Documentary cinema operates in the real by framing it and, therefore, also engages with what remains beyond the frame. This endows documentary films with a particular agency in the real and issues them with a related ethical prerogative. Framing comes with the double bond of capturing and expressing, which locates documentary agency in capturing the world in its becoming and expressing it as a sensation of the real’s continuous unfolding. When a documentary intervenes in the real as process, it highlights that the lives and events depicted in its frames continue beyond the film. The ethical stakes in working with the vibrant and expressive nature of the real – its perpetual becoming – have to do with harnessing process into a sensation that the world could be different.

The three variations of documentary capacities mapped in this book – imagination, fabulation, and affection – offer singular responses to documentary ethics. Imagination tallies with Two Uncles and The Last Bolshevik seeking to actualize the lives of a disappeared uncle and a deceased filmmaker in documentary cinema. These films create possible lives in the face of loss. Fabulation confronts clear-cut distinctions between the normal and the abnormal, and thus resists the categorization of the subjects in Grey Gardens and Tanyusha and the 7 Devils by their respective communities. Finally, everything and nothing, From the East, and Trans-Siberia experiment with habitual ways of perceiving and thinking about particular political situations and attune the viewer to the situations on an affective level.

What is of primary importance in all of these cases is that ethics intertwines with creating. Possible lives, resistance, and affective experiences are not preformed content for the documentaries to convey, but substance that the films create and release into the real. This movement is channeled through the capturing work of the frame and the expressions it lets out. The aesthetics of the frame, then, promotes ethics as an act that sustains the potential of becoming in the real.9 Ethics pertains to the specificities of framing and the expressions created with the aim of affirming the potential of becoming in individual bodies and actual forms. This is also an ethics that works alongside the individual responsibilities a filmmaker has toward their subjects and the audience. The ethics of sustainability is an impersonal ethics that works to affirm the stretch of becoming that traverses individual
bodies and actual things, historical events and social systems, ecological processes and political economies alike.

Hence, ethics is not a moral perspective, but integrally woven into analyzing the composition of actuality captured in documentary frames and proposing alternative lines of life in the face of deadlocked or unlivable circumstances. Ethics includes the evaluation of the situation at hand and a proposal for its rearrangement with the available means.2 This does not necessarily entail a happier life or a better future for the filmed subjects, but it does purport visions of how the framed lives could be lived differently. In *Grey Gardens*, the collaborative style of filmmaking facilitates the Beales’ self-expressions and offers Little Edie and Big Edie a stage to present themselves on their own terms. The documentary challenges the view of the two women as somehow inferior or incapable and instead affirms their quirkiness with song and dance. In *Tanyusha and the 7 Devils*, ethical stakes are even more critical as the girl at the center of the film is for the most part silent. In this case, the filmmaker could not intervene in the situation in any way, but the resulting documentary is capable of undoing the categorical claims that posit Tanyusha with the devils. In both documentaries, framing amounts to evaluating the norms posed on the filmed subjects and breaking through them in the expression of the film. From an ethical point of view, documentary fabulation falsifies harmful categories and thus proposes the beginnings of more affirmative settings.

The ethics of imagination pertains to fashioning life in the face of death. In *Two Uncles* and *The Last Bolshevik* this coincides with tending to the referential limits of archival documents and expressing the more-than-referential in them. In *Two Uncles*, the framing of a photograph and a magazine cover enables the narrator to remember an uncle she never had a chance to meet. In *The Last Bolshevik*, various modalities of fictional and documentary footage are used to forge the memory of the late Soviet filmmaker Alexander Medvedkin. The differences in image types are overcome with an emphasis on what is immanently available in them. In both documentaries, first person narrators occupy positions of remembering with the archival documents, and within these dispositions the referential is foregone in favor of what is incipient in the images. Here, ethics intertwines with the epistemological prerogative of cracking open the self-evident level of visibilities and statements in order to re-arrange what can be seen and said at a given moment in time.3 In the two documentaries, this enables imagining emergent lives when individual lives have waned.

The testimonial video *everything and nothing* excavates the characteristic ways of discussing the Lebanese resistance movement and viewing
one of its heroes. The interview that forms the foundation of the video contains disorienting moments of rupture in which Soha Bechara and the artist behind the camera step out of their respective roles. These moments connect the viewer to the emergent side of the resistance fighter. *From the East* and *Trans-Siberia* focus on Eastern Europe after the demise of the Soviet Union. The former captures change as it unfolds and the latter deals with the paralyzing aftereffects of the new situation. *From the East* uses still frames and lateral tracking shots to capture the indeterminate state of the East, and *Trans-Siberia* attends to the personal experiences of two gulag prisoners to show the vast unknown that still veils political debates about the Siberian prison system. In all three documentaries, explicit political argumentation is replaced by an interest in the underexposed sides of the resistance movement, the indeterminate in changing political systems, and the unthought that remains in political discourse. The ethics of affection in these cases has to do with challenging habitual perceptions and modes of thinking.

The documentary films discussed in this book deal with a variety of “crisis situations” to which they give distinct responses. As I have shown, they do not promise salvation to desolate circumstances, but instead affirm the potential of becoming in the situations they deal with. Instead of promising a different world, the documentaries engage with the limits that need to be transgressed for differentiation to take place in this world. Here, the ethical prerogative translates into excavating the more-than-referential in archival documents, into falsifying oppressive norms, and into challenging habitual perceptions.

As documentary films tend to the limits of the referential, the discursive, and the perceptual, they express the ruptures and breakpoints where transformations can begin. This is a capacity available for all documentaries, although it is not enacted universally. However, more often than has thus far been admitted, documentaries do explore the limits of the world in ways that affirm the potential in becoming and inaugurate the first steps towards realities to come. These realities, it has to be remembered, are not visions of a different world, but propositions of how the world we live in could be arranged differently.