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Review of Bonmariage, Emmanuelle. *Manu*. Brussels: Clin d'Oeil.

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Manu Bonmariage (1941) is a well-known Belgian film director, who produced more than 80 films, including *Du beurre dans les tartines* (1980), *Allô police* (1987), *Les amants d'assises* (1992), *La terre amoureuse* (2002), and *Vivre sa mort* (2015). Before becoming a director and independent filmmaker, he used to be a cameraman. Since he has been gradually losing his memories due to his Alzheimer's disease which he developed in his 70s, he started reviewing and retaining his life, by visiting the different people who he grew up with and worked with. As ever, using his camera as an extension of himself and a medium for interaction, he records what he sees in the process of revisiting his life. His daughter, Emmanuelle Bonmariage, the director of *Manu*, follows her father on this trip along memory lane and into the future, and records the process. This is a touching film, which provokes deep reflections that, evidently, go way beyond considering the process of living with dementia as an illness trajectory.

The first place where Manu goes to is Chevron, a village near Liège in Belgium, where he was born and grew up. He shares in this fragment that this is the place where he would like to die/be buried in. When we review our lives, we often think about our roots, that is, where we are from. To many people, the place where they were born and/or grow up, is where their roots are. Therefore, it is not uncommon that many people who left the places where they were born or grew up in, express their wishes to return to these places when they are old or after they passed away. When Manu was six-years-old, he lost the sight of his left eye through an accident. He has been using only his right eye for almost all of his life. He reflects on this facet of his life by talking to his childhood friends in Chevron and feels that losing sight of his left eye is a good thing for him as a cameraman. When cameramen film, they can only use one eye. Since Manu can only use one eye per se, he can better focus on what he films. He tells his friends, "Luckily I lost the left eye. Since I don't have it, I directly see what I have to film." This remark expresses his positive attitude, that seems unaffected by his age or by the experience of living with dementia.

We learn that this is not the only scar on Manu's life: he also had a near-death experience when he was in his 30s after he was poisoned with arsenic. He decided, back then, not to charge the person who intentionally poisoned him, and, while looking back, still would not do so, because this was someone with whom he had a relationship. He even blames himself instead of the person and says, "I had a turbulent life. I wasn't careful about who I had relationships with." Thus Manu is a living example of the concept of relational autonomy: a person may make decisions not based on what is right or wrong or what maximizes their best interest, but on sustaining his or her relationships with other people.

This documentary film also shows that Manu visits his long-term friend, Frans, a soundman, who was in Manu's film crew. They traveled to different places in the world and worked closely together when they were young. They do not live close, and Manu takes trains to visit Frans. As they are watching their photos together, a lot of memories come up, such as those of their trip to Vietnam. When they talk about Manu's near-death experience, Frans is teary. He recalls vividly seeing Manu in the hospital: Manu was naked, sweating all over his body and face, and the room was full of blood. Frans thought that Manu would die. Manu feels how scared Frans is simply by recalling this scene, and touches Frans' head. Frans sweeps his tears and the two friends hug. The tenderness of that hug makes tangible the depth of their friendship, and how much Frans cares for Manu as a colleague and a friend. On the train home, Manu calls Frans and says that he will come and visit again. However, after the call, he says to himself, "We will not see each other again." Manu is in his mid-70s and his Alzheimer's is progressing. It can be the last time that they would ever see each other, and even if they would see each other again in the future, Manu may not recognize Frans due to his Alzheimer's. His anticipated grief is hyperreal.

Emmanuelle, the director of this film and the daughter of Manu, brilliantly captures Manu's persistent and deep humanity; that is: his connection to and care for people that characterize him throughout his life and work, up to the present. Jean, another former colleague of Manu from the time at the Belgian Teleradio, is clear about this: "He (Manu) has a heart of gold." Alzheimer's might keep reconfiguring his memories of a lived past, Manu's humane nature is unattained. I was impressed by a scene in the film where he and Emmanuelle watch *Les Amants d'assises*, one of the films he produced. The film is about a man who is being betrayed but who still deeply loves the betrayer. When Manu watches the film, he is quiet, turns away, closes his eyes, puts his head down, and looks sad. As a spectator, I can feel that he feels connected with the man in the film, feels his love and pain, and cares about him. Emmanuelle, who evoked this moment of compassion in the documentary, checks in with him. Manu replies to her, "I'm just coming to my senses. It's gripping." Films and other audiovisuals are powerful mediums for people to experience, share, and co-create emotions and thoughts. This applies – and maybe even more – to people living with Alzheimer's too.

Although this is not a film about Alzheimer's per se, leaving out most of the tropes (caregiving, loss, apathy) that are commonly mediatized, the film captures Manu's acceptance of his present condition. He even films his dialogue with his doctor about his disease. This dialogue tells that he sees Alzheimer's as a part of him: he describes himself as an "Alzheimerian." He knows that his Alzheimer's will not improve, and his memories will keep fading. "What I'm concerned most about, is whether I will get better," but also: "I know very well that I won't." Therefore, he tries to record what he sees and the events that he himself provokes in the present. For example, he runs into a veteran who went to Vietnam at the bus stop, and he wants to learn more about this veteran's story, so he asks the man questions, and records their conversation. Here, Manu shows himself as a person who lives in and treasures the present. Living in the present is not an easy thing because people tend to look into the past and future.

I was most impressed by the last scene of the film, where Manu holds a burning fire torch and walks into the dark. He then leaves the torch on the floor, where, Emmanuelle picks it up. The torch powerfully symbolizes Manu's passion for film and film-making, which are significant parts of his life and self. At the moment of the film, Manu is still very passionate about the art of filming and holds strong beliefs on what filming should be, that is: capturing reality. For example, Emmanuelle, who here is the director of the film wants to film a scene of him coming out of a garage in a way that Manu does not think is natural enough. He argues with her and says, "What we're doing here should feel natural . . . You have to know that we're dealing with reality." Another example of the naturalness of the medium in Manu's being-in-the-world, is when Emmanuelle asks to what if he would stop filming. He answers: "Stop filming? I hope I can film at least my funeral." However, due to his physical and cognitive decline, his

capacity to produce new work independently is decreasing. Emmanuelle, picking up the torch, thus also picks up his passion for filming.

This is a very touching film that tells the story of an older person living with Alzheimer's who has a deep passion for his work and deep relationships with people through the camera of his daughter and himself. I believe that it will be of interest to people living with dementia, family caregivers, professionals and researchers working with people living with dementia, and filmmakers.