ups, many of them shots of kisses. Child fragments the shots to an extreme—some are only a few frames long—then systematically repeats, varies, interweaves them, matching or contrasting the motion or graphic dominants involved. The frenzied pace is augmented by an autonomous and equally rapid sound track montage of musical clips, conversational fragments, random phrases, periodic announcements.

Montage patterns are the driving mechanism of the film. Once an image fragment is introduced, it is submitted to variations such as a flipping of the frame from left to right, which inverts the graphic elements of the image. Thus a close-up of a woman turning left will be followed by the same shot with the direction of the movement inverted, in a manner that recalls the interval montage of Leger's Ballet Mechanique. However, unlike the topically or spatially oriented series in Ballet Mechanique devoted to objects of action, the series here is more personal and determined by kinetic or graphic patterns. In Cover Action each shot migrates into new montage contexts, becoming a part of many different heterogeneously ordered series.

Over the course of a screening, one begins to recognize the shots through their repetitions. One begins to know the image of a woman in the Jackie hat and distinguish it from the woman in the fedora, or the one in the bandana, from the close-up face in soft focus, or the young girl in the esmako jacket. The images gradually accrue the weight of event and referential, and we can reconstruct the individual women, the events of each visit. Thus a walk by a stream, acrobatics on a lawn, a game of leapfrog, the depicts, an embrace on a wicker chair,-behavior reflected in the form of their fragmented parts, dispersed throughout the body of the film. Women's faces and their bodies dominate the imagery, creating a swirl of sensuality, of perform-

text of a speculation on image, motion, and pacing? Abigail Child has left her film whirling beyond itself. She has not fixed the answers to her image dilemma within the frame of the film itself. The film poses its questions as questions.

A quite different strategy is adopted by Michelle Citron in her film Daughter-Rite, (1978). Citron uses autobiographical home movie footage from her childhood as one part of the image track, alternating with actions of fictional, staged conversation between two adult women. The conversation scenes (in a kitchen preparing salad, in a bedroom sorting through their mother's vanity-table drawer) are filmed in a cinema vérité style, which encourages the viewer to take the adult characters to be the same little girls pictured in the home movie footage some twenty years later. In addition, the home movie footage is always accompanied by a voice-over monologue, a spoken diary that creates an additional autonomous narrative. However, the themes of mother-daughter relationships and family histories are common to each of the three autonomous narratives.

The home movie footage is optically printed to slow down the action and to repeat certain images. This gives these images a haunting, emphatic quality. While the increased graininess of the film and the slow motion increase our sense of these images signifying a past, colored by connotations of remembrance or dreams, their retreactive structure underscores elements of the action that beg for analysis. In this reworking, an action such as the readjustment of one of the little girl's hair clips by the mother is presented to fully emphasize the child's winning reflex and the manner in which this gesture of parental grooming is an act of possession and discipline. The two girls are mostly seen in full-skirted dresses of the fifties, on occasions of display such as a parade, a birthday party, or in vacation footage, and they are exclusively filmed with their mother, presumably by their father. The reworking visually analyzes the performative aspects of these images from childhood. The home movie becomes a ritual of presentation for an audience, the first member of which is the cameraman-father. The reworking serves to expose and protest this ritual, to investigate its elements and satirize some of its efforts to display itself as an idealized family portrait.

Unfortunately, the voice-over diary narration competes for attention throughout these home movie segments and the alternating fictional discussions appropriate these home movies into that context, so that it is hard to concentrate on the material presented by this dense, analytical imagery. One is asked by the structure of the film to fit the parts together. This combinatory reading tends to privilege the verbal signifiers; it does not provide a silent thematic space in which to concentrate on the ways in which the reworked home footage is in itself articulate and suggestive. Citron's aim for counterpoint overlays these already rich images with so much other information that this tendency to read them reductively, or even to see them as a "background" for the diary narration.

It is perhaps a personal aesthetic judgment that leads me to believe that the reworked home movie footage contains the most interesting propositions in this film, concepts that are not presented to their best advantage when submerged in the larger narrative context the film as a whole provides for them.

The performative aspect of a young girl's experience is also noted in Marjorie Keller's Daughters of Chain, a film that also re-creates found footage, this time of a child dancing. The image evokes ambiguous connotations; on one hand, the pleasure and sensuality of her movement, on the other, a sense that her behavior is al-

90 JOURNAL OF FILM AND VIDEO XXXVIII, (Summer/Fall 1986)
Daily life, both present and past, has served as raw material and resource to a number of women filmmakers seeking to present a female/feminist vision in their films. Images usually taken by fathers or found in someone else’s home movies are one way filmmakers have found to explore the manner in which film gathers and transforms fragments of lived experience. In these captured gestures and posed performances before the amateur camera, filmmakers see a plethora of significant instances that can be reimagined by selection, repetition and transformed motion into essays and works of art embodying the artist’s sense of “what goes on between the pictures,” as filmmaker Werner Nekes has put it.

Equally, women filmmakers have taken images very close to home movies of their own lives, redefining the spaces, times and people with whom they live as elements of a cinematic self-portrait.

I am drawn to this body of films with the same curiosity and fascination that leads me to periodically flip through my own photo albums. Never having had home movies taken of me when I was young, my personal archives consist of snapshots. These photos were mainly taken by my mother. Once, a few years ago, during a ritual perusal of these treasured images, I became aware of psychoanalytic elements of the poses that I had never before perceived. Here was the little girl, princess, sidekick, repeatedly posed with older brother, male cousins, sons of my parents’ friends, as the bride in the couple, Dale Evans to Roy Rogers, Ginger Rogers to Fred Astaire. Never just two children, these poses of me with boy children were wedded to a fifies’ prediction of a future marriage. The series of substitutions serve to avoid the incestuous implications of the family, but nonetheless reinscribe incestuous desire. The replacement for the father was offered in the form of a brother, replacements for the brother in the form of whatever boy child was present at the moment. Someday I intend to work with these images, to coax out of them all their oracular power. From this desire comes this article as a preliminary step, a discussion of what other women have done with their images of their lives.

Of course one obvious place to start is with Maya Deren. Deren’s writings champion the “amateur” film over the large-budget film produced by the industry (“Notes”). She also recommends conceiving “chamber films” analogous to musical compositions for chamber ensembles, in contrast to full scale orchestral symphonies (Village Voice 25 Aug. 1960). This emphasis on a personal scale for filmmaking in her writings avoids the terms “home movies,” “personal films,” and “diary films,” which others, such as Stan Brakhage, Jonas Mekas and Ken Jacobs used to describe their approach to films in the early sixties. The reason may be an ongoing debate between Deren and Mekas over issues of selection, form and conception. Evident throughout Deren’s writings and particularly in her An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film, is a sense that spontaneity is only a component in a process of art making that, according to her, should be governed by concepts and composed in highly articulated forms. In one of her exchanges with Mekas, published on June 1, 1961, Deren says:

... Jonas Mekas undertook to choose me as representative spokesman for the opposition to the improvised “catch as catch can and I hope the camera caught something” school of filming by quoting my reference to such artists as “amateur burglars” ... 

The implication is that since I am against amateur burglary I am therefore on the side of orthodoxy and artistic law and order as traditionally defined. Actually, Mr. Mekas himself has praised my own films for leaving behind the “epic picture (form like the novel).” In this and in their use of highly unusual film techniques, my films are less orthodox than the semi-documentary structure and style of films like Pull My Daisy and Shadows ... 

Moreover, my criticism of the amateur burglar was that he was not a good thief! I am for the rob one self robber, who gets down in the deep vaults.

“The creative artist must be willing to rob his own bank ...,” which takes “time, planning and a great deal of self-knowledge if one is to come out with more than what the teller has on hand from recent deposits, ...”

To accomplish such a great bank robbery, I mainained, one must start with a concept. [The quotes and italics are in the original—Deren is citing an earlier article she wrote for The Voice, July 21, 1960 and an article by Jonas Mekas, also for The Voice, March 2, 1961 (Village Voice 1 June 1961)]

Deren’s economic metaphors of robbery switch her usually positive use of the word “amateur” to a negative connotation in this case. The passage gives us insight into how strong a concept “art” remains for Deren; her interest in amateur filmmaking is not in any random gathering of images, but rather in a non-commercial venture by the artist who shapes the events, metaphors, and spatial-temporal configurations she projects onto the screen.

Using Deren’s own metaphor, we can say that by tunneeling deep in her own vault, Deren committed grand larceny in making her first film, Meshes of the Afternoon, (1943). For what she has robbed from the cache of her own resources is a film that is at once a home movie (of the unconscious or the artist’s mind) and a formally realized work of art, whose innovative spatio-temporal ordering transformed its audience’s concept of film. The film is “located” in the artist/protagonist’s home in the Hollywood hills, a home she shared with her husband, Alexander Hammid, who plays her husband in the film. With these biographical elements of the home movie, Deren meshes a wide range of ideas on memory and the psyche, repetition and variation, spatial and temporal cogntion.

The events of the film are marked by para-praxis, the traces of failed actions: a key falls beyond the reach of a hand down the front stairs of the house, a phone is found off the hook, a record player is turning relentlessly beyond the borders of its inscribed musical information, a knife falls from where it is precariously poised on a loaf of bread. The film of Deren’s house reminds one of those childhood games, “What’s Wrong with this Picture?” and in some sense the film can be taken as an image of domestic disorder. There is how-
ever no key to this image riddle; the key has already fallen away in the first act, and besides, Deren's writing in section 3B of _An Anagram_ denies a psychoanalytical reading, a static interpretation of symbols suggested by the objects in this film. The objects are animate, transformational; a man becomes a hooded figure with a mirror face, the figure disappears around the edge of the path, a key becomes a word, issuing from the artist's mouth, a key becomes a knife, as does a flower. Further, the woman multiplies into four incarnations of her self, and then like the ritual of an African trial by fire, each of them touches the key, until for one it does not flip upside down as itself, but becomes a knife. All these objects are shifter in a traversal of spaces and a multiplicity of positions, fragmentations and transformations that appear to be seeking a location for domestic violence. Is it the dream of the man or the woman, is it an act performed by the woman that shatters the man/mirror of her self? Or is she drowned already as she sits dreaming on the easy chair in her living room?

All these possibilities coexist, enamish so that no one interpretation can dominate this film of the home, of the female self, of the artist's own self-enactment. Hollywood's has a propensity for drowning its missives in the Pacific (HUMORESQUE, A Star Is Born, Interiors), but here the sea does not cover and therefore claim, its corpse. The image of a death draped in seaweed is hardly a convenient or guilty capitulation to narrative closure, for the beached mermaid sits in the house, just as she dreamt it earlier. The house space is magical. It's architecture includes an infinite staircase, a second story window that one can leap into from the outside, a picture window that becomes a telesopic tunnel into the space of dreams. The tropes will not rest, the film will not end, the key is falling still, as Maya Deren gives us her vision of a home movie as a gift to a future generation of filmmakers.

Where have these younger women filmmakers gone with metaphor generated by the home movie, the amateur film, the captured fragments of family life and special events? Their films are different from Deren's poem on the relationships of the objects of daily life to the psyche, and their directions are diverse. Amongst the many women filmmakers who have creatively explored aspects of the "home movie," I have chosen four works to contrast the ways in which they incorporate these issues of personal life and/or "found" amateur footage: _Glass Shadows_ by Holly Fisher, _Covert Action_ by Abigail Child, _Daughter-Rite_ by Michelle Citron and _Daughters of Chaos_ by Marjorie Keller.

_Glass Shadows_ shares with _Meshe in the Afternoon_ the exploration of the space in which a couple live. In _Glass Shadows_ this space is a loft apartment bordered on two sides by windows. The woman, _Fisher_, does all the filming, but both she and the man move through the spaces, nude, more as models than actors, taking rather stationary poses. They become statues of a sort, though by no means statuesque; rather, they simply stand. A mirror on a dresser provides an important interior frame reflecting the positions of the filmmaker and the man, as the hand-held camera pans and tilts through this space. Superimposition overlays the images, creating a great ambiguity of window-mirror reflection. Sometimes the two figures appear to be mere traces that embody a potential sexuality. Light through glass on glass combines with the transparency of the layered images to efface the opacity of presence into a more ephemeral suggestion of the having been or the perhaps being. The images are voluptuous and airy all at once. Mostly the figures are distant in the film, though sometimes fragmented by the framing. One close-up mirror-reflected tilt covers the curve of the filmmaker's body, a region from breast to hip, the curve of a certain feminine. This image contrasts graphically with other images of the filmmaker shooting, her gaze characterized by the camera which she holds, though not always at eye level. When the camera is held lower, centered on her body, we sometimes see her echoing that of the camera, intent, serious, concentrated. The great fluidity is filled with ambiguities of intention and randomness—is this next shot a whim or a planned venture? One never knows. There is none of the constraint of purpose one senses in the pans of Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's _Riddles of the Sphinx_ (1977) or Yvonne Rainer's _Journeys from Berlin_ (1970). Instead we have a willful looseness, a hesitancy of process as we witness a film being made. _Fisher_ is light-handed, but not in the sense of frivolity or even the purely random, for there is also a sense of estimation and hypothesis in her selected camera gaze. Can one be both spontaneous and disciplined, motivated by theory, but charged with the risks of multivalent inspiration in a camera movement (as are great oriental brush painters in their gestural craft)?

The home movie, shaky, undisciplined, naive in its gestures of selection, is here reinvigorated by the filmmaker's sense of light and the sensuality of a reflected architecture. The tone is entirely different from Deren's film of self, house and husband; _Fisher's_ does not delve into the unconscious, but images the surfaces of her imagination, the texture of light touching and permeating the spaces of her sexuality.

The reception of this film was mixed when it was first shown. It presents images seen by some as the epitome of voyeurism, narcissism, exhibitionism: the nude bodies, the mirror, the artist filming herself and trying to express her sense of the sensual. Those who saw the role of the feminist film as critiquing these figures as mechanisms of patriarchal filmmaking could only condemn _Fisher's_ work when they took it seriously enough to comment upon it at all. In an atmosphere of dogmatic quest for a correct feminist practice, a film like this was bound to be seen as reactionary or at least "essentialist," a term connoting a mistaken positing of a pure feminine. The dogmatism of this position is often oppressive and unaware of its internal contradictions. This tendency to be dogmatic can be understood, perhaps, in the context of a theory that contests the norm. In constructing a theory of representation that could struggle against what was oppressive in various filmmaking practices, particularly as regards women, it is easy to see why one would seek to eradicate the systematic exploitation of the female body as fetish object par excellence of the film frame. Yet, I regret that the fragility and sensitivity of _Fisher's film_ could be so unjustly trampled in the pursuit of this notion of a feminist theoretical film practice, especially since it hardly engages in standard inscriptions of voyeurism and narcissism. While it touches on elements of these processes of looking, it does so quite differently than other films, and that difference could be of great significance for feminist theory. I find it a film that challenges feminist theory to expand its vocabulary and judgment to include not only a mode of negative critique, but also a more positive exploration of visual pleasure, a direction that more of us now are anxious to pursue.

The rapid cutting of Child's _Covert Action_ is in sharp contrast to the fluid drifting quality of _Fisher's_ film, as is the composition of the images themselves. The images are taken primarily from home movie footage which one eventually understands as the chronicles of two men made of their amorous encounters with various women at their vacation house. Mainly the personalities are seen cavorting in the backyard, but there are also a number of close-
in vacation footage, and they are exclusively found with their mother, presumably engaged in activities related to their care. The remaining visuals are all of the older filmmaker and the young child. The final image is of the filmmaker, who is being watched by the young child. The sequence serves to introduce the first member of the family to the young child: the filmmaker who, in this case, appears to be using a camera to record the footage. The Vimeo account a short time before the filmmaker steps into the vehicle and begins recording the family's activities in the kitchen and the nearby neighborhood. The filmmaker's purpose appears to be to create a narrative about the family's life and activities, which he then shares with others through a digital platform.

This leads to the question of how these two images are related. The first image is a still from a family video, while the second image is a still from a documentary film. The filmmaker's purpose in creating these two images is to capture and share the family's daily life through different mediums. The family video captures the family's everyday activities, while the documentary film provides a more formal and structured narrative of their life. The two images together illustrate the filmmaker's ability to capture and share their family's life through different mediums, and the viewer's experience of these images is shaped by the filmmaker's intentions and the context in which they were created.

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ready determined by the look she receives as she performs and is therefore less self-motivated and spontaneous than it might first appear. This image occurs in the context of nature imagery, flowers, and an adult nude woman walking into a lake. A thread of imagery develops that leads to a wedding ceremony in which the young bride and attendants are wearing traditional white and pastel formal dresses, with the camera somewhat distanced from this greeting-card floral ceremony. The film, through its editing, angles and sharply critical title, is at an ironic remove from the home movie subject matter it presents. Though images such as this wedding are loaded with the potential for personal investment on the part of the participants, they are also ripe for a simplistic satire. Keller's film does not ridicule the women it represents, but it does ask questions about what kind of daughterhood such images suggest.

Keller, Citron, Child and Fisher have all found in home movie footage a starting point that has taken them in quite different directions, ranging from filming the space of the home in a manner that separates this vision from the naive rendering expected in the home movie, to reediting or reprinting found footage of one's own or other's home movies. In each case important issues of film imagery are raised, in the spirit of DeRen's call for "chamber films." Let me summarize these issues, suggesting that much remains to be done in filmic exploration. First, there is the relationship of woman to camera, of the presentation of the body to the other who watches. When the filmmaker is also a woman, or further, when the image is of herself, this relationship is complicated and doubled back on itself in mirrored reflection. Many ways of framing the woman, the past self, and the female other remain to be explored.

We have also seen that the home movie is a unique trace of the past. It is charged with personal memories, but also inscribes social relationships. The artist can see in these traces rich raw material for analysis, development or play. The technique of analytical reediting of home movies introduces both the combinatory processes of montage and the possibility of commenting on or marking actions through fragmentation and reinterpolation. We can look forward to different principles of analysis being applied to such images, different reworkings of the threads of daily life one finds in the home movie.

Notes

1 Werner Neke used this phrase as a title of a talk he gave at the Center for Twentieth-Century Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Spring 1976, to refer to the cinematic force of the cut. His theory of montage emphasizes the significance of the individual film frame as a picture and the intermittent motion of the projector shutter as creating the space of absence in which these pictures are articulated. There is thus a space between the pictures in any film, but Neke's theory suggests the vitality of films that actively recruit this "absent" space as a creative terrain.


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CONCERNING DAUGHTER RITE
Michele Citron

After twenty-seven years of marriage my parents divorced and went their own separate ways. Queried as to what I would like of the family's accumulated debris, I asked for the home movies. Two weeks later I received in the mail a large carton from my father. Inside were three bulging shoeboxes crammed with reels and reels of unbelievably 50 foot spools of 8 mm film. The movies had been one of the more important rituals in my family.

My father had exclusive domain over the camera and a definite idea of what should be filmed. Mostly he shot public celebrations: birthday parties, holiday dinners, barbecues, girl scout picnics, couples' club activities. In order to ensure that everyone was captured on film, he would line us all up and make us walk single file through a doorway, acknowledging the camera. When I asked him why, he said that he didn't want to accidentally miss someone who was present, and this was the only way he had figured out to ensure that everyone got into the movie. He used a similar technique with the family. Everytime we got dressed up to go somewhere "special"—out to dinner, to the synagogue, to a recital—he would film us walking out of the house, dressed in our finery, waving to the camera.

My father also filmed many private domestic moments: cleaning house, washing dishes, making dinner. As a kid I hated this invasion of my privacy. Now I find these voyeuristic images a fascinating record of domestic life.

The second stage of the ritual involved watching the home movies. This happened about once a month when we had no family activities planned or when relatives came to visit. The small reels came out of the shoeboxes, the screen and projector were set up, and an evening was spent watching ourselves. We all provided the live sound track.

"God, how thin I look there," my mother would laugh.

My grandmother in a booming voice would then point her finger at the image on the screen, "Remember Uncle Danny, hon, he's been dead for years. My does time fly, I can—"

"I wish you'd wear that dress again," my mother would interrupt, turning her gaze on me. "It looks so nice on you."

"Oh, mommmmm," I'd groan.

But there was also a darker side to my family: grim fights over money (there was never enough), suffocating intrusiveness, emotional manipulations. When I asked my father for the home movies my request was motivated less by sentimental feelings and more by my unpleasant memories. I somehow expected the movies to confirm my family's convoluted dynamics. But when I finally viewed them after a ten years hiatus, I was surprised and disturbed that the smiling family portrayed on the screen had no correspondence to the family preserved in my childhood memories.