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English version

**The *filmeurs* Joseph Morder and Alain Cavalier.**

**Filmic gesture of relinquishment and epistemology of non-manipulation**

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### **Abstract**

This article aims to analyse the cinematic practice of the *filmeur* through two of its top representatives in the French space: Joseph Morder and Alan Cavalier. Its purpose is, therefore, to determine the epistemological approaches and the aesthetic characteristics of this filmic experience developed in solitude, in which the filming becomes a “corporal and aesthetic act” characterised by subjectivity, privacy, immediacy and observation. The analysis of different works pertaining to both filmmakers—*Lettre de Joseph Morder à Alain Cavalier* (2005), *Joseph Morder par Alain Cavalier* (2006), *J'aimerais partager le printemps avec quelqu'un* (2007), *Le Filmeur* (2005) and others—will show how these experiences of reality go beyond the diaristic or autobiographical practices, since the narration is relegated in favour of the present and spontaneous experience of placing oneself “within the act of filming”. These intimate and minimalist practices of a filmic gesture of relinquishment are determined by the evolution of the technology used and its automatisms: in Morder’s case from the Super 8mm to the mobile phone and in Cavalier’s through his small digital camera. This filmic experience is defined by an epistemology of non-manipulation that becomes a transgression of the cinematic orthodoxy.

**Key words:** Alain Cavalier; Joseph Morder; filmeur; digital cinema; film analysis.

## 1. Introduction

For some authors, cinema is defined by the essence of audiovisual filming, understood as a way of experiencing reality outside the film industry, where the subjectivity of the filmmaker “is positively revolutionary, due to the utopia that establishes a society of free individual creation, where this possibility of creating will be offered equally to everyone: each work [...] is a sort of small liberated zone...” (Noguez, 2010, p. 32). As I already had the opportunity to analyse (Monterrubio, 2017), Joseph Morder, throughout his entire film career, and Alain Cavalier, from his work *La Rencontre* (1996), exemplify this experience of the real through the camera that needs to work in loneliness. The latter declares about the former: “Joseph, to me, is neither a director nor a filmmaker. He films how others paint or write, that is, from his childhood and every day. He is a *filmeur*” (Bluher, 2004). Since the premiere of *Le Filmeur* (Alain Cavalier, 2005) the concept has gained greater relevance in the theoretical space, and various authors have configured a characterisation of the term. H el ene Audoyer (2006) provides an essential definition, in which the task of the *filmeur* is that of “the solo recording of images and sounds” (p. 56). For his part, Fran ois Laplantine (2007) describes its multi-faceted characterisation:

Out of a truly ethnographic curiosity for meticulousness (and not accounting), the filmmaker clings to the small details of everyday life [...] The *filmeur* is an observer, an actor in what is being filmed, a spectator. He is also a dreamer within that documentary film moulded by fiction. He is also a conversationalist who, however, does not intend to reduce the image to speech [...] He is, above all, an interlocutor, who demonstrates a profound sense of hospitality, conversing with everything he encounters. (pp. 116-117)

Like Laplantine, Dominique Noguez (2010) places Morder's work in the space of ethnology: “This auto-ethnologist, helped by the image, thus constitutes, for us, so forgetful, a backup memory” (p. 276). Robin Dereux (2014b) provides another connotation of the *filmeur*'s task, when speaking of Cavalier, equally applicable to Morder: “...that is, he films but will not necessarily make use of what is filmed. Obviously, this profoundly transforms his way of thinking about cinema. And it revives that dream, common to many others, of a more direct cinema” (p. 9). Therefore, after all these considerations, I can define the *filmeur*'s activity as consisting of filming himself, as the operator, and alone, material that may or may not be part of a cinematic work. This is

how Cavalier explains it: “For me, the film exists in the act of filming [...] The deep pleasure, painful at times, of imprinting something of life on the film, removes any interest from any period of preparation and dissemination of the film” (Pangon, 1996, p. XXV). The film experience of the autobiographical “cinema-I” defined by Phillippe Lejeune (1987) is hybridised with that of the self-portrait (Bellour, 2002; Grange, 2008) to become a refined experience of reality.

## **2. The filming as experience of reality**

This filmic experience, defined in this way, is characterised by immediacy, intimacy and freedom. Its immediacy allows time to be retained, to capture what vanishes. Again, the statement about Cavalier is equally valid for Morder's work:

What counts for the filmeur is not necessarily finishing a project, but rejecting the fact that time passes, that magnificent moments, sometimes linked to the presence of someone or to feelings, or linked to a form of harmony with nature, remain present. It is a question of retaining what flees, of retaining time [...] He collects and recollects blocks of duration. Or glean, to take up Varda's expression. (Dereux, 2014a, pp. 92-93)

This immediacy also makes it possible to capture the unpredictable, what reality offers without the premeditation of the filmeur, the discovery. In addition, the intimacy of the film experience is projected not only on what is filmed but also on the spectator, with whom a relationship of equality and maximum complicity is established since the filmeur's activity also makes him a spectator: “There is a doubling that comes from the nature of your work” (Chauvin and Lepastier, 2014, p. 32). From this intimacy and freedom, the unconscious will also emerge. Cavalier already anticipated this when talking about his first autobiographical work, *Ce répondeur ne prend pas de messages* (1979), an antecedent of his work as a filmeur: “I believe that films can be made alone [...] You can reach a state of concentration, make a cinematic gesture of withdrawal, like the painter, like the sculptor... without worrying about money, the trade, the public...” (Cavalier, 1996, p. 59). The essentiality of this gesture leads him to define it as “a bodily act” (Robles, 2014, p. 265). The filmeur's activity is then associated with Alexandre Astruc's formulation of the camera-pen (1948): “...the myth of the camera-pen—Joseph Morder prefers the term camera-brush—thus acquires all its meaning; the gesture of filming [...]

can surpass the speed of the hand and the pen to capture the transience of things” (Beauvais and Bouhours, 1995, p. 1987). While Morder prefers the term camera-brush, concerning the impressionist characterisation of his work, as I will analyse below, Cavalier wishes he has owned this little digital camera since childhood, which would have enabled him to develop a filmic and not a literary diary: “It is the only regret in my life. Not having had a camera, instead of a pen holder” (Chauvin and Lepastier, 2014, p. 32). This cinematic gesture of withdrawal implies observation as an essential characteristic for the capture and experimentation of reality and the digital camera becomes an essential tool for this, also due to a large extent to its automatism (focus, diaphragm, etc.). As will happen to Morder concerning the mobile phone in *J'aimerais partager le printemps avec quelqu'un* (2007), Cavalier also highlights the importance of the video camera's automatism as an aesthetic starting point for his work as a *filmeur*. Cavalier's words also describe Morder's premise: “I have been able to use these devices thanks solely to their automatism [...] It is a magnificent rule but very restrictive [...] it is like a musical instrument [...] I adore very simple machines. If there were disposable cameras...” (Robles, 2014, pp. 260-261). The *filmeur's* experience is likewise stripped of the infinite possibilities of montage to turn it into yet another tool for purifying what is filmed:

What was wrong in filming can never be corrected in editing [...] the moment in which the image and sound are recorded is THE moment, it is the mass, it is the liturgy. [...] And the editing consists of eliminating the shots in which nothing vibrates, but it is not in the editing where you will give it any emotion or meaning or vibration or comedy. What is wrong in the eye of the filmmaker is wrong in the eye of the spectator (Robles, 2014, p. 78).

### **3. Joseph Morder**

In the case of Joseph Morder, he began in the audiovisual field through the experience as the *filmeur*. Since his mother gave him a Super 8 camera on his eighteenth birthday (1967), the filmmaker dedicated himself to filming his so-called *Journal filmé*: “I consider that, from the moment I started filming, I started my diary” (Blucher, 2006, p.204). This diaristic activity has not ceased throughout the last five decades, although it has evolved over time. Dominique Blucher (2005) establishes six different stages, differentiating the *journal filmé* (filmed diary) from the *film-journal* (diary-film) when the diaristic matter becomes film:

1. The silent diary in S8 (1967-1976), to which he adds intertitles.
2. The diary with direct sound (sound camera) and with voice-over commentary not written but recorded during the viewing (1976-1978). In 1976 the author began to use the sound S8 and until its disappearance in 1997, combining both formats (silent and sound) and without further editing, beyond joining the three-minute tapes.
3. The *diary-film* (1978-1982), that is, the conversion of the filmed diary into a film, in which direct sound alternates with voice-over commentary: “The art of the diary-film consists of combining images and words and shaping the difference between the visible and the sayable” (Blüher, 2005, p. 185). These are eight diaries, of which the last one (*Journal neuf*) is a fake diary, creating another experience of documentary-fiction hybridisation inherent in his work.

*L'Été madrilène (Journal filmé 1)* June-November 1978, 90 min.  
*Le Chien amoureux (Journal filmé 2)* December 1978-June 1979, 90 min.  
*La Femme en vert (Journal filmé 3)* July-December 1979, 100 min.  
*Certains tombent en amour... (Journal filmé 4)* December 1979-July 1980, 90 min.  
*Le Lapin rose (Journal filmé 5)* July-December 1980, 125 min.  
*Le Lapin à deux têtes (Journal filmé 6)* January-June 1981, 130min.  
*Au petit Suisse (Journal filmé 7)* June-December 1981, 90 min.  
*Les Nuages américaines (Journal filmé neuf)* July-December 1982, 80 min.

Figure 1. Diary-films 1978-1982.

4. The continuation of the *diary-film* (1982-1983), which has never been screened, that is, it has not been publicly released.
5. A synchronous diary, without voice-over commentary (1984-1997). The disappearance of the sound S8 tape in 1997 forces the author to return to silent filming. This non-public diary accounts for approximately two hours of filming per year.
6. The *impressionist diary*—without commentary or intertitles, since 1998—and the *diary bis*—in miniDV and direct sound, since 2000—thus creating two parallel diaries that remain faithful to the principles of this activity: do not delete, keep the chronology and no edit. The length of the video recording is ten times that of the S8 one.

Regarding Morder's diaristic activity, Noguez (2010) states: “His films are a series of long letters that he addresses to himself and to us [...] It captivates us while bringing us a little closer to ourselves” (p. 277). As the Forum des Images website

indicates, in 2015 his diaries exceeded a thousand, but only a tiny number have become public films. Before such profuse material, Morder declares:

[A] part of my family disappeared during the Shoah. The fact that I film so much is probably linked to the absence of images of certain members of my family killed in the camps. I do not know my mother's face as a child since those images disappeared in the war. I suppose I compensate for that lack by making an uninterrupted torrent of images. (Morder, 2008, p. 6)

The two works that I aim to analyse are framed in this last stage, in which the author combines both formats (S8 and video): the short film *Lettre de Joseph Morder à Alain Cavalier* (2005)—shot on S8—and the feature film *J'aimerais partager le printemps avec quelqu'un* (2007)—made with a mobile phone. To the characteristics already exposed, it must be added that both are shot practically entirely with a handheld camera: “[In] S8, I almost never film with a tripod, even the so-called fixed shots are filmed with a handheld camera. They are what I call 'floating' shots: I film with my breath” (Blüher, 2006, pp. 209-210). This floating shot is then associated with the filmmaker's breathing, turning filming, as Cavalier indicated, into a bodily act that determines its impressionist essence.

#### **4. Alain Cavalier**

Alain Cavalier, however, began his career as a *filmeur* in 1996 with *La Rencontre*, shot on Hi8 video, showing his love affair with Françoise Widhoff during the first year of their relationship: “The appearance of light video cameras transformed the Cavalier-filmmaker into a *filmeur*” (Dereux, 2014a, pp. 92-93). The activity of the *filmeur* in Cavalier (which, as I have already indicated, has as its precedent the film *Ce répondeur ne prend pas de messages*) presents an added characteristic to those already analysed: “Becoming a *filmeur*, for Cavalier, requires the combination of three essential elements: holding the camera, of course, but also performing that gesture alone and, finally, being able to film everything while speaking, preserving synchronous sound” (Robles, 2014, p. 37). The filmmaker, therefore, rejects any subsequent sound addition, ruling out all kinds of voice-over commentaries, as he himself puts it: “How can I explain that I like the sound image and the visual sound?” (Limosin and Toubiana, 1996, p. 48), and which he also states in *Le Filmeur*: “Filming and speaking at the same time, I have not yet completely achieved

it” (00: 08: 35-00: 08: 40). While breathing is fundamental in Morder's floating shot, in line with his impressionist yearning, in the case of Cavalier, it is determined by his synchronous voice, enunciated during the filming.

The *filmeur*, as Serge Toubiana (1996) indicates regarding *La Rencontre*, performs an aesthetic stripping in which the spectator is offered “the very gesture of the filmmaker, in the purity of his writing. Here the machine and the self are imbricated, inseparable: they make one” (p. 51). Thus, a kind of filmic utopia is generated, “the ideal of capturing a pure reality, freed from its contaminations” (Ayala, 2008, p. 158). Like Morder, Cavalier then begins a videographic diaristic activity that largely replaces the written one, as I have indicated. In addition to this properly diaristic activity, all of the filmmaker’s subsequent work, with the exception of the film dedicated to Georges de La Tour and up to *Pater*, will be produced under these postulates of the *filmeur*: filming alone and with direct sound. It is a profuse body of work in which feature films coexist with other shorter pieces (some of them dedicated to or in relation to some feature films) and the so-called *récits express*—“express stories”—among which we find the portrait *Joseph Morder par Alain Cavalier*.

FEATURE FILMS.	MEDIUM-LENGTH FILM	SHORT FILMS AND RECITS EXPRESS
<i>La Rencontre</i> (1996)		Portraits of actors from <i>Plein de super</i> :
<i>Vies</i> (2000)		<i>Ma femme vit dans la peur</i> (2001)
<i>René</i> (2002)	<i>La fête</i> (2003) 30’ ( <i>René</i> )	<i>C’est plein</i> (2001)
<i>Le filmeur</i> (2005)	<i>Bonnard</i> (2005) 25’	<i>Le roi de biberons</i> (2001)
		<i>Vingt ans après</i> (2005) 4’ ( <i>Thérèse</i> )
		<b><i>Joseph Morder par Alain Cavalier</i></b> (2006) 9’
		<i>Parler et travailler</i> (2006) 4’ ( <i>Portraits</i> )
		<i>Jeanine aux fers</i> (2006) 16’ ( <i>Portraits</i> )
		<b>8 récits express</b> (2007): <i>Petite usine à trucages</i> , <i>La danseuse est créole</i> , <i>Chat du soir</i> , <i>Bombe à raser</i> , <i>La fille de Brioche</i> , <i>J’attends Joël</i> , <i>Agonie d’un melon</i> , <i>Bec d’oiseau en plexiglas</i>
	<i>Lieux saints</i> (2007) 32’	
<i>Les braves</i> (2008)		<i>Comment ces trois films</i> (2008) 6’ ( <i>Les braves</i> )
<i>Irène</i> (2009)	<i>Sept gouttes de sommeil</i> (2011) 48’	<i>Faite la mort</i> (2011) 4’ ( <i>Le combat dans l’île</i> )
<i>Pater</i> (2011)	<i>Complices</i> (2011) 30’	<i>Le pâtissier japonais</i> (2011) 11’ ( <i>Un étrange voyage</i> )
		<i>Cadeau de naissance</i> (2011) 9’ ( <i>Martin et Léa</i> )
<i>Le paradis</i> (2014)		<b><i>Faire l’affiche, Marier deux arbres</i></b> (2014)
<i>Caravage</i> (2015)		<b><i>Je reviendrai plus tard</i></b> (2015)

Figure 2. Alain Cavalier’s filmography as *filmeur*

Audoyer (2006) analyses Cavalier's cinematic experience based on the author's statement about the desire to create that cinematic gesture of withdrawal: "The cinematic gesture [...] is at the same time a concrete gesture (a set of movements) and a symbolic gesture (ethical, more precisely)" (p. 66). First of all, this cinematic gesture would consist of this aesthetic relinquishment: "[S]tripping the images and sounds of everything that is dispensable for their correct perception ('like the sculptor'), but also extracting, collecting, sedimenting, concentrating, compressing ('like the painter')" (Audoyer, 2006, p. 78). In the author's own words: "For me, what is essential today is my physical connection with the camera. In particular when I frame in the viewfinder, my mouth close to the microphone [...] that offers a word that is like a confession in the ear of the spectator" (Dereux, 2014a, p. 97). Amanda Robles (2014) describes this filmic gesture as "the will to touch life" through the presence of what she calls the contact-shot:

The filmeur and his handheld camera, a haptic camera, eye and hand at the same time, propose another way of inscribing the filming body in the filmed world. Contact cinema should not be understood only in a spatial sense, but also in a temporal sense: this cinema of proximity, of intimacy, also seeks immediacy. (pp. 9-10)

##### **5. *Lettre de Joseph Morder à Alain Cavalier (2005) and Joseph Morder par Alain Cavalier (2006)***

As René Prédal (2008, p. 28) indicates, the Arte channel broadcasts *Lettre de Joseph Morder à Alain Cavalier* on the occasion of the premiere of *Le Filmeur* (2005) and also programs *Joseph Morder par Alain Cavalier* on the day of the premiere of Joseph Morder's film *El Cantor* (2006). This filmic exchange allows us to confirm the similarities and differences between both of the filmeur's experiences, developed in part in the same space and in a short interval of time.

The filmic missive by Morder, who has not yet seen *Le Filmeur*, materialises as an affectionate and complicit tribute to its cinematic concerns. Thus, Morder generates a letter from the diaristic premise of the habitual daily life of his impressionist diary in silent S8, camera in hand, to which he later adds the epistolary text as commentary and subtle ambient sounds. The letter is built with short shots, embodying the so-called "jump cut" referred to by Blüher (2004):



Unlike the “glimpses”, the cascades of instant glances by Jonas Mekas, the quick succession of glances by Joseph Morder does not tend towards an abstraction of movement and colour but remains at the service of an action represented in quasi-continuity [...] the jump cut generates a style of writing that is perhaps the only one that can be achieved with a camera-pen as light and personal as the S8 camera.

This impressionist diary of the streets of Paris and Morder's apartment includes the fragmented self-portrait of the filmmaker in the interior, and the complete one in the exterior reflections. A letter, therefore, of a digressive nature that advances through the elements of the sender's daily life and the complicit game with the recipient around the personal objects in his apartment—books, paintings, film cans, family photographs, etc.—in correspondence with Cavalier's cinematic work in *La Rencontre* and *Le Filmeur*. These present objects give way to past memories of the meetings between the two filmmakers. This narration concludes with a series of self-portrait images that, again, correspond to those that Cavalier presents in *Le Filmeur*, although Morder has not yet seen the film. The communion with the camera, that indissociability already mentioned, makes the filmeur's self-portrait, throughout both filmographies, materialise mainly with the camera integrated into the portrayed figure, both agent and object of the image.

The filmmaker's taste for the S8 and the Kodachrome film, with which he has made his *Journal filmé* for almost four decades and also used in the filming of this letter, becomes the object of epistolary narration with the disappearance of the 40 ASA emulsion. This is how the digressive enunciation of the addresser, always devoted to a cinematic reflection, continues: “With the death of Kodachrome 40 ASA in S8, it is a colour that will disappear from our palette. Finally, perhaps there is a source of beauty within” (00:02:41-00:02:53). Later, there is a new digression around the reverse paths followed by both authors: from the film industry to the filmeur's cinema in Cavalier's case, and the reverse direction in Morder's career. This reflection is accompanied by everyday images of the city of Paris. The more open shots, with more narrative information, are gradually transformed into closer shots, which capture objects or their fragments and offer Morder's impressionist gaze. The epistolary enunciation then exposes how his filmic work in S8 represents the end of an era and the beginning of a new future: “At this moment, these images represent the agony of an era, of a genre, of a form of happiness [...] In fact, I am certain that they are an answer, a great essence. The departure towards an unknown and exciting destination” (00:05:36- 00:05:51). The letter then concludes with the desire for

a forthcoming meeting between the two filmmakers who respond to the denomination of filmeur as a definition of their cinematic practice, in which everyday and intimate reality converges with filmic and aesthetic reflection.

Cavalier's response does not materialise in another letter but captures the encounter between the two in the short *film Joseph Morder par Alain Cavalier* (2005), remaining faithful to his principles on the simultaneity between image and sound, that is, the direct sound of his small miniDV camera, which he holds in his hand and with which he travels around the rooms through panoramic shots and his own movement. In this way, Cavalier films the encounter with Morder in his apartment, where the filmmaker reproduces again the objects featured in Morder's letter, now identified, about which Cavalier questions him, producing an intimate portrait of him and his family history. The images are repeated from one work to another, the concept of originality disappears in favour of reality. The task of the filmeur is no longer to create a new image but to capture the reality experienced in the first person.

The conversation between the two, with Cavalier always behind the camera, revolves around that apartment, that of the parents who have already disappeared, where Morder began his filmic activity. The objects reveal Morder's personal history, that of his mother in a Nazi concentration camp, that of his father's migration before the war, that of his cinematic career. The portrait thus materialises under the premises already used in one of the portraits from *Vies* (2000), the one dedicated to the sculptor Jean-Louis Faure, which is generated through the showing of his studio and his work, on which the dialogue between the two is likewise produced. We find, therefore, in this visit by Cavalier to Morder, all the characteristics of the former's work already exposed: immediacy, intimacy and observation as necessary conditions to capture the unpredictable, such as the intimate story about the mother's ring or the comic verification of the state of deterioration of Morder's chair. Cavalier states: "The only thing that interests me is observing life [...] it is only the observation of life that leads me not to prepare" (Chauvin and Lepastier, 2014, p. 26).

As opposed to the impressionist gesture of Morder's floating shots, and the jump cut of short shots, camera in hand but without movement, the realistic gesture of Cavalier's contact-shot makes closed panoramic shots that transmit the movement of his gaze, while moving through the space he wants to know. This contact-shot is not only spatial and temporal, as I have indicated previously, but it also becomes emotional. This three-dimensional closeness is Cavalier's way of experiencing reality: "I only do

proximity. I only film what I can touch” (Chauvin and Lepastier, 2014, p. 31). Observation, proximity and immediacy allow a beautiful revelation of intimacy, in which the most dramatic aspects coexist with the most comical and the most everyday, in which tonal heterodoxy prevails over genre orthodoxy.

#### **6. *J'aimerais partager le printemps avec quelqu'un* (2007)**

This work represents the advent of that “unknown and exciting destination” that Morder spoke of in his letter. The film was born from a proposal by the Pocket Films Festival (2005-2010), dedicated to films made with mobile phones, in which the filmmaker had already participated in its first edition with the short film *L'insupportable* (2005). In contrast with this first superficial contact, *J'aimerais partager le printemps avec quelqu'un* constitutes a deep and reflective experience of filming with this new and unknown device, becoming the first film recorded with a mobile phone to be released in commercial theatres in France. In the presentation of the feature film, the filmmaker highlights its similarities with the S8, affirming the possibility that the mobile phone offers an image with its own characteristics and a “singular beauty”: “What interests me is discovering the heart of the camera, and therefore, its soul” (00:03:12-00:03:21). In this way, the film represents a return to its beginnings with the S8, to the discovery of these technical and aesthetic specificities (exposure, reproduction of movement, sound quality, infrasound capture, etc.): “[W]hat interested me was how to find a specific type of writing with a mobile phone, plunging into the unknown. On the other hand, the film is also a constant questioning about a new format, which reminds me of my beginnings in the S8” (Morder, 2008, p. 7). This primordial interest in the audiovisual characteristics of the new device means that the image and sound (exclusively direct) are captured by the camera’s automatism, without the filmmaker’s manipulation. Nor are they modified after filming: there is no colour grading or sound post-production.

The film continues with Morder’s diaristic form, whose date, from February 21st to May 15th 2007, appears in the form of a subtitle over the image, and is sometimes also stated by the filmmaker through the direct sound. The lightness and manageability of the new device allows for new frames and almost total freedom of movement. On the second day of the diary, Morder records himself in front of the mirror and addresses his gaze and his words to the spectator, to confide in him that he is the same age as his father when he died (57 years old). Similar to Cavalier, the filmmaker Morder speaks, therefore, in front of and behind the camera, placing the most intimate statements in front, such as the one

that occurs on February 26th, in which a depressed Morder confesses his longing for “sharing the spring with someone”. In the same way that we previously verified the prevalence of reality over originality, here the devaluation of the image quality in pursuit of the immediacy it can provide is evident; in this case the intimate emotional expression. The next day Cavalier visits the same family apartment that he recorded a year earlier and that Morder is now going to sell. The reverse portrait of the one created in *Joseph Morder par Alain Cavalier* is then produced, which allows the filmmaker Morder to observe the characteristics of the camera. On this occasion, its automatism varies the values of the diaphragm, the amount of light that the image collects. That is to say, the filmeur does not control or manipulate these technical aspects, but he devotes himself to observing them. As he records Cavalier, he speaks: “It is your hands that bring the light” (00:05:55-00:06:00).

On March 3rd, on a walk through the city, Morder introduces a plot out of which he had already created two previous works of fiction: *Le Grand Amour de Lucien Lumière* (1981) and *Romamor* (1992). Both films narrate the encounter of a S8 filmeur (Lucien and Mark, respectively, played by Morder himself) with a woman he wishes to film. On this occasion, the filmmaker repeats the experience, but in this case with a man, Sacha. Following his interest in documentary-fiction hybridisation, Morder uses an unknown actor—Stanislav Dorochenko—to create an encounter that, without a doubt, the spectator can perceive as real. His filming is once again determined by the specifics of the camera: “[I] don't see what I'm filming because of the light” (00: 14: 40-00: 14: 45). In addition, the filmed subject, with his own camera, becomes a filmeur and turns Morder into the object of a new recording. The quotation from Noguez with which I began this article, regarding a “society of free individual creation”, becomes an image here. Morder then films Sacha's camera viewfinder, where his own image appears, generating a *second-degree self-portrait*. Days later, the filmmaker travels to London, where he fears he has lost his notebook containing Sacha's phone number, and expresses that moment of stress, almost panic, during filming: “I no longer look through the lens” (00:22: 40-00:22:43). The image moves and trembles without framing any motif, transmitting an emotion that Antony Fiant (2014) describes concerning Cavalier and that is equally pertinent in this case:

The small digital cameras, extremely handy, allow for an aesthetic prolongation towards the existential questions of the filmmakers through trembling, over or under exposure, blurred images and other improvised frames [...] that do not seek to offer an exact image of themselves but rather restore an interior disorder through discontinuity, the unfinished, the doubt... (p. 87)

The indissociability between the *filmeur* and his camera implies emotional expression through filming. In this sense, there has previously been a new materialisation of this aesthetic-existential expression, with an invocation-shot of Sacha in the dark (Figure 3) that surprisingly anticipates the one filmed by Cavalier two years later in *Irène* (2009) (Figure 4).

Figure 3. *J'aimerais partager le printemps avec quelqu'un* (Joseph Morder, 2007)

Figure 4. *Irène* (Alain Cavalier, 2009).

Back in Paris, he recovers the notebook he thought he had lost and travels to Moulin d'Andé, a mythical place in French literature and cinema (the location for Alain Cavalier's *Le Combat dans l'île*). There, Morder intends to write a melodrama, *Le Coeur d'une mère*. The stay becomes the solitary reflections of a walker in love (numerous shots of his feet walking), who confesses his "lovesickness" (May 15th). As Raphaël Bassan (2008) indicates: "The walk, the drift, would they not be the initial gesture that presides over all creation? It is the deep meaning of all his diary and of this particular opus." Morder's cinematic gesture of withdrawal is born from this movement, from the walk, from a certain observational wandering that also leads to an intellectual walk, to a digression. Both concepts constitute Morder's experience as *filmeur*. Back in Paris again, he dedicates himself to a 35mm shooting, *Le Lieu du mélodrame*, around the family apartment that Morder is about to leave; a filming that Cavalier also records. Morder then documents his own cinematic work and Cavalier's activity as a filmmaker. The total relinquishment of the filmic gesture of both filmmakers is recorded.

Figures 5 and 6. *J'aimerais partager le printemps avec quelqu'un* (Joseph Morder, 2007).

Thus, the fundamental difference between the two cameras is evidenced since the mobile phone does not allow the filmmaker to put an eye to the viewfinder, as indicated by Cavalier, or to approach the microphone. The *filmeur's* bodily act is transformed, it moves away from the camera, tilts towards the spectator's space. Next, Morder films again the previous image in front of the mirror, now reproduced on the computer, discovering a new *second-degree self-portrait*. The second encounter with Sasha (April 10th) occurs in a cafe. Although he agrees to be recorded, Morder's filming distorts the encounter. Despite the awkward silences, the filmmaker continues his observation about the camera's automatism: "[W]hat I like about this camera is that the light changes with the movement of the face," "the cigarette has brought the light again" (00:46:40, 00:51:53). Thus, the conflict of filming appears as a disruptor of the personal intimate relationship. Morder generalizes this dichotomy: "Do I like love or movies more? Or do I like both? (00:54:06-00:54:16).

After a second trip to London on the anniversary of his mother's liberation from the Bergen-Belsen death camp by the British army (April 15th) and the sale of the family apartment, Morder receives a visit from Françoise Michaud (leading actress in *Romamor* and other films by Morder), whose opinion he seeks on whether to film Sacha in their next encounter. During the conversation, Françoise takes the camera to film the filmmaker. Like Cavalier with Françoise Widhoff in *Le Filmeur*, Morder shares his experience, entrusts the camera to the loved one. The filmmaker thus completes an itinerary also carried out by Cavalier: his self-portrait; the portrait of another *filmeur*; his portrait captured by the other as *filmeur*. In the case of Cavalier, Françoise recorded him after the two skin cancer operations he underwent, in a space of absolute intimacy.

On May 5th, Morder announces a new commemorative date: the fortieth anniversary of his father's death. Finally, the third encounter with Sacha takes place on May 14th at the filmmaker's house, and he narrates it the day after, while filming the empty bed where they spent the night together: "Sacha called me yesterday, he came in the afternoon, at home for the first time. I decided not to film him. It was more important for me to see him for the first time with my eyes, without intermediary gaze" (01:19:05-01:19:33). Thus, Morder describes the camera as an intermediary between the filmmaker and reality, which, as I have already indicated, moves away from the idea of indissociability previously expressed. Regarding Cavalier, the limit of the filming was also marked by the capture of the intimacy of the other, but in his case the distortion does

not occur in the filmic gaze but rather comes from the impossibility of the intimate expression of the other in the presence of a camera.

On May 15th, the final date of the diary and his brother's birthday, Morder narrates a new anniversary in front of the mirror: 45 years ago he arrived in France with his mother and brother. On the final black screen, we read: "To Alain Cavalier and Françoise Widhoff." In addition to acknowledging the influence of Cavalier, in the presentation of the film Morder defines it as "a synthesis of my work around encounters, memory, remembrance, truth, lies, pleasure and, in an unspeakable way, the pain, but, above all, life" (00:17:46-00:18:16). In this sense, Blüher (2000) proposes an analysis of Morder equally pertinent for Cavalier, particularly in his film *Irène*:

Joseph Morder does not try to resurrect the past, but to collect it and make it sensible in the present [...] The authenticity of the image consists of the fact that it manages to make us feel that we are "in another place," temporally and spatially, in the fact that a "real" image carries with it the emotional form and affective charge of that other place (p.78).

## **7. Evolution of the filmeur Cavalier**

Cavalier's extensive filmography already mentioned draws a clear evolution of the filmeur's experience. *La Rencontre* is built using a fixed camera and close-ups in an "attempt to fix the moment" (Robles, 2014, p. 60). And for this, he trusts the possibilities offered by the video to embody the relinquishment of the image: "I trust in the video image to provoke, to fertilise, to transform the film-image: the work discarding dark areas, avoiding long focal lengths. I look for a sharp, bright, simplified image" (Limosin and Toubiana, 1996, p. 43). With *Vies* (2000) Cavalier abandons the fixed shot, the filmeur gets moving, camera in hand. *Le Filmeur*, which covers ten years of Cavalier's video diary, becomes a bastion of this conception of cinematic art: "With *Le Filmeur*, the true adaptation between the artist and his tool is produced" (Prédal, 2008, p. 21). Thus, Cavalier develops all the possibilities of filming: camera in hand and occasionally on a tripod; filming himself in a fragmented or complete way through the mirror; and even entrusting the camera to the loved one, Françoise Widhoff, as I indicated previously. In *Pater*, as we will see below, the filmeur abandons his solitude to turn filming into a dialogue of gestures.

Cavalier continues his most intimate film experience in *Irène*, the epitome of the *filmeur*'s intimacy, where the contact-shot becomes temporary and above all emotional and existential. On this occasion, the filmic diary feeds on the literary diaries written by Cavalier between 1970 and 1972, which the author reads behind the camera. The filmmaker's emotional journey after the death of his wife, who passed away in January 1972, becomes "an act of sharing. The gesture of the *filmeur* is to take us with him. He is our eye, and he speaks in our ear: he confides in us" (Delorme, 2009, p. 27). The use of a written diary to generate the audiovisual diary evidences the potential of the latter over the former, thanks to an image that multiplies the senses and emotions. *Pater* (2011) and *Le Paradis* (2014) represent new experiences for a *filmeur* who ventures to explore new territories. In *Pater*, Cavalier generates the limit-experience of the *filmeur*, by turning the solitude of filming into an encounter and dialogue with the actor—Vincent Lindon—turning him into co-author of the work by giving him a camera: "By ostentatiously unveiling the instruments of its very particular writing, the film confesses the cinematic pact on which it is built. Foundational, capital, generic confession: in the same way as Cavalier is an actor in the film, Lindon is also a *filmeur*" (Fargier, 2011, p. 14). While Morder filmed the Cavalier *filmeur*, Cavalier completes the itinerary by showing us both *filmeurs* through an exterior shot.

Figures 7 and 8. *Pater* (Alain Cavalier, 2011).

In the same way, the experience of reality is hybridised with the creation of a fiction: "[W]e both film ourselves in our daily lives. And under the gaze of the spectator, we transform, regularly and depending on the circumstances, into fictional characters, before returning to our daily affairs" (Cavalier, 2011). While Morder inserted the fiction in the diary without revealing it, proposing a discussion about its indiscernibility, Cavalier addresses this same issue through its dialectical opposition.

With *Le Paradis*, Cavalier intends to carry out a work of total improvisation. In this case, the main evolution occurs in the sound, which is now treated in post-production, including the appearance of music at the conclusion of the film. The film arises from a new desire in the filmmaker, not about reality but about reverie and the unconscious: "I would like to find something that was related only to the unconscious and not to what was experienced" (Robles, 2014, p. 279). His latest feature film to date, *Le Caravage* (2015), is perhaps his most exquisite exercise in observation, in this case about a dressage horse



and its well-known owner, Bartabas. On this occasion, the filmeur does not want to interact with the filmed object and his voice disappears in pursuit of a silent observation, absorbed in the animal and his rider. However, and as I have already explained, the presence of the filmeur enables him to capture the unpredictable. At one point in the film, Caravage frolics in the dirt after a training session. He approaches the camera and licks the lens making the image almost disappear. We then hear Cavalier's laugh and his voice for the second time, after a minimal intervention at the beginning of the film. Again, reality determines and modifies the characteristics of the image. The filmeur does not stop recording, he does not even clean the lens, he continues filming while the blurred image, by itself, recovers its sharpness. It is therefore a revealing moment of the epistemology of the filmeur's experience consisting of the non-manipulation of what is captured by the camera.

Less known than the aforementioned feature films, Cavalier creates, again from the daily experience of the filmeur, medium-length films that may or may not be related to the previous ones. Among them, it is necessary to address two films that are born from Cavalier's most solitary everyday life. Returning to two of the spaces already portrayed in *Le Filmeur*, *Lieux saints* (2007) is the filming of successive public toilets and *Sept gouttes de sommeil* (2011) is the filming of night stays in different hotels throughout the country after the screenings of his films to which Cavalier is invited. The spectator then contemplates an exercise in observation and reflection in complete solitude. The capture and description of the details of almost forty public baths (and some private ones) provoke the memory of diverse personal, literary and cinematic anecdotes.

*Sept gouttes de sommeil* performs the same exercise in hotel rooms. On this occasion, Cavalier dates each of them with the name of the cinema where his film has been shown and the number of attendees. His enunciations then describe his encounters with the public and convey the emotions of that exchange, the relevance they have for the filmmaker. What Fiant (2014) states about the first also defines the second "*Lieux saints* [...] perfectly embodies Cavalier's gesture between intimacy and openness, between private and public, between turning inward and sharing, between absence and presence, between life and death" (p. 82). In an exemplary moment of this gesture of relinquishment, Cavalier leaves the camera in *Sept gouttes de sommeil* to sit in front of it and addresses the deceased Jean Eustache. In both spaces, bathrooms and hotel rooms, the filmmaker takes multiple self-portraits through the mirrors, in all of them his face glued to the

viewfinder of his MiniDV; an image of that cinematic gesture of withdrawal characteristic of the *filmeur*.

The *récits express* (as the author himself calls them) are a kind of unavoidable filming, since the *filmeur* cannot resist the call of reality to capture the moment: “The ‘express story’ therefore consists of filming the moment inside of a short story—necessarily the moment—naturally well-constructed” (Villain, 2014, p. 19). This capacity is provided by the handheld camera that always accompanies him: “This little camera that I carry with me is a resistance tool [...] It is the tool that has allowed me to find my place and that has allowed me to continue” (Chauvin and Lepastier, 2014, p.30). These express stories are often born on the margins of feature films, as essential moments that must be shown but do not find their place in the film, and are offered to the public thanks to their DVD edition. If we take the last two films, *Le Paradis* and *Le Caravage*, we find three express stories that are totally representative of this need to capture the moment according to the *filmeur*’s experience of reality. In *Marier deux arbres* (2014) Cavalier makes public a couple of shots of a tree to which he assigns the female sex, due to the cavities it presents, and which grew through a thick wire that the filmmaker identifies with those used by Germans during the occupation. In *Faire l’affiche* (2014), Cavalier films himself working on the image that will make up the poster for *Le Paradis*. After discarding all his attempts, the unpredictable arises and the discovery occurs: his cat crosses into the photographed space. Finally, the exercise of silent observation that *Le Caravage* entails, inevitably requires the express story *Je reviendrai plus tard* (2015), in which the filmmaker says goodbye to the horse, talks to Bartabas and lets himself be seen reflected in the mirror while filming them both. Cavalier cannot resist interacting with them, inscribing himself in that reality, in an intimate farewell almost whispered in the ear of the admired Caravage.

## **8. Conclusions**

Considering all of the above, it is evident that these two greatest exponents of the figure of the *filmeur* present numerous similarities and also key differences that outline a complete range of their possible practices. All of these elements are in pursuit of an experience of reality through a cinematic gesture of relinquishment defined by subjectivity, freedom, immediacy and observation that is born from an epistemology of non-manipulation: neither during filming—use of the automatism of the camera—nor in the post-production—the colour grading of the image and the editing of the sound are dispensed with. I present all the characteristics analysed in the following table (Figure 9).

<b><i>Filmeur</i></b>	
Exploration of reality	
Subjectivity – freedom – solitude	
Immediacy – the unpredictable	
Intimacy – the unconscious	
Observation – the finding	
Operator – Observer – Spectator	
Epistemology of non-manipulation	
Cinematic gesture of relinquishment	
Bodily, aesthetic, ethical and existential act	
Camera in hand	
Automatism	
Editing as a tool for purification	
Metadiscursive reflection	
In front of and behind the camera simultaneously	
Fraternity with the spectator	
<b>Morder</b>	<b>Cavalier</b>
S8 – video – mobile phone	Video
Direct sound + Voice-over commentary	Synchronous sound
Impressionist diary – jump cut:	Everyday portrait – space-time continuity:
Floating shots	Contact-shot
Wander, drift, digression	Interaction
Dating, ephemera, anniversaries	No dating

Figure 9. Characteristics of the filmeur's audiovisual practices.

The filmeur’s bodily gesture, his link with the camera, becomes a gesture of aesthetic relinquishment and a gesture of ethical and existential expression. In this way, this new filmmaker makes a metadiscursive reflection, a gesture of resistance, which transgresses the canons of cinematic creation. The capture of reality is imposed to the detriment of the concepts of creativity and originality; the immediacy of the image prevails over its quality; genre orthodoxy vanishes in the face of tonal heterodoxy; the rules around the format of the image, its framing or its movement disappear. The filmeur proposes “sharing a life experience, a poetic form” (Fiant, 2014, p. 78) that begins with the self-portrait and will eventually turn the other into a filmeur. Cavalier sums up the filmeur’s experience in this way: “Before I believed that it was necessary to live a lot to film a little. Now I know that filming and living are the same. It is exactly the same thing” (Chauvin and Lepastier, 2014, p. 32).

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