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The Length of Day

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Abstract
This is a review of the short film, *The Length of Day* (2021), directed by Laura Conway.

Keywords
HUAC, Communist Party

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The Length of Day (2021), dir. Laura Conway

Laura Conway’s grandparents, Shirley and David Bramhall, were American communists. In this film, Conway uses footage of her grandparents that she filmed before their deaths, as well as FBI records (disclosed to her by the Freedom of Information Act) and her grandmother’s memorabilia, to paint a portrait of their lives as young idealistic social reformers. She also interweaves clips from old Italian movies, which are clearly not of her grandparents, but her own subtitles to these adds an imagined conversation with her dead grandmother, seeking revelations and closure. Her film technique is imaginative and whimsical, as well as deeply personal.

Her grandparents were called up before the House Unamerican Activities Committee in 1956, protested against US involvement in Vietnam, worked for civil rights and labor rights, all of which we see documented at a dizzying speed that clearly is not concerned about giving detail so much as an impression of lives with a purpose. Conway’s wistful treatment of this suggests a meditation on how distant these ideals still seem from being fulfilled, as our nation has so pointedly failed to deal adequately with poverty, militarism, or minority rights.
In the end, Conway’s imagined conversation with her grandmother tells her to “invent your own future. You can’t have mine.” Although looking back has its value, looking forward is what her grandparents’ values were all about. They imagined a better world, and joyfully worked together towards it with love and hope.