

A Continuous Goodbye

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----- PRÓLOGO -----

A year ago, I was making a film about the need to leave, and now I'm making a film about wanting to stay. *For those who have to hit the road again* shows what made me want to experience the world. This is a tribute to the people who make the world a place worth knowing. What pressure to live up to them. **A Continuous Goodbye.**

Before leaving, I felt that I was leaving my connections behind and that they would never return to that state, whether due to different stages of life or even the possibility of not wanting to return from Spain. And so, saying goodbye to my loved ones would end up being less temporary than planned. I think the uncertainty of what awaited me is harder for me than the concrete alternatives could actually be. Now I realize that the potential is always more difficult than reality.

My grandmother passed away on the day of my flight. And even so, my parents told me to go. The last time I saw her, I felt that it might be the last time, and in fact, it was a good last time—dementia gave us that day.

[LIVE IN THE PRESENT / META]

“If you look for meaning, you’ll miss everything that happens”, Tarkovsky

I used to think it must be really difficult for actors not to have existential crises trying to figure out who they really were with so many different roles and jobs. And how could they have meaningful relationships where the people around them believed in their sincerity on a daily basis? In fact, the better they are professionally, the better they can pretend in their personal lives.

But what about a writer or a director? I don't know if it's more true to try to create art in order to gather the conditions to actually live, or to first live in order to then truly create art.

I don't know if what I produce has more seeds from Jonas Mekas and *As I Was Moving Ahead*, *Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2000), Terrence Malik and *The Tree of Life* (2011), or Chantal Akerman and *News from Home* (1976). But I do know that if I ever created something like Celine Song did two years ago, I would feel fulfilled. I have realized that my way of living more in the present, and not so much in the future or the past, is to talk about those past and future times, calming my nostalgia, ironically feeding it. I now create thinking about what happened, or what is to come—and that is how I live in the present.

I grieve in the moment, fearing that something might happen, but not afterwards, when it actually happens. Because otherwise, I would be the kind of person who would call, right?

Can we say we know artists when we only know their work? But doesn't our work reflects who we are? I hope so, and I hope not.

Similar to this idea, Meta told me that this is why I am an artist. Only an artist could say this to another artist and I would truly believe it. Or did she say “filmmaker”? I know it doesn't matter. “Relax, Bea, the idea is there anyway,” I know.

It doesn't take long for people to understand that for me, all the tattoos I have or will have must have meaning, that they speak of what I believe and think. Come to think of it, maybe I'm not just talking about tattoos. And, for as long as I can remember, there has always been, to a greater or lesser extent, some unease linked to how memory works in an unreliable way. We stop remembering clearly, the contours blur and only an emotion remains, a smudge of an idea. Time will pass, but I want to always remember with great affection what I experience, what I think and who I meet. My dog is no exception, and neither is Madrid.

[BORBOLETA]

“E assim descobri o meu riso favorito de todos os tempos.”

[“And that's how I discovered my favorite laugh of all time.”]

Someone recommended a local place to my mother and me where we could eat churros with hot chocolate. I tried it and then took Meta there. Everything is connected and intertwined, even when we don't realize it. She told me about a digital garden *[what's the name of the app?]*, where you can record and connect all sorts of things.

I think each new sentence confirms the previous one. Almost the materialization of the butterfly effect, I would say. “Butterfly” — Alba's favorite word in every language. And with her, I discovered my favorite laugh of all time.

[LET GO / MEREDITH]

“A primeira pessoa foi mais temporária do que este contexto já por si só tão temporário.”

[“The first person was more temporary than this context, which is already so temporary in itself.”]

Meredith is Canadian and a native English speaker. I think we would have been very important to each other during our stay here in Madrid, but she decided that this city is not for her, so she went to Italy and I promised to visit her... But maybe this was all that was meant to happen, nothing more. Three encounters were enough to give me confidence in the language, that my insecurities were just insecurities. Enough to influence the way I got to know everyone after her. And then disappear.

Nat, what about the lady we spoke to at the café, who told us that this was the second dog she had adopted at an advanced age with health problems, but that she wanted to give him companionship and a good rest of his life? What a pure and selfless sentiment that I have not yet been able to achieve.

[DO DIFFERENT / JUAN]

“Não sei se teria tanta abertura como vocês tiveram para mim.”

["I don't know if I would have been as open as you were with me."]

I admired Juan in this regard. Juanje to his friends. The next time I'd seen him, I might have called him that, but we lost touch - my fault. He had a tobacco case like mine; it was the first thing I noticed, because, of course, smokers start with a cigarette when they meet someone for the first time.

He expanded my horizons. If I had been settled in my space, job, country, with the hustle and bustle and demands of everyday life, I don't know if I would have welcomed someone temporary in this way without fear.

I remember when we agreed to speak in our native languages. I spoke Portuguese, he spoke Spanish. If there was any doubt, we used English. It's a little counterintuitive to hear one language and respond in another. Sometimes we found ourselves speaking English without even realizing it.

I'm also giving myself to them, even though I know I'm going to leave them. And the more I give myself, the harder it gets.

[THE BEST THING THAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED / ANDREA]

“Por que motivo é mais fácil sermos vulneráveis numa língua que não a nossa?”

["Why is it easier to be vulnerable in a language other than our own?"]

My way of connecting has always been through conversation, getting to know how someone else thinks and sharing the reasons that shaped us into who we are. But here I built intensity in other ways. We paid attention to the patience people showed when we didn't know how to express a certain idea in another language, or even appreciated when they made an effort for us without exchanging a word.

I learned not to rely only on language. Take your time getting to know someone. Andrea is right, it's a matter of sensing whether there's a spark, without needing to understand where it comes from. Eventually, you'll find out.

It was only later that I realized that the language barrier was the best thing that could have happened to me. It opened doors that, in another context, I wouldn't have known how to open.

I also noticed your bee tattoo. What does it mean? I didn't get to ask. Thank you for trusting me, I didn't get to say that either.

[WORK / DAVID]

“Tenta de novo, experimenta o desconhecido e deixa-te surpreender pelo temporário caminho”

["Try again, experience the unknown, and let yourself be surprised by the temporary path."]

From the beginning, I released myself from the pressure of staying here to work afterwards. I didn't want to reduce this experience to just professional efforts.

One of my goals for this year was to discover myself as a working person, since I know without hesitation what I would do in every situation as someone who studies. They, estas señoras, saw me take every step in this first stage of discovery. I don't know if I acted like an intern, an Erasmus student, or how I would actually act at work, but they reassured me regardless of the options. They accepted this English version until, over time, I naturally began to retain details of their language and culture.

You always drank tea with me when we got to work and after lunch. Now you've told me that you're drinking more coffee again, but maybe you're also smoking less without me there.

I call you “just a boy,” but I hope you take it with the same affection I felt when you wrote “friend” on a painter's tape to describe me. We're so similar in the way we feel that I don't think it's difficult. You're the real star, just a silly boy.

“Já passou metade do tempo que aqui vou estar. Está a passar demasiado rápido - quem me dera, voltar ao início.” *["Half the time I'm going to be here has already gone. It's going by too fast—I wish I could go back to the beginning."]*

What was I thinking? I don't want to go back to the beginning, that would mean starting over. It would mean losing what I've experienced (it would mean erasing what I've lived), and I wouldn't do that. I just want more time.

[NEW CITY, NEW ME]

“Tento ver a cidade numa perspetiva de quem aqui vive e não só da perspetiva de um turista e quando tudo já me parecer familiarizado, será tempo de ir-me.”

["I try to see the city from the perspective of someone who lives here and not just from the perspective of a tourist, and when everything seems familiar to me, it will be time to leave."]

When I started to recognize buildings, streets, and even memorize the faces of people I passed by, who had the same routine as me, it was a sign that I was starting to feel at home there. But maybe this is the ideal time. If I stayed longer, even this place that has fascinated me could begin to lose its magic and become mundane. I think I'm just trying to convince myself of illusions, because even if I tried to believe it, nothing has been like this period so far.

Madrid is what Lisbon is trying to be, but it still has a long way to go.

New chapter. New language, new city, new home. Rebuilding myself without the pressure of others' expectations, everything I showed myself to be can be everything I always was. In another language, it seems we need to create another version of ourselves. We are observing each other change without knowing it. The version presented to us may be new, but for us it is the only one.

I have always had difficulty with the temporary, and now I am in the ideal context to find the balance of not depriving myself of experiences, because I know that they will eventually come to an end.

I never expected to see so much of the sea here.

Everyone knows Portugal, but I don't know their countries. Does that say more about Portugal or about me?

[NATÁLIE]

Let's say that you and I were together all the time, then you'd start to hate a lot of my mannerisms. The way every time that we would have people over...I'd be insecure, and I'd get a little too drunk. Or the way I tell the same stupid pseudo-intellectual story again, and again. Y'see, I've heard all those stories... So of course I'm sick of myself. But being with you... it's made me feel like I was somebody else.

Before Sunrise (1995, Richard Linklater)

Am I different? Am I being different? I feel different, so I am different, right? We cannot be just what we do and what we say. Are we also what we think and feel?

““whatever you are, be a good one” hm? You are what you preach, Nataalka and that is a wonderful thing to be.”

I never saw her buy a plastic bottle of water unless I asked her to, a single moment when she didn't have her reusable bag, a piece of clothing that wasn't second-hand, or using a piece of fabric to blow her nose, even if it made her look like a grandmother. I felt that there was nothing I could say or do that would drive us apart.

Two months into the year, I already felt that I had achieved another goal I had set for 2025—to make one good friend in Spain. We had known each other for two weeks, and without knowing it, she motivated me to achieve ambitions she didn't even know I had.

Aquí y ahora. You're everywhere, have you seen, Nat? You made me a lucky person.

I still find it hard to believe that you weren't speaking Czech. But yes, you were trying to sing “Happy Birthday” to me in Portuguese.

Some questions that came up as the days went by. “What will our last coffee be like?” / “Will I leave first, or will you pack first?” / “Will we visit another city after this one?” / “Will we be able to maintain in another country the friendship we are still building here?”

One of the oldest things I associate with her is her desire to live in Madrid since she was little. Now I have the same desire as you, and you're not there. Will we eventually relive our memories in the city where we first met?

When in doubt, I go running, choose pistachios, drink iced coffee, save sweets for the morning, don't smoke, but drink cider. Nat is in everything I've done and wanted to do.

[REWATCHING PERSON]

“Sou uma slow reader porque sou uma faster thinker?”

["Am I a slow reader because I am a faster thinker?"]

I always thought I was someone who valued quality over quantity. But I've never been one to rewatch movies, not even my favorites.

With so many art forms to experience, I've never really identified with memorizing a song or revisiting a movie.

But here, for the first time, I needed to do so. I learned to view films more objectively, as I knew I would eventually have to do in a professional context. But I even think I'm starting to actually enjoy it. Am I also becoming someone who revisits films?

[VALENTINA]

“Quanto tempo é o suficiente para sentir uma cultura, não só enquanto turista? O que é demasiado rápido para uma relação?”

["How long is long enough to experience a culture, not just as a tourist? What is too fast for a relationship?"]

We met on May 18. When I already had filled my notebook with things I couldn't forget for my return, I met you.

Some things are memorable, not because they are revolutionary, but because they are familiar. But you are a familiar feeling that I still don't know.

"You dream in a language I can't understand", said Arthur, in *Past Lives* (2023). I haven't shown you this movie yet, but it's on our list.

But I showed you *Before Sunrise* on June 16, without planning or realizing the significance of the day, which coincided with the day Celine and Jesse first met. I don't need to explain. I think you're starting to understand how much these coincidences mean to me.

My favorite movie in the *Before* trilogy is the first one, Alberto's is the second. You've only seen the first one, but which one will be yours? I won't lie, I hope it's the first one too. Maybe I naively believe that for two people to be together, the ideal would be for them to feel the same way about life, right? But isn't it more advantageous for two people to have different favorite movies? Who value, deal with, and demonstrate different ways of thinking and feeling, to find a balance together?

I've always thought that we can learn a lot about a person through their favorite movies. How much they believe in love or how much they want to escape reality. How much comfort they find in the abstract or how much they value rationality.

Are we what we attract? Or is it really opposites that attract? I admire who you are, so deep down I hope it's the first option.

I was still telling you what brought me to Madrid and you were already helping me say goodbye to something you didn't even know, but you tried to understand. You became part of a dream I didn't want to end.

[IMMINENT RETURN]

“Encontrei pessoas ao acaso e, ao ir embora, pensava “nunca mais vou ver estas pessoas com quem passei um bom par de horas a rir”.

["I met people by chance and, when I left, I thought, “I'll never see these people again, with whom I spent a couple of hours laughing together.”]

I see progress in myself here.

I never had the need or even the curiosity to live abroad, but now it's all I can think (about) and imagine. I'm not ready to return to Portugal, but I wasn't ready to leave either. Maybe it's just a matter of trusting, even if I can't control it.

I met someone who would be living on the road for another month, and when I asked her if goodbyes got easier, she replied, “No. I'm more used to it, but I constantly have to remind myself that it's not goodbye.”

What narrative structure does this film have? Classic three acts but with an open ending?

I'm afraid I'll forget over time. Even to write about this, I relied heavily on what I had already written while I was there. It's already starting to seem so distant... I create in the hope of not forgetting. Of remembering.

It doesn't matter where you are. It matters who you're with. People make a place what it is. "The steady heart of Past Lives is not how painful it is to say goodbye to others, but how painful it is to say goodbye to ourselves."

But wherever I go, I'll miss it. Maybe that also says a lot about the people I haven't met yet.

Of course *ter saudades*, being Portuguese means *ter saudades*, as Alba rightly told me.

Would this experience have been the same without these people? Definitely not. I loved Madrid and I owe that to you.

A year ago, I was making a film about the need to leave, and now I'm making a film about wanting to stay, but we constantly want to leave and stay, don't we? I still don't get paradoxes, but I think it's good to want to leave and stay. I intend to return to Madrid, and maybe these last goodbyes will only be temporary. Or **a continuous goodbye**.

***128 dias, +3000h, 52 people, 6 cities, 4 movie theaters, 37 restaurants, 535 new songs,
22 cafés, 12 bars, 45 movies, 9 lighters***

Abby, Alberto, Alejandra, Alba, Amélia, Andrea 1, Andrea 2, Antonella, Bea 1, Bea 2, Blondie instructor, Camila, Carolina, David, Diana, Elsie, Emanuele, Filippo, Félix, Gabriela, Iris, Iván, Jabi, Juan Carlos, Juanje, Josef, Juju, Laura, María 1, María 2, Marika, Martina, Meredith, Meta, Miguel, Natálie, Nat's brother, Nicole, Petr, Filipa, Police driver, Samuel, Salla, Sara 1, Sara 2, Lady with the dog, Stan, Stephania, Tereza, Valentina, Victoria

from

Argentina, Canada, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Finland, Germany,
Hungary, Italy, Kenya, Peru, Portugal, Spain