

As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty

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I have never been able really to figure out where my life begins and where it ends.

CHAPTER I

I have never, never been able to figure it all out. What it's all about, what it all means. So when I began now to put all these rolls of film together, to string them together, the first idea was to keep them chronological. But then I gave up and I just began splicing them together by chance, the way I found them on the shelf. Because I really don't know where any piece of my life really belongs.

Let it be, let it go, just by pure chance, disorder. There is some kind of order in it, order of its own, which I do not really understand, same as I never understood life around me, *the real life*, as they say, or the real people, I never understood them.

I still do not understand them, and I do not really want to understand them.

1. This document includes the film's voice-over fragments only, not the written texts that frequently intertwine with

Without knowing, unknowingly, we carry... each of us, we carry with us somewhere deep, some images of Paradise. Maybe not images... some vague, vague feeling where we have been some place... There are places, there are places in which we find ourselves in our lives. I have been in such places where I felt, ah, this must be like Paradise, this is Paradise, or something like that. A little fragment of Paradise. Not only the places... I have been with friends. We have been together, my friends, many times, and we felt some kind of togetherness, something special, and we were elated and we felt, ah, we felt like in Paradise.

But we were right here on this Earth. But we were in Paradise... Those brief moments, those moments... And that is maybe what it's all about... Forget eternity, enjoy. Yes, we enjoyed those moments. Those brief moments, those evenings. And there where many such evenings, many such evenings, my friends. I will never forget them, my friends...

and relate to the spoken word. We'd like to thank Manuel Asín for allowing us to include this text.

I think Nietzsche was the transition. I believe one of the absolute greatest philosophers of the Western culture is Nietzsche. The most precise of all.

That's why he was the greatest influence...

He changed my life in 1960. In 1959 I read his "Dramaturgie", and I read the introduction of the second or third edition, which was years later, and he says, "Oh if I would have only written poetry and incorporated it all, instead of trying to say it as a philosopher! That was my failure". So I said: "That's enough. I have to make my films now". And that's when I left my job at the Graphic Studios and made "Guns of the Trees". He had his mind and he continuously struggles...

CHAPTER II

Here I am, in my editing room, this late night, this late night again. I have stopped my tape recorder here... That is, I am rewinding... as I'm working on my sounds... Here I am, just with my images and my sounds, by myself, now, in a practically empty house.

Oona is now married and happy and she is in Brooklyn. But actually, this very minute she's watching with Sebastian. They went to a movie. Hollis is out, she left early this morning. I left before her, so I don't know where she is and when she's coming back home. So here I am, just myself, and cats and my images and my sounds. And myself.

Myself, wondering, wondering about myself. Actually, maybe I am exaggerating. I'm not really wondering. I'm just doing my work. I'm just working. This is my little workshop here, this little room, loaded, stacked with film, and my two *Bayans*... Here is one, and here is another.

As I'm working on my sounds, I'm not so sure what I'm doing really. It's all chance. I'm going through all the reels of my sounds, picking

up this, picking up that, splicing it all together, putting it all together, by chance. Same as the images, same as... I am putting those images together, exactly the same when I originally filmed them: by chance, with no plan, just according to the whim of the moment, what I felt at that moment that I should be filming. This or that, without knowing why.

Same with the sounds that I have collected through all those years. I'm picking up all those sounds and putting them here on the soundtrack, by chance.

Memories... Memories... Image, sound, memories...

No judgement here... positive, negative, good, bad... They're just images and sounds, very very innocent in and by themselves, as they pass through... As they go and they go. Very very innocent. Yes, people are bad, cinema is innocent, innocent. People are not innocent. They are not.

CHAPTER III

Here is a surprise for Chapter Three.

Now, what do the normal, regular people usually do? Of course: they get married. So, Hollis and me, that is, the protagonists of this film, we decided to try to be like all the normal, serious people: we decided to get married.

Ah, Almus, with your boundless energy!

Ah, Jacques Ledoux, sweet Ledoux!

Ah, P. Adams, Allan!

Ken, and Richard.

Harry, I miss your jokes. I miss your jokes.

Ah, and there is the man of the minute... and Hollis's father. And Hollis's brother.

Watching the snow fall. Keep looking for things, in places, where there is nothing.

The dream.

The crying room. The crying room. The crying field. There is a room... there is a room, we never see its inside. There is a room in which there is a woman who cries and cries. We hear her crying, but we never see her. The crying field. There is a room.

The silence. The silence. But what happens during the silences? Yes, the silences...

But what happens during the silences?

But what happens during the silences?

The pain is stronger than ever. I've seen bits of lost Paradises and I know I'll be hopelessly trying to return, even if it hurts. The deeper I swing into the regions of nothingness, the further I'm thrown back into myself, each time more and more frightening depths below me, until my very being becomes dizzy. There are brief glimpses of clear sky, like falling out of a tree, so I have some idea where I am going, but there is still too much clarity and straight order of things, I am getting always the same number somehow. So I vomit out broken bits of words and syntaxes of the countries I've passed through, broken limbs, slaughtered houses, geographies. My heart is poisoned, my brain left in shreds of horror and sadness. I've never let you down, world, but you did lousy things to me. This feeling of going nowhere, of being stuck, the feeling of Dante's first strophe, as if afraid of the next step, next stage. As long as I don't sum up myself, stay on the surface, I don't have to move forwards, I don't have to make painful and terrible decisions, choices, where to go and how. Because deeper there are terrible decisions to make, terrible steps to take. It's at forty that we die, those who did not die at twenty. It is at forty that we betray ourselves, our bodies, our souls, by either staying on the surface or by going further but through the easiest decisions, retarding, throwing our souls back by thousands of incarnations. But

I have come close to the end now, it's the question will I make it or will I not. My life has become too painful and I keep asking myself, what I am doing to get out of where I am, what am I doing with my life. It took me long to realize that it's love that distinguishes man from stones, trees, rain, and that we can lose our love and that love grows through loving. Yes, I've been so completely lost, so truly lost. There were times I wanted to change the world, I wanted to take a gun and shoot my way through the Western Civilization. Now I want to leave others alone, they have their terrible fates to go. Now I want to shoot my own way through myself, into the thick night of myself. Thus I change my course, going inwards. Thus I am jumping into my own darkness. There must be something, somehow, I feel, very soon, something that should give me some sign to move one or another direction. I must be very open and watchful now, completely open. I know it's coming. I am walking like a somnambulist waiting for a secret signal, ready to go one or another way, listening into this huge white silence for the weakest sign or call. And I sit here alone and far from you. And it's night and I'm reflecting on everything all around me, and I am thinking of you. I saw it in your eyes, in your love, you too are swinging towards the depths of your own being in longer and longer circles. I saw happiness and pain in your eyes and reflections of the Paradises lost and regained and lost again, that terrible loneliness and happiness. Yes, and I reflect upon this and I think about you, like two lonely space pilots in outer cold space, as I sit here this late night alone and I think about all this.

CHAPTER IV

So, my dear viewers, we have arrived at Chapter Four.

Sorry that nothing much, nothing extraordinary has so far happened in this movie. Nothing much extraordinary. It's all very simple daily activities, life. No drama, no great climaxes, no tension. What will happen next. Actually, the titles in this movie tell you right there what's going to happen. I guess, by now you have noticed that

I do not like any suspense. I want you to know exactly, or at least approximately, what's coming, what's happening. Though, again, as you have noticed, nothing much is happening anyway. So let's continue, and see, maybe something will happen. Maybe. If not, forgive me, dear viewers. If nothing happens, let's continue anyway. That's how life is. It's always more of the same. Always more of the same. One day follows another, one second follows another second.

OK, I'll give you now some suspense and let's see... Let's see how the time is going... I'll record exactly one minute beginning now.

Cut! That was one minute. One minute is longer than one thinks.

And the mist now covers the sand.

And the mist now covers the sand.

I have been so totally alone with myself for so long.

I've been so totally alone with myself for so long.

He sits under the tree in the park, listening to the leaves of the trees in the wind.

That day you wanted to come with me, but you couldn't. I went alone, but it wasn't the same. You said you had a feeling that in one of my lives I had something to do with the circus. You said, you could see me in Spain.

No image. Only soundtrack of Louis and Storm discussing something. Bits, glimpses of mystics.

My dear viewer, it's midnight now. I am talking to you and it's very very late in my little room. I'm looking at these images and I'm trying to provide you with some sounds to go with these images, and my imagination. My mind has just stopped dead.

I am looking at these images, now, many many years later. I recognize and remember everything. What can I tell to you, what can I tell to you. No. No. These are images that have some meaning to me, but may have no meaning to you at all. Then, suddenly, this being midnight, I thought: there is no image that wouldn't relate to anybody else. I mean, all the images around us, that we go through our lives, and I go filming them, they are not that much different from what you have seen or experienced... From what you have seen or experienced. All our lives are very very much alike. Ah, my dear Blake! Just a drop of water. We are all in it and nothing, there is no big difference, no essential difference between you and me, no essential difference.

CHAPTER V

You must by now come to a realization that what you are seeing is a sort of masterpiece of nothing. Nothing. You must have noticed my obsession with what's considered as *nothing*, in cinema and life, *nothing* very important. We all look for those very important things... Very important things. And here there is nothing important, nothing. It's all little daily scenes, personal little celebrations and joys. Nothing important. It's all nothing. Nothing. That is, if you have never experienced the ecstasy of a child making the first steps... The incredible importance of that moment, of a child making his first steps. Or the importance, the incredible importance of a tree in the Spring suddenly all in blossoms. All in blossoms! The miracle... Miracles of every day, little moments of Paradise that are here now. Next moment maybe they are gone. Totally insignificant... but great.

«The reader should be carried forward not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, not by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution, but by the pleasurable activity of the journey itself.» Coleridge.

Is it June? Yes, June 26th, oh boy!

June 26th. Now what do we have to say for ourselves on this day?

June 23rd.

The voice said: "You don't have to go anywhere. You just have to make yourself ready. Prepare yourself. Know it's there. It will come by itself. Your work is here, it will come by itself. Just have trust and knowing, and be open and ready. Don't worry, don't frustrate. It will come.

CHAPTER VI

By the time a viewer, that is you, reaches Chapter Six, one expects, that is you, you expect, you expect to find out... more about the protagonist, that is me, the protagonist of this movie. So I don't want to disappoint you. All I want to tell you, it's all here. I am in every image of this film, I am in every frame of this film. The only thing is: you have to know how to read these images. How? Didn't all those French guys tell you how to read the images? Yes, they told you. So, please, read these images and you'll be able to tell everything about me.

So, here it is, Chapter Six.

Ah, the summers of New York! The summers, when everybody is leaving the town, when I can walk the streets just almost by myself, and the sun beating on the streets, and sweating, and hot, I like it, I am in ecstasy during those days, weeks of the midsummer, the hottest time in New York. I like it, I like New York when it's hot and when I am sweating and I am walking the streets. I have walked those streets all my New York life, many many years. I have memories... I have memories of those streets, going back many many many years. The summers... the summers of New York. Ecstatic! New York downtown rooms are hot and the mysterious wind comes through the windows and blows the curtains gently. Ah, the winds of New York summers! You

sit or maybe you lie in your hot bed in your hot room, and you are sweating, and you don't know what to drink, and whatever you drink comes out immediately through your skin as sweat. Ah, those are the days that I like! And you sit maybe by the window and you look out, and maybe you don't even have a fan going, and it's hot in the room too, and you look out, and it's all white and washed out by the sun. Ah, then you go to the park, and you lie in the grass and you look at the blue sky, maybe there is not a single cloud in it, and it's hot, and it's hot. There are millions of people around you on the blankets, the trees, the trees, and there is you, maybe just by yourself, in the middle of the summer. Ah, what an ecstasy, what an ecstasy!

As I was watching you that moment, I thought there can not be anything more beautiful or more important on this earth, between heaven and earth, as you were there one with them, one with heaven and earth, giving life, giving life to Oona. I admired you that moment and I knew that you were completely somewhere else, somewhere else where I could never be, something I could never totally understand. The beauty of the moment, that moment, was beyond any words.

Now, this is from William Carlos Williams, from his autobiography: «That is the poet's business, not to talk in vague categories but to write particularly, as a physician works upon a patient, upon the thing before him, in the particular to discover the universal». John Dewey had said: «I discovered it quite by chance. The local is the only universal, upon that all art builds». Quotes closed.

Then all the sound stops suddenly.

CHAPTER VII

My dear viewers, I guess you have come to another realization by now: and that is, that I am not really a filmmaker. I do not make films. I just

film. I am obsessed with filming. I am really a filmer... It's me and my Bolex. I go through this life with my Bolex and I have to film what I see, what is happening right there. What an ecstasy just to film. Why do I have to make films when I can just film! When I can just film, whatever is happening there, in front of me and now, my friends, whatever I see. I may not be even filming the real life, I may be just filming my memories. I don't care! I just have to film. Like, I have to film snow. I have to film snow. How much snow there is in New York? But you'll see a lot of snow in my films. Snow is like the mud of Lourdes. Why do they always, when they paint Paradise, show it just full of exotic trees? No! Paradise, my Paradise was full of snow! I tell you: Paradise was full of soft, white snow, and I used to roll in it and I was so free and happy. I was in Paradise. I knew... I know when I as a child I was in Paradise. I know.

I guess I am a romantic. You can call me a romantic. It's OK with me. I do not understand, I never really understood, never really lived in the so-called *real world*. I lived... I live in my own imaginary world, which is as real as any other world, as real as the real worlds of all the other people around me. You also live in your own imaginary worlds. What you are seeing is my imaginary world, which to me is not imaginary at all. It's real. It is as real as anything else under the sun. So let us continue... Let us continue.

CHAPTER VIII

As I am putting these pieces of film together, this late evening, I am thinking about myself, I am thinking how during the years, I have covered myself with layers of civilization, so many layers that now even myself I don't see how easily wounds are made deep inside... Deep inside by things that I don't even suspect. What do I know about this civilization, this life? I know nothing. I do not understand anything. And I know nothing. I know nothing. I do not know how I managed to reach this point, how I have reached this point in my life. But I continue moving ahead, slowly,

moving ahead, and some glimpses of happiness and beauty come my way, by chance, when I do not even expect it... when I do not even expect it... So I keep moving ahead, I keep moving ahead, my friends...

I understand animals: cows, horses, cats, dogs... But I do not understand people. I do not understand people. So let us continue.

Life goes on.

My camera... To film... I am not making films. I am just filming. The ecstasy of filming, just filming life around me, what I see, to what I react, to what my fingers, my eyes react, this moment, now, this moment when it's all happening. Ah, what ecstasy!

CHAPTER IX

So let us continue. It's very late at night now, in New York and in my little room, where I am putting all these pieces together. It seems that the only time I have for myself is those late late night hours when everybody's sleeping, when the air is clearer from all that daily noise, activity. Those are the little bits of time and, of course, it has always been so, that is why this film consists of little bits, fragments of time, time from my life... little fragments. But sometimes the fragments contain all that there is, as Blake said...

CHAPTER X

In the background you can hear some noises from the New Year's celebration. New Year's 1999 into 2000. Tomorrow will be the first day of the year 2000. I am here in my editing room splicing. I made about one hundred and fifty splices today, and I am looking at my old footage, footage of the XXth century, the last quarter of the XXth century, as the world is celebrating the new year. The new year... I am celebrating all the past years in this

footage, this film. It's about twenty minutes to the end of this millennium as I sit here, in my editing room making splices, splicing little bits of my own past, my own millennium. Each of us have our own millenniums, millennia, and they could be longer or shorter. And when I look now at this footage, I look at it from completely somewhere else, I am completely somewhere else now. This is me, there, here, and it's not me anymore, because I am the one who is looking at it now, at myself, at my life, my friends, the last quarter of the Century. Now it's about seventeen minutes to the end of this century, this millennium. It's just time. Time goes on, life goes on; same as this film is going on through the projector gate... projector gate. The film, these images recorded casually at different times, long ago, and they mean just what they mean, just what they are, and nothing else beyond themselves.

The Sundays... The Sundays in Central Park, when you sit in the grass... when you sit in the grass with friends and, maybe, a bottle of wine, and some cheese and some Italian sausage. Ah, the ecstasy, the beauty, the happiness of Sundays in Central Park! If you have never spent Sunday, many Sundays, as many Sundays as I have spent there, you'll never know the happiness, the pleasure, the ecstasy, the beauty of Central Park on Sundays. Central Park! Summers in Central Park... The summers of Central Park...

The seasons of the year pass New York, quietly, very often unnoticed. Here is winter and then, before you know, suddenly, Spring. Sometimes you think it's already Spring, and then, it snows for a surprise. And then again, the Spring takes over and suddenly everything is blooming. Everything is blooming and you know then it's really Springtime. Yes, it is Springtime. And then you go to the Central Park. Eh, my friends! The Spring, the summers of New York!... I don't think you believe me. But I tell you: it is beautiful in New York in the Spring. And when the summers come, I am ecstatic, I don't want to go anywhere, I want to stay here, in New York.

Memories, memories... They come and go, in no particular order. I remember this, I remember that; places, faces, situations, they come and go, they come and go.

My dear friends, to be in Paradise is to be with good old friends. Ah, my friends! The hours, the evenings we spent together! That was Paradise. As time goes... as time goes, there is nothing more important than good friends, my friends!

CHAPTER XI

As I sit in my room this late night and look at some of the images that I am splicing, putting together, I wonder how much of yourselves you'll see and recognize in these images.

I am talking to you now, Oona and Sebastian and Hollis. I am talking to you now. These are my memories. Your memories of the same moments, if you'll have any, will be very different. These are my memories, the way I saw it when I was filming it. It was through my childhood memories, I guess, I was filming my own memories, my own childhood, as I was filming your childhood. I picked up those moments to which I responded, coming, remembering my own childhood. So I do not know how much of yourselves you'll see in it, though it was all real, it was all real life. It's you, it's you in every frame of this film, though it's seen by me. But it is you. You'll see it all very differently. It will mean completely something else, these images, to you than to me.

Yes... It's late night again. The city is sleeping. I am here alone, looking at these images, fragments of my and your lives; talking into this mike, by myself, by myself...

CHAPTER XII

I am still in Provence, this evening, here, in my editing room, this late night. I am in Provence! I feel the sun, I feel the lightness, I see

the landscape, the trees, the flowers. I can smell the air of Provence and I can feel the happiness, the happiness of that summer in Provence, as we, Hollis and me, as we were driving through the little towns up and down and around hills, little towns. Provence! As we drank the wine of Provence, the air of Provence. Ah, the happiness, the ecstasy of that summer. It's still here, now, with me, this very moment, it's stronger than anything that I have experienced, gone through. Today... today, now and in New York it's much much stronger and closer and much more real. You ask me about beauty! What do I know about beauty! But I know that I have experienced moments of happiness. Moments of happiness... and that was, if there is beauty, that was beauty.

Provence is beauty. Being in love is beauty. Drinking the wine of Provence is beauty. That was, that is beauty, my friends! Yes, friends is beauty. To have a glass of wine with friends, old friends and new friends, is beauty. I drink to you tonight, here, by myself, I lift my glass of Provence wine, Ben's wine, to you, my friends!

My dear viewers: as we continue I do not feel any guilt making you watch these very personal insignificant moments of my life. We all look for something more important... for something more important... But, as life goes, at some point we realize that one day follows another, and things that we felt were so important yesterday we feel we have forgotten them already today.

Life is continuing... Life is continuing... And what's important to me may be totally unimportant to you, totally unimportant to you... Though everything eventually passes, except this very, this very very moment, and the next second we are in another moment and something else happens and everything else is gone, is past, is memory, is memory. But some of the memories... no, they never really go away. Nothing really goes away, it's always here, and sometimes it takes over you, and it's stronger than any reality around you, around me, now. That is... reality. That is real. That is really real, though it's not here anymore, as they say, it's not here anymore. But it's here for me, it's here and now.

I don't know what life is. I know nothing about what life is. I have never understood life, the real life. Where do I really live? I do not know. I do not know where I come from, where do I go. Where am I, where am I? I do not know. I do not know where I am, and where I am going to and where I'm coming from. I know nothing about life. But I have seen some beauty, I have seen some brief... Brief glimpses of beauty and happiness... I have seen, I know. I have seen some happiness and beauty.

I do not know where I am. I do not know where I am! But I know I have experienced some moments of beauty, brief moments of beauty and happiness, as I am moving ahead, as I am moving ahead, my friends! I have, I know, I know I have experienced some brief brief moments of beauty! My friends! My friends! •