that might answer his questions. At least partly, Jonathan appears careful not to repeat this state of affairs in his own life story. To record is to control, or at least to attempt to.

Capturing it all on video; re-creating what was not caught; inventing scenarios for the camera; cataloging, organizing, restructuring, and ultimately sharing this footage—Jonathan, who is everywhere in the film worried about his genetic history, ensures that his own mental processes will be documented, will be caught on video. Walking delicately along the line separating self-obsession and self-confirmation, Caouette's footage shares much in common with Timothy Treadwell's. Werner Herzog's *Grizzly Man* similarly documents the life of a man whose quest for an alternative family sets him filming. Unlike Caouette, however, Treadwell is not afforded the luxury of final cut.

### “Any idiot could make a film out of it”: *Grizzly Man*

Werner Herzog's *Grizzly Man*, which at first seems to share little with the more overtly domestic narratives of *Capturing the Friedmans* and *Tarnation*, ends up being equally about both family and the desire to document its instability.<sup>12</sup> In place of a traditional family, however, in *Grizzly Man* we find Timothy Treadwell's admittedly eccentric, substitutive attempts to create a family outside the species. James Moran has convincingly argued, “In our contemporary era of families we choose, for whom traditions and conventions may be in continual flux, the home mode [of videotaping] offers an important tool for tracing common roots no longer nourished only by blood” (60). Along these lines, *Grizzly Man* is about a man who constructs—both through deed and through video—an alternative family out of the bears and foxes he tries to protect in the Alaskan wilderness. Similar to both David Friedman and Jonathan Caouette's video footage, Treadwell's is focused on familial crisis, though here the crisis expresses itself in the shape of Treadwell's apparent isolation from this and all human communities and his problematic attempts to situate himself as not only the author of his surrogate family but also its patriarch and protector. Though video allows Treadwell the liberty to shoot for hours upon end (much of the footage Herzog uses might best be thought of as Treadwell's “outtakes”), of particular interest are his desperate attempts to capture the illusion of *harmony* he has assembled for himself in the wilderness.

Treadwell lived among the grizzlies in the Alaskan wilderness for part of each year, worked as an activist on their behalf, recorded his experiences, and gave classroom lectures based upon them. When he and a female companion, Amie Huguenard, were killed by a bear in 2003, he left behind an extraordinary video record of his experiences (over one hundred hours of video footage, according to Herzog), which constitutes a large part of *Grizzly Man*. Although Herzog is no doubt being cagey when he claims that any idiot could make a film from this exceptional footage, his point is well taken: as a director, Herzog is working with another filmmaker's material, something that he freely acknowledges, functioning in large part as an editor of what Treadwell had already chosen to record.<sup>13</sup>

Although living among the grizzlies might seem an invasive approach to protecting and studying the species, Treadwell considered himself an integrated part of their

community. The opening sequence of *Grizzly Man*, in fact, addresses this element of Treadwell's life, showing self-taken video footage of Treadwell explaining his process: “I am like a fly on the wall, observing, noncommittal, noninvasive in any way.” This is a curious fantasy, a rehearsal of the language of *verité* that runs counter to the evidence his footage provides. Direct address and direct involvement are Treadwell's preferred modes, constituting a significant portion of the video program he created in which he attempts to make an argument about his relationship with his animal family, not merely his observation of their activity.

Treadwell defines himself as “different,” as loving “these bears enough to do it right.” His self-perceived exceptionalism emerges both in his visual methodology and verbally. At one point he dares his imaginary spectator to try to do what he does; his rhetorical response: “You will die here. You will fuckin' die here. They will get you.” Treadwell's favorite composition affirms his self-perceived connection to the bears. In it, the bears are in the deep (and sometimes not-so-deep) field and he is in the foreground, remaining in the frame while he narrates. This compositional tendency indicates the shifting nature of Treadwell's purported subject, which is as much the bears as it is himself. Treadwell also seems willing—perhaps eager—to make himself vulnerable, reaching out toward a bear or coming just close enough that he has to assert himself in order to escape from harm. He documents these moments of borderline danger, it seems, in large part to suggest his privileged status among the bears, whom he affectionately refers to by name throughout the film.

If Treadwell isn't quite the fly on the wall he imagines, neither is Herzog, despite his temporal distance from the



Figure 6. Timothy Treadwell's favored video composition: placing himself in the foreground with his bear family behind him.



original moment of Treadwell's videography (Herzog came to the project after Treadwell's death). Herzog does not refrain from entering the world of *Grizzly Man* at a number of points in the film, both visually and through voice-over narration. Herzog offers his interpretations throughout, inserting himself and his ideas into what has already been captured on video prior to his involvement in the project. Herzog is perpetually aware of these insinuating decisions, beginning the film by crediting Treadwell with shooting all of the footage in an act of citation that suggests the degree to which Herzog wants to foreground the parasitic elements inherent in a project of this nature. Herzog appears to deeply admire what Treadwell has achieved in his videography, interrupting Treadwell's story on occasion to praise his compositional choices and accidentally magical moments. Herzog's passions, which find expression throughout his storied career, also run toward the *apparently* accidental. His is a sort of home movie aesthetic, and elsewhere he has stated, in a manner strangely appropriate to our concerns here, that "there is no independent cinema, with the exception of the home movie made for the family album" (Cronin 202). Never entirely public or private, Treadwell's footage complicates the definition of *home* video by focusing on his own attempts to reorganize the very concept of a symbolic home in the wilderness.<sup>14</sup>

The relationship between the public and private elements of Treadwell's footage, especially as it is filtered through Herzog's intervention, resonates with the other films under discussion here. Clearly, Treadwell understood some of this footage as having a potential for eventual public consumption. Herzog tells us that Treadwell often repeated takes, some up to fifteen times, and he provides us with some of these duplicate stagings where we see Treadwell redoing a "scene" to make it more adventure-some, exciting, or professional. Herzog also includes footage of Treadwell at one point commenting that "this stuff could be cut into a show later on." Much of Treadwell's footage, then, is inherently different from what we think of as home video, and not just because Treadwell's "home" is an unconventional one. Rather, it is also conceived of as a presentation of Treadwell's performances, as a document meant to represent his bear family and his relationship with them to the outside world.

It is worth considering, then, the ethical implications of Herzog's use of some of the more private moments of Treadwell's footage. Treadwell, who made many of these

trips alone, often appears to treat the camera as a companion, a family member, occasionally even as a god. Early in the film Herzog gives the viewer a glimpse of this relationship, showing Treadwell goofily interacting with the camera: "Give it to me baby, that's what I'm talking about." Elsewhere he converses with the camera about his fears of being hurt by a bear; wonders why he can't develop long-term relationships with women; curses out a fox who has stolen his hat ("where's that fucking hat, that hat is so friggin' valuable for this trip"); rants about the Park Service; and ruminates on the existence of God, speaking directly to the camera ("thank you"), as if it was the deity he sought to convene with. In what might be the most transgressive moment in his footage, Treadwell marvels over a fresh pile of bear defecation, first feeling the heat from it and then touching it while saying how amazing it is to commune with something that was just inside one of his bears. "I know it may seem weird that I touched her poop," Treadwell says. But to whom is Treadwell speaking? And why did Herzog deem these moments essential to the telling of Treadwell's story?

If Treadwell often treats the camera as if it was a confidante, interspersing his potentially public recordings with footage he surely never imagined would reach the public, then we also have to ask why he left the camera running on occasions that seem to defy the logic of self-documentation in the context of the public image he was attempting to construct. Like David Friedman's video diary and Jonathan Caouette's lifelong self-documenting project, Treadwell seems to be seeking a dialogue with himself. He might have been more directorially selective, less revealing, but instead opts to undergo a kind of self-scrutinizing record keeping that transcends the heroic, public self he was simultaneously constructing. Treadwell, like the subjects of the previous films under investigation here, seems to lose track of his existence outside of the camera's presence, needing it as a witness to these intimate moments, even the flawed moments with his unconventional, interspecies family, moments not entirely unlike those we witness in *Capturing the Friedmans* and *Tarnation*.

The relationship between Treadwell as the maker of his own documentary image, however dualistic, and Herzog as the distributor of that image is equally fascinating. Herzog clearly feels an obligation to Treadwell and his vision of himself, even as he explains his take on Treadwell's self-delusions to his film's audience and includes moments that undermine Treadwell's vision of himself. Treadwell's death

and Herzog's handling of it bring these representational and ethical issues to the foreground. When Treadwell and Amie are attacked by a bear (they will die during the attack), Treadwell is unable to remove the lens cap on his camera, leaving only an audio recording. Unlike the rest of the film, then, there is no visual counterpart for this part of Treadwell's story. Herzog first introduces us to the sound portion of the videotape when he interviews the coroner, who narrates what is on the tape: "We can hear the sounds of Amie screaming," etc. The coroner acts as an interpreter of the recording, distancing the film's audience from the original content and offering his take on the attack: it occurred quickly, and Amie was faithful and brave, staying with Timothy while they tried to fend off the bear for a full six minutes.

Herzog ends this scene by backing the camera away from the coroner but does not otherwise articulate his own interpretation of or feelings about the tape, this snuff film *sans image*. The second time *Grizzly Man* addresses the subject of the imageless video, immediately following

this scene, Herzog enters the visual landscape of the film for the first time, appearing on camera with Jewel, a friend of Treadwell who is in possession of this audio remnant. On-screen with headphones, Herzog listens to the tape that Jewel has never allowed herself to hear. He is shot from behind, in profile, holding his eyes as he selectively narrates what he hears. He then stops, choked up, and we get a shot of Jewel with tears in her eyes, inspired by what she can only imagine. Herzog tells her, "Jewel, you must never listen to this . . . and you must never look at the photos that I've seen at the coroner's office. . . . You should destroy it [the tape] . . . because it will be the white elephant in your room all your life."

As if to confer the recording of Treadwell's death with the official status of the repressed, this tape surfaces for a third time toward the end of the film when Herzog returns us to footage of the coroner describing the audiotape. The coroner's descriptions are more explicit here, giving the spectator a sense of the gruesomeness of Timothy's and Amie's deaths. This kind of detail—"All of a sudden the



Figure 7. Better seen than heard? Herzog's narration tells us that "during the fatal attack there was no time to remove the lens cap," so Treadwell's final video is purely audio. The audience watches as Herzog (pictured here with headphones on) listens, describes, comments, and suppresses.

intensity of Amie's screaming reached a new height. . . . These horrifying screams were punctuated by Timothy saying, "Go away, leave me," etc.—is all the more surprising given Herzog's earlier prohibition. His decision to absent this audio from his film and yet to spin around it like the center of a whirlpool creates a spectacle out of that which he refuses to include. Who is Herzog protecting here? His audience? Jewel? Treadwell? The bears? It is also worth remembering that Herzog offers this prohibition—that neither Jewel nor, it turns out, his audience will hear this tape—while also emphasizing his privileged access both to it and to the photographs that he chooses not to show. It is, we might argue, the elephant in his own film.

All of this has to do, more or less, with the politicized idea of the gaze and its auditory counterpart. Bill Nichols, in *Representing Reality*, suggests:

Mulvey's concern with the eroticization of the gaze and the gender hierarchy that classic (Hollywood) narrative imposes does not translate directly into the terms and conditions of documentary production. (Although it is hardly alien either.) The institutional discourse of documentary does not support it, the structure of documentary texts does not reward it, and the audience expectations do not revolve around it. Voyeurism, fetishism, and narcissism are present but seldom occupy the central position they have in classic narrative. (76)<sup>15</sup>

Nichols's project in the early 1990s was to acknowledge what had been a dominant critical discourse in film studies, one he felt needed to be retooled when applied to documentary practice. Quoting Mulvey and then reshaping her logic to fit what he takes to be the largely different enterprise of documentary production and reception, Nichols presents us with terms appropriate to our present investigation: "One way to give further consideration to this shift in problematics from narrative to documentary would be to address the specific qualities of the documentary gaze and its object of desire: the world it brings into sight" (77).

Herzog, perhaps more obviously than our other filmmakers but very much in keeping with their course as well, frustrates Nichols's suggestion by concentrating attention around that which is not shown, the world both he and Treadwell refuse or are unable to bring into sight. In *Grizzly Man* that world includes both the taboo footage (refused at Herzog's much-discussed discretion) and, perhaps even more critically, the world (familial, social, romantic) beyond that which Treadwell had created for himself (ignored, we are led to believe, at Treadwell's own

videographic discretion). This absence becomes a critical trigger for spectatorial desire, casting Treadwell's none-too-romantic solitary existence in relief and marking his failed patriarchal dominion over the bears as a tragic response to a similarly failed familial existence. Herzog's decision to flirt with the ethical boundaries he has imposed upon himself reminds us of the degree to which Nichols's tri-fecta—voyeurism, fetishism, and narcissism—has become, in recent years, not just a central but an essential part of the documentary project. This is all the more the case in films centering on home video footage, which is so suited to bringing the most personal, and vulnerable, of worlds "into sight."

The unseen, the unavailable, the unfiled are equally critical elements within Jarecki's and Caouette's films. All three of these films make plain that, as raw material, personal video footage imposes certain representational boundaries upon the documentary filmmaker, even as it opens up others. Bearing the video age imprimatur of authenticity, these at times starkly exposed moments of self-revelation are moments twice chosen, first at the moment of filming and again at the moment of editing. In the context of a discussion about autobiographical film and video, Michael Renov argues that if "memory is, like history, always revision, translation, the gap between experience (the moment of filming) and secondary revision (the moment of editing) produces an ineradicably split diaristic subject" ("The Subject in History" 6). Within the context of the documentary films under investigation here, the referent of the "split" is doubly significant. Using Caouette's borrowed psychoanalytic language, we are certainly faced here with a range of "depersonalized" subjects. We are also faced, however, with a range of "defamiliarized" families. In both cases the critical rupture seems to occur somewhere in the gap between the desire to represent and record and the desire to contain and control. In the video age memory *appears* to come cheaply. Family, these films argue, does not.

## Notes

1. In suggesting that this is a new trend, we are also quite aware that there is a significant history of cinematic self-documentation that precedes this current generation of home videocentric documentaries. There is, of course, a legacy of self-documentation to be found in home movies themselves; in avant-garde cinema, especially the work of Jonas Mekas and Stan Brakhage; as well as in documentary filmmaking. For more on this history see Lane; see also Chalfen, whose

*Snapshot Versions of Life* was written on the precipice of the shift from home movies being primarily shot on film to home movies being primarily shot on video. In addition to the experimental films made by Mekas and Brakhage, Chalfen briefly discusses a group of 1970s films that exemplify an earlier burst of activity involving the use of home movies: Sandy Wilson's *Growing Up at Paradise* (1977), Frederick Becker's *Heroes* (1974), Barry Levine's *Procession* (1978), Victor Faccinto's *Sweet and Sour* (1976), Jerome Hill's *Family Portrait* (1971), Martha Coolidge's *Old-Fashioned Woman* (1976), Jan Oxenberg's *Home Movie* (1973), Alfred Guzzetti's *Family Portrait Sitings* (1975), Amalie Rothschild's *Nana, Mama, and Me* (1974), and Don and Sue Rundstrom's *Uprooted! A Japanese American Family's Experience* (1978). Renov addresses the related idea of the essayistic, autobiographical film in "The Subject in History."

2. The case of *Grizzly Man* is more complicated, since the film does not concern a conventional human family (except the one its protagonist absents himself from) but rather a man and his surrogate animal family, as will be discussed in the final section of this essay.

3. The phrase "families we choose," coined by Kath Weston, is used by Moran in *There's No Place Like Home Video* to address the fact that "the nuclear family has increasingly diminished statistically over the last three decades, replaced by alternatives ranging from single parenthood and gay marriage to 'families we choose' among relatives, friends, and colleagues" (xvii).

4. For more on this see Zimmermann (112–42). Zimmermann notes that in the 1950s there were even home movie editing services, which would "transform the jumble of unconnected frames into a coherent and interesting story of a family's life" (127). Originally published by Harry Kursch and Harold Mehling, "Your Life on Film: Ralph Eno, Amateur Editor," *American Mercury* (November 1956): 69.

5. Zimmermann cites a number of trade and popular publications that attest to some of the essential differences between home movies and home videos. Drukker trots out a list of pros and cons in his essay "The Video Difference." At the time video equipment was still clunky and pricey, but videotape was "dirt cheap and reusable," requiring no development and allowing you to record "for hours" as opposed to three minutes at a time (Drukker 90). In the early 1980s complaints were still circulating about battery power and editing capabilities for video technology, but these issues would be resolved over the course of the next decade.

6. Adam Shell and Darren Stein's *Put the Camera on Me* (2003) supports this thesis about the shift toward children as the producers of home video. However, the emphasis in this documentary is on the degree to which these kids, guided by their precocious leader, created alternative videographic worlds for themselves, some of which would be shared with their parents and some of which seemed to be for their own consumption.

7. For more on this see Zimmermann; she discusses the degree to which "images of family, children, and travel coalesced into the ideology of togetherness" (135).

8. Moran discusses the differences between film and video throughout his first three chapters, especially pages 40–42.

9. The phrase "revenge of the home movie" is used in a discussion of explicitly autobiographical documentaries such as *Tarnation*. Elsewhere Arthur notes that the phenomenon of directors intentionally and regularly appearing in their own documentaries is also relatively recent, dating back to Ross McElwee's *Sherman's March* (1986) and Michael Moore's *Roger and Me* (1989) ("Feel the Pain" 47–50).

10. This is simplifying things somewhat, since Caouette uses video, film, and still photography throughout.

11. Bonastia posits that a number of recent films, *Tarnation* among them, function as "exercises in self-help" more "than as expressions of artistic vision with the intention of connecting with an audience" (20). Although we don't agree with the latter part of Bonastia's assertion, it seems true that Caouette, David Friedman, and, as we shall see in *Grizzly Man*, Timothy Treadwell all find the act of filming themselves and their families on video to be cathartic, a form of self-administered therapy. Bonastia, a sociologist, has concerns about this tendency both in documentary filmmaking and in the recent "flood of memoirs" (22), positing that "the urge to share your every musing with the world is contagious" (24).

12. The quote in the subhead is from Werner Herzog, talking about the process of working with Timothy Treadwell's footage for the making of *Grizzly Man* (Garcia 16).

13. Joe Bini, in fact, edited *Grizzly Man* and has worked with Herzog on a number of films. We intend the idea of editing to be understood here in a conceptual fashion as much as a literal one.

14. Moran makes a point about the conception of family and home that is relevant here: "While usually thought of as geographic, home may be photographic as well, unconfined to a specific place, but transportable within the space of imagination" (61).

15. See also Mulvey. In *The Subject of Documentary* Renov critically reconsiders the terms of Nichols's argument by attempting to articulate documentary's own erotic patterns of desire.

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