

through medication and instead begin to understand the self and personality, such as the ways in which the members of Bethel strive to accomplish these goals.

Another culturally distinctive aspect of the film is the way psychiatric episodes are managed within Bethel House. The film depicts an incident in which a Bethel member heard voices telling him to board a UFO and save the world. When he attempted to leave, other Bethel members convinced him that a license was required to ride a UFO. The group took a vote to decide whether or not a license was necessary, and the response was immediate and unanimous in favor of obtaining the certification. Through this incident, the viewer is able to see the ways in which hallucinations are not simply dismissed or regarded as unreal. Rather, the Bethel members react to the specificities of the psychiatric episode as if it is authentic. Instead of attempting to convince the man that the illusion is false, the experience of the hallucination is embraced and utilized to resolve the situation.

Nakamura sheds light on a topic that is often overlooked and shows that psychiatric problems are not a barrier to living as a social being. A founding member of Bethel states that he wishes people abroad would see this film and know that people with psychiatric disabilities are not “abnormal.” Nakamura illustrates that the people of Bethel are learning to overcome challenges regarding such things as social skills and to live without hiding—or being hidden—from society. Through this film, the viewer is able to see that Bethel represents a sense of community and home for people with psychiatric disabilities. Members state that Bethel has helped them to overcome obstacles, such as a fear of social situations. Through living in a group home, even if there is a level of withdrawal, there are still other people living

nearby to interact with in a social capacity. Thus, Nakamura highlights that psychiatric disabilities are not a barrier to sociability.

Although Nakamura addresses the positive aspects of Bethel House, she does not shy away from depicting the realness of the situation: life in a group home is not perfect, and conflict often arises. At a morning meeting, a dispute breaks out between a young woman and an older woman, which leaves an opening for others to criticize the young woman. As the young woman leaves in tears, the remaining members discuss whether or not the situation was handled properly. Conflict among members is an aspect of life within Bethel House, but these disagreements aid in learning to navigate social relationships. Thus, Nakamura does not simply show an idealized view of Bethel; she also includes the complexities of daily life.

A strength of Nakamura’s films is the focused view of the people and events depicted with little interference through narration and explication. This diffused approach is beneficial as it allows the audience to focus on the people in the film, but it is also a slight hindrance at times because there is not always a clear understanding of the message being conveyed. Nakamura’s films abstain from an authoritative tone and invite the viewer to step out of their comfort zone and confront topics that are often deemed “taboo,” such as death and mental health. Nakamura addresses socially prohibited topics that are often sensationalized and brings a normalcy and mundaneness to them, which reflects the reality of the situation. These films may be useful in cultural anthropology classes to aid students in understanding the ways in which practices surrounding death, religion, and mental health are culturally constructed and varied.

Film Reviews

Coffee Futures

Zeynep Devrim Gürsel, dir. 22 min. Watertown, MA: Documentary Educational Resources, 2009.

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Coffee Futures is a short film about a long story—that of the 50-year journey that Turkey has taken toward obtaining membership in the European Union. The film is not about—as one might have expected from its title—the price of coffee on the global market. Instead, it juxtaposes footage about personal relationships told by amateur fortune-tellers with clips from speeches by prominent Turkish and European officials discussing Turkey’s relationship with the EU.

Fortune-telling in Turkey is a social ritual that often takes place over a cup of coffee. Fortunes are read from the configurations left by the grounds of the thick brew in the bottom of tiny cups. Fortune-tellers assert that this “technique of

prognostication” is less a matter of accurately forecasting the future than it is about a rhetoric of speaking about personal relationships—usually romantic relationships, although occasionally those between parents and children.

Zeynep Gürsel, the film’s director, sets out to have her fortune told by a number of amateur fortune-tellers, both male and female. At the end of each session, Ms. Gürsel asks the fortune-teller his or her thoughts about the future of Turkey and the European Union. If that seems an odd question, what becomes immediately striking is that the language of that relationship is almost identical to that used to describe personal relationships. This has been a long tug-of-war, said one woman, that began in 1959 when Turkey applied to the European Economic Community, and again in 1987 when that group had morphed into the European

Community, and yet again in 1999 when Turkey's candidacy to the EU—candidacy but not membership—was accepted. Some of the fortune-tellers think it is likely that both Turkey and Europe have been purposely keeping the relationship platonic, that there will never be a union, that the relationship will never be consummated. Still others are ready to turn elsewhere, having been rebuffed so many times. In this rhetoric, Turkey becomes symbolically the woman seeking love, hoping for union with Europe while Europe is cast as commitment phobic, alternatively seeming to approach then pulling back as a way to keep Turkey on the hook. Europe is also enacting the role of a parent trying to reform and educate a child, as one man sardonically notes. "Europe knows everything," he says, "we poor Easterners know nothing"; another offers, they think of us as "barbarian Turks." The film itself is a testament that belies that view.

The film captures the erudite Bülent Ecevit, Turkey's prime minister in the 1970s, saying: "I am 56; I was a child when this started and we're still struggling to get into the EU." It shows, in the 1980s, then-prime minister Turgut Özal offering, "We are at the beginning of a long narrow uphill road [where there will be] many challenges." As the film demonstrates, this uphill struggle was still going on in

2007, when Mesut Yilmaz, prime minister in the 1990s and someone still active in politics, speculated: "When will we join the European Union, or is our membership a dream?" There is a long pause before he says: "This question can only be answered by fortune-tellers." Maybe that was the line that inspired the director, or maybe she was just lucky to have found it; nevertheless, it weaves together what seem to be two very separate domains—the personal and political—and with wit and brilliance provides a new way of thinking about this 50-year-long relationship.

The film has been shown in a variety of venues in Europe and may be subtly provoking changes in the way Europeans think about Turkey joining the EU. The only thing lacking in the film, according to one viewer, an economist, is some discussion of what Turkey has to offer the union—for example, its young, educated, vibrant workforce could invigorate the aging European countries. Europeans, he says, should take another look.

The film ends with a song from the perspective of a coffee cup, saying: "I gave my life to you, why could you not turn back and look my way?" The camera zooms in for a close-up of a coffee cup—poignantly, around its rim circle all the stars of the union. Notably, the circle has not yet closed.

Sweetgrass

Lucien Castaing-Taylor, recordist. Ilisa Barbash, producer. 101 min. New York: The Cinema Guild, 2009.

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Film scholar Bill Nichols has argued that the principal problem of documentary revolves around "what to do with people" (Nichols 2001:6). In *Sweetgrass*, we are reminded that people may constitute only part of the problem. An engaging, vivid work by visual anthropologists Lucien Castaing-Taylor (recordist) and Ilisa Barbash (producer), *Sweetgrass* follows the last migration of sheep through Montana's Absaroka-Beartooth mountain range. Viewers, though, will have to wait for this contextualizing information at the end. In the sparse spirit of Frederick Wiseman and Robert Gardner, we are simply offered "Big Timber, Montana, USA," in a title card to locate us at film's start. Castaing-Taylor and Barbash stick close to the observational ground, employing long takes and steering clear of interviews or voiceovers throughout. For those looking for ethnographic expository to situate their viewing experience, *Sweetgrass* will surely disappoint. For those willing to play the role of patient onlooker, the film offers an instance of a documentary poetics worthy of the attention of anthropologists and filmmakers alike. The landscape shots are breathtaking, rivaling any John Ford film, in their attention to the serene beauty of the mountainous West. In several scenes, the trials of herding are rendered

strikingly as sheep become a living, breathing traffic jam, almost spilling out of the frame toward the viewer. The film's soundtrack is richly layered, as animal bleating, human whistling, and walkie-talkies all vie for sonic attention in key moments.

A subtle humor pervades throughout as well. There are moments of idle chitchat and tender joking among the ranchers—one memorable scene involving a story about "cowboy brain"—that provide both levity and poignant insight into ideas about work and community among the film's subjects. Barbash and Castaing-Taylor weave in these moments strategically, giving them the flavor of conversational asides serendipitously performed—which undoubtedly they were. These vignettes also serve to underscore the perpetual waiting involved in undertaking a drive of this scale. Scenes of relative quiet bookend those involving shepherd shoptalk. Even the filmmaker himself falls under the sleepy spell of the wait. In one scene, shot from inside of a tent at encampment, one of the shepherders dryly observes, "Got warm in here, Lucien went to sleep."

Perhaps the film's most intriguing resonances pertain to the host of recent conversations within anthropology and cultural studies on the role played by naturecultures and companion species in our complex present (Haraway 2003). Among other things, *Sweetgrass* is a meditation on