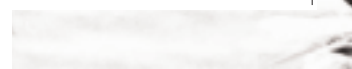
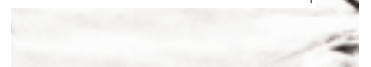


INCARNATIONS

by Janieta Eyre









DIARY DEAREST

by Tom Chomont

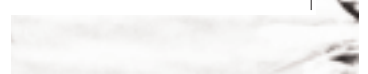
Diary is an integral aspect of most filmmaking because, unlike other forms of art, the filmic image is rendered from a recorded likeness, however altered or unrecognizable it may become. The diary aspect may or may not be apparent to viewers, but there is an indelible relation between the film and the maker. With the camera prosthesis, each act of seeing requires a frame, which necessarily excludes more than it embraces. These rectangles of intention, these dividing lines between the visible and invisible world, are also a part of each maker's personality, a signature of seeing.

JUNE 27, 1992

There is a place from which everything emanates, that is all light and all sound in harmony, and this light is shaped to our own individual experience, projected onto worldly matters. Pure light and sound is the beginning and the end, but short of that are the infinite heavens and hells that we make of it. (Is all action reaction?)

This preceding paragraph is based on the memory of a reverie experienced while riding the Enterprise at Coney Island. The open cart is connected to a carousel and spins along the ground; then the carousel tips and the cart hurls up to the sky, then back down to the earth in a continuing circle. In my mind, this action describes the space between that very inner private chamber and the earthly domain, the vertiginous path between heaven and earth taking place at every moment. For heaven can just as well be hell. I sense the internal space of my mother, Peter, all those I have known and who have known me, separated forever as individuals by the borders of our limited identity. I know the cart will return to earth, but I will disembark into a world plainly shaded by my own private approach.

Quite suddenly, after not seeing much of each other, and my being quite unconsolably sad, Clark and I decided to live together. Much uncertainty, unspe-



cific directions, undefined situation. Currently unspeakably happy.

My initial impulse to film was intimately bound to creating souvenirs of moments, people, places, objects, feelings, enactments and the like. This was motivated by the desperate realization, already at the age of five, that all things were subtly but surely changing and that no moment could be re-experienced. This was followed by the more disturbing realization, around age ten, that even the most vivid memory grew dimmer and less detailed, and that subtle but unstoppable changes in who “I” was made it impossible to go on recapturing the past, even with the literal evidence of a photographic likeness to preserve it. But I was simultaneously becoming aware of the power to render something transmutable. Each moment, as it is lived, dies instantly, or with the trailing blaze of a shooting star, but art held out the possibility that something from the past could be propelled forward by an alteration of form.

NOVEMBER 28, 1995

The day before Thanksgiving, Clark and I went to an anniversary party at an S/M bar. I had a design drawn on my chest after Clark put a dog collar on me. Then my head was shaved (and my pubic hair) by a barber dressed in leather chaps with a black rubber jock. At the party we ran into a friend who was in the “adult video” I did in 1991 (just sold a re-edited, harder version to a distributor). A friend of his said, “Hello,” and without another word began to pinch him by the nipples, bringing him to his knees, at which point Clark and I grabbed his arms and legs, stretched him over another man’s knees, pulled down his pants and slapped and strapped his ass. All four of us took turns, and then Clark got some ice cubes from the bar and cooled down his butt before shoving the ice in. The day after Thanksgiving, this man came over for a take-out dinner to talk about shooting another video at his house in West Virginia ...

Image gathering always has a sentimental aspect for me, though the final form of a work requires a merciless rending of the material. Even my most apparently confessional and/or anecdotal works, such as *Phases of the Moon* (1968), *Oblivion* (1969), *Razor Head* (1984) or *The Dog Diary* (1996), are far from literal records.

“While I was making *Morpheus in Hell* (1967), I was working as a typist in an office. I began to feel like a machine, and developed mechanical rhythm periods in my sleep that were like dreams; then eventually, even when I was awake, I would sometimes see landscapes and faces in front of me when I closed my eyes. We would be talked into working until two or three in the morning one night a week when a deadline came due. Once, I came home and stood in front of the mirror, talking to myself, saying things I didn’t even know. The odd thing was that

I experienced both talking and listening to the face in the mirror. Sometimes I would look at the face and see the lips moving and hear the words coming like they were someone else's. That was the beginning of *Phases of the Moon*, which was shot in the same mirror, and explores the divide in our personalities. But I soon realized that two wasn't enough—it's really millions, because all the faces are us, and we have to split into more than two. We have to keep splitting until we know all of them.

"Back then, I'd lived almost a year near Central Park West and never realized it was a gay cruising area, and then one night I was walking and suddenly noticed men looking at me. My mouth just dropped open. I was aroused! One man approached me and I must have looked petrified. I immediately felt he was a hustler. I was afraid to bring him to my room, but I finally relented. I knew him for over a year on and off; he would disappear and come back, and that's how *Oblivion* began. It was shot on two separate evenings, but had elements of many of our visits. We would sit and talk, he would smoke, and at some point one or both of us would feel aroused. Usually he would take off his shoes when he wanted to have sex; that's in the film, where his hand untying his shoe is blended with a pan of his body on the bed. While this material was highly personal, I was conscious from the beginning that there had to be a formal side. The experiences themselves had broader meanings of identity and role-playing and the face as a mask. I wanted to give the film the feeling of being between dreaming and waking. Much of the imagery had symbolic meanings for me, like the apple and the canopy of lights, which I thought of as the nervous system or the circulatory system.

"There's always a tension for me between seeing someone from the outside—as a body, an object—and seeing the dissolution of identity that usually takes place during sleep. If the dissolution happens when we're awake, it's disturbing; we want to avoid it. But objectifying this man was a tendency in our relationship. At that time, I think he had trouble accepting his sexuality. He said it was easier to accept performing sexual acts for money, but the fact of the matter was, he would sometimes take the money he earned and go buy another prostitute to have sex with him as he wanted it. Twice he asked me to pay him for sex, and I thought, 'This is a very bad precedent, and besides, I can't afford it.' While I resisted, it still appealed to me to ask, 'What will you do for this much?' After many years of trying to follow what I was taught—not to do certain things sexually—I had a lot of very intense fantasies. During this time I began to act out my fantasies and, in doing so, the experiences became more important than the fantasies. This all became part of the film."¹

Approximately thirty images comprise *Oblivion*. Most obsessively repeat themselves. Although the images appear

1. From an interview with Tom Chomont in *A Critical Cinema*, by Scott MacDonald.

to be solarized, the film was actually contact printed, combining high-contrast black-and-white negative with a colour positive of the same image. The high contrast accounts for the tendency of shots to flood. Images in the film swell and contrast, often disappearing into pure colour ... *Oblivion* employs extremely rapid cutting. Some of the images last as briefly as two frames. The fact that we see so few frames, that a shot is representationally ambiguous, or shown upside down and sideways, often causes the viewer to project his/her own fantasies ... When Jean Genet was asked to what end he was directing his life, he responded, "To oblivion." (Murphy 122)



stills: *dog diary* by Tom Chomont

JULY 23, 1996

July 4th weekend turned out to be a crisis point in my relationship with Dog. I had pushed Dog into a three-way relation with Clark and me, and he began to feel that he was in the middle of our relationship. Just at that point he was obliged to go to Washington to help an ex-lover pack and move to New Jersey. I became insecure, although he assured me it was just an old personal debt with very bad timing. Finally, I realized he wanted to feel I was taking a decisive role and wanted him as my Dog. And I did! He had to go to California again this week for more training. Clark thinks he may be a stray Dog; I'm inclined to feel he is a faithful Dog. I've done unsafe things with both Clark and Dog. Keep both informed what is going on. But, does Dog keep me informed? The insatiable appetite for Dog is on hold, I probably needed the rest. Miss him, trust him. We had a great time before he left.

The film diary questions the relation between reality and illusion in art. For instance, some viewers understand *The Dog Diary* (1996) as literal documentation. But while it is based on video material gathered during several days over a six-week period, the original recordings run over five hours, and the finished tape is just twenty-two minutes. Alongside montage and several video "effects," the film also features superimposed sounds and pictures. In its finished version, it has a closer approximation to memory than the original footage. The largely erotic relationship with Dog was based on sexual fantasy, and the tape works to convert some of these moments into reflections on identity, power and representation.

In the case of *Razor Head* (1983), my brother had provided two rolls of film, asking me to record a private, erotic, shaving ritual which would last two days. My brother had shaved many men and taken polaroids of them, and he later produced his own S/M tapes for an underground market, but this was the first time we had worked together. For my film, I used an effect produced by lighting the

colour images with strong shadowing and sometimes fading or moving the light. This comprised the A roll and was combined with a high-contrast print of the same images on the B roll. Printed together, these two rolls show the colour image etched into or evaporating into the white light of the screen. Although I had originally used the effect to approximate the use of blank paper as part of the composition in drawing, by this time I had come to think of it as expressing the transient and spirit-manifesting aspect of material form.

OCTOBER 5, 1999

Dear Mike,

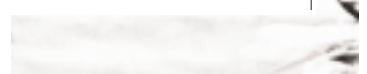
Hoped I would hear from you but then, I said I would call if you didn't, so I probably will. You sounded a little tired and said you had been "up and down," so I worry that you've had fluctuating health. You had written about starting pentamidine treatments and I remember Ken (who had them from early on after his diagnosis) told me that the infusion was unpleasant and often followed by nausea. He did say there was less of a reaction after the first month. My own nausea-producing medicine (sinemet) has been altered to a time-release prescription, which is less irritating because not as much enters my system at one time. However, it is not always 100 per cent effective until the next dose.

I'm less in touch with it at present, but I remember how in connection with the light I had that near-death experience. You know, the one of going into the light and presences being there on the way. All sound and light were there as I drifted into it. Fragments of voices and sounds and people were present, and if I let go and passed into it, the light and sound would gather into a single sound like a heavenly choir. I felt some apprehension, because entering fully into it seemed like dying or leaving the world forever. Then just at the last, concern for someone I knew pulled me back and I wondered if it were possible to go into the light and still be in the world.

It began like a dim star in the very centre of the darkness. I had seen it many times while meditating. Sometimes it was blue or red or outlined by haloes of changing colour, and sometimes it took forms that I came to feel were projections of my mind. When I began drifting fully into it, the forms would pass away. It seemed like the sounds and voices created there were the result of the mind's attachment to worldly things. This primal light and sound felt like home; it was the place my personality drew from to create experience. Some would say that this feeling is the last stimulation of the phosphenes (that are credited with stimulating dreams) as the brain shuts down in death and that the ringing sound is similarly a last vestige of hearing when outside stimuli are shutting off. I don't know.

I also talked to my brother about this when I arrived at the hospital the day he died. He was unconscious and in intensive care on a respirator. The hospital staff said he had reached the point where they suspended the rules about only one person at a time visiting, and they encouraged us to talk to him because they said patients seemed to hear although they might not respond, and that voices of loved ones sometimes brought them back when nothing could be done medically. I told him many things, but then began to remind him of our talks about the light. I asked him if he could see the light and told him he could go into it. I told him he could swim back to the shore where I was with Howard and Andy and Andy's friend Peter (who came to show Ken his new, green-dyed mohawk haircut). I told him I wanted to show him some old photographs from when we were children, but I told him that if he felt too tired to swim back he could let himself drift into the light. I stroked his arm while I spoke. His pulse raised once while I was stroking his arm. But later I was told that he had been administered a stimulant to start his pulse up again, and that when it only perked momentarily, the doctors knew he was probably going to slip away.

Everything in this world is constantly changing. Eventually everything is gone or not what it



was. Our attachment to it causes pain and joy, satisfaction and frustration. The light and the sound have a feeling of eternity but they may just be the dot on the TV screen when it's turned off, fading away. Practising at non-attachment is a preparation to deal with the gradual loss of everything. I write this as one who cried and wailed with grief at the death of my cat Spider. I am writing these thoughts because they relate to that moment in my kitchen when we speak, and what happens to us. Hope to talk with you soon and that you're feeling a bit better.

All my love,

Tom

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BLIND SPOTS

by Chris Kennedy

I've been putting off making films for a while. No one wants to do mediocre work, less so an emerging artist. The missteps of inexperience may bring wisdom, but they still sting with pain and embarrassment. The effort it takes to move beyond the mediocre to the sublime requires patience—a demand which, added to the fear of failure, often makes it hard to create at all.

As a young image-maker, my sense of the art continues to develop. I still have images formed by textbooks rather than the flickering light against a white screen. One of these pictures is from the ending of a Jonas Mekas film. He and a few friends had just been turned away from a prestigious film seminar and wound up on a hill overlooking a beach. Instead of being disenchanted, they spent the afternoon cavorting with their Bolexes, passionately engaged with their new form. The film ends at this point, captioned with Mekas's final title card, declaring his cohorts "the monks of the cinema." This title denotes a spiritual and sensual aspect of this personal form of filmmaking, a form that P. Adams Sitney, who danced that afternoon, would later call "visionary cinema."

This term captures the freedom and beauty of Phil Hoffman's best work. His investigations of personal history, tragedy and the mythos of filmmaking have shown that he knows something about being a monk. His cinema gave us the image of the cobblestones floating by in *Kitchener-Berlin*—in one transcendent sweep of the steadicam, past and present were joined with the mysterious. The power of this image endures, despite the many films I've been absorbing recently. Instead of trying to create—instead of facing the keyboard and then the camera—I've found it easier to watch. I've spent countless hours at festivals, where easy access has permitted me to gorge on the medium. Gluttony has its drawbacks.

I find myself in the second stage of discovery, where the initial excitement for the art fades into impatience. Outside the cocoon of college, where only the canon is kept, there are discoveries and the inevitable disappointments. Too many disappointments. Initiates like myself are still learning sight, but even the chosen have fallow periods. Maya Deren couldn't finish *Divine Horseman*. Bruce Baillie gave



still: *Kitchener-Berlin*.



us the awful ending to *Quick Billy*. Stan Brakhage shows us everything he does. How do visionaries lose their way? It is painful to witness, especially when it reminds you of your own failures.

Philip Hoffman, too, has suffered through bad periods. None of his recent films have matched the power of *O, Zoo!*, *Kitchener-Berlin* or *passing through/torn formations*. *Sweep* belabours Hoffman's favourite themes: the relationship between family and history is rehashed, intruded upon by graceless self-reflexivity. *Technilogic Ordering*, uncharacteristically impatient, loses an important political moment to an enervating structural conceit.

When the filmmaker comes out of the cloister, bearing their latest, there is great expectation, though just a moment lies between a masterpiece and an opaque, uninteresting work. Moments of truth require an inspired commitment to process—the willingness of artists to explore themselves is as important as the images they make.

I once read a Marxist who called films “allegories” of their production. The view was materialist, reading economics back into every image. I think there is also a spiritual side to this allegory, where the process of making becomes evident. The best experimental films show their scars. The bandages are splicing tape.

A life of vision includes the missteps—when faced honestly. It includes the good films with the bad, the prolific periods with hibernation. The worst reveals how stunning the majestic is. Asking “Why do great filmmakers make bad work?” is like asking “Why do bad things happen to good people?” No answer.

My grandfather, the first artist I knew, would have little patience for all this. “You paint because you like to paint. It’s what you do. If the painting fails, then learn from it and start again.” I had a camera trained on him when he said this, trying to memorize his words, wishing wisdom would transfer to youth.

He knew that you have to wrestle with the angel—muddy your hands, do bad work to cleanse your soul. You have to work at intuition, gift giving, and chance.

The true gift to the audience comes when an artist steps back. The image of the cobblestones considerably condensed the weight of Philip Hoffman’s experience. The myth of personal filmmaking insists that there is no need for rigour when the image comes from the soul. But the introspective quality that can make an image so resonant can also render it untouchable, too dear to cut. How to be cowed neither by the blank page nor by an overload of experience? Whether it faces drought or deluge, real vision encounters its subject straight on.

As I watch for inspiration, I am beginning to recognize the author’s second pass, when the experience of shooting is reshaped. I still see Mekas frolicking on the hill, but I also see the time he took to reflect upon and craft his film. His gift was not just the moment when the camera rolled, but when he realized, “On that day we were monks.”

Soul searching is not separate from filmmaking; a part of you is always on the line. But in the end you create and, with luck, you’re back on the hill, with a Bolex in the afternoon light.



still: *Faultlines*
by Chris Kennedy.

THEORY IS SEXY

by Roy Mitchell



still: *Christian Porn* by Roy Mitchell.

I once had a professor who taught a course on postmodern film. He kept going on about some pre-cultural relationship that existed between a mother and child. I would go have a coffee and wait until that evening's film was screened. On the nights where the film was unbearable, I'd say I forgot my glasses and leave early. He wanted us to be experimental and postmodern in the final essay, so I was. I played with the text fonts and line spacing on my computer, incorporated big gaps and shuffled the page order. I got a B+, quit university and never went back.

Experimental film is just like that class. It takes a keen eye to discover if someone is serious about being serious, or just playing with whatever is the equivalent to text fonts in film.

Experimental film can be so damn earnest. It is deep. It is made by people who like to think a lot. They usually have degrees and like to wear black.

Oh, I know you want to disagree. You can name oodles of laugh-riot experimental films, right? But I am not writing about the exceptions. I am here to talk about the last time you sat in a semi-renovated, drafty, exposed, brick-and-wire space on cold, metal chairs and watched "work." Chances are you left the place wondering if you understood what you had just seen.

Experimental film does not require a beginning, middle or end, but the longer the work, the more important the ending. The best experimental work is short. The end is what we are all waiting for. Then, as the lights go up, you can turn to your companion and say, "NOT BAD." Do not expect to share much beyond that, because any more discussion could ruin the impact/engagement/connection with the work. You can quote theorists, because believe it or not, that scratchy piece of celluloid is based in theory. Whoever said the brain was the sexiest organ must have been an experimental filmmaker, curator and/or writer. Or trying to sleep with one.

But everyone knows what is sexy. Money is sexy, and film is full of it. In my limited research into funny experimental film, I have found that the more serious the film, the more money the maker comes from. It takes money to wear a good

black. After years at university studying theory, the kids do not want people saying they are spending mommy and daddy's money on FUN. No, they want to be taken seriously. As they get older, they sell out to Hollywood, use more narrative, get funnier or become web-page designers.

Whenever someone mentions experimental film, I get nervous. I drift off into a vision of the experimental film experience, as I want it to be. My experimental cinema would have no rows of uncomfortable seats, just bean-bag chairs scattered around the room. These would provide an audible indicator of just how boring the work is. Fidgeting equals bad, doesn't it? While viewing, people could walk around, stretch, get a drink and talk. And there would be a cappuccino machine in the back. It would keep the audience awake with its hissing and caffeine. In my experimental cinema no film would be processed in negative, and no voice-overs would be delivered in whispered tones. There would be more footage of figure skating and very small people surrounded by very large landscapes. After the short films had screened, people would be honest and astonishingly provocative in their analysis of the work. I would charm the pants off of some filmmaker, curator, and/or writer. We would sleep together. Because theory really does turn me on.



DESTROYING ANGEL

by Robert Lee

Where our language suggests a body and there is none: there we should like to say is a spirit.

Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

Learning to read was like climbing for some. Each word, a step in the direction away from an unwanted ending. It felt like a progress upwards, but reading was an inevitable descent. Every word led to the edge of the page and then down.

He pretended to be an ESL student to help the instructor meet the enrollment quota for a class that would otherwise be canceled.

Drawing cartoon daggers on a yellow-lined notepad.

The sounds of well-meaning language teachers, the tired students, the many unison drills out loud, heard through the walls.

They seemed happier when speaking the language they would never master, events from the past forgotten without the words to describe them.

Sometimes all inessential verbs left out, as if any extra efforts were too much.

He listened to someone pronounce the silent letters, who used the same word eleven times. He waited for it again.

They sat and thought before they replied, sometimes half a minute or more would pass before they opened their mouths to deliver the economical answers.

When asked to use a particular word, a student said he had “melancholic” features, then paused to indicate a search for a euphemism. His features not found in the word.

He did not want to be the subject of the sentence.

Unable to mourn the lost object, the melancholic internalized the loss. He turned the lost object into a loss within himself, felt he was missing something of himself.

The man seated beside him said, I write too, in my journal, you would like to read it sometime and see all the bad things that have happened to me.

The “I thinks” and “maybes” stricken out of his speech, so that now the man spoke with the blunt authority of someone among equals.

It was the first time he had heard him speak, but it always seemed that way, whenever anyone said anything.

Speaking quickly as if to finish the sentences before they became afraid.

They did not like him in the second grade because he knew how to spell every word in the spelling bee.

They beat him up without explanation, possibly because he asked for none.

His business to be accomplished behind a closed door, with all evidence removed at the end and no reference to them afterwards.

After class, the instructor was talking in an assured, non-stop voice to one student while others waited outside his office or sat on the stairs nearby.

He wasn't interested in meeting people, but knew it would be impossible to skip steps or find a shorter way.

They stared at him and noted his details and then their own.

The way you looked for something hidden in a kitchen drawer, behind the worn-out can opener, the toothpick dispenser, the instruction manual for a food processor.

The instructor took him to a place built by people who had nothing to lose by being overheard. They were about to close.

A party of drunken office workers lingering at the largest table.

Co-workers who often discussed each other, but seldom thought about each other when they were alone.

Loud-talking boyfriends were explaining and explaining. They did not

need to convince him of anything, but they tried.

They offered detailed accounts of their workout routines.

A bad suit and haircut can travel faster and with more precision than all the best intentions.

Their self-involvement spared him from having to comment.

They kept talking like there would always be room for whatever they had to say.

An old waiter refilled his water glass, exhibiting the utmost concentration, holding it critically to eye level.

Everything the waiter did somehow had the quality of an accusation.

Delivering a whole speech with his face: You are going to be sorry and I look forward to the apology.

The kind who asked a lot of questions, then peered into your eyes as if he expected you were lying. What it might be like to be interrogated, each word chosen could be false.

He watched advertisements on the overhead television for wonderful cars with almost no money down.

Then menacing men entered a beauty salon, drew the shades and flipped the window's sign over so its OPEN side faced inside.

The painful bugles of bus brakes from the stop just outside.

A forehead glowing with sunburn and three beers blocked his view and made it easy to focus in one direction.

The rest were not simply closed books, but closed books that he had no interest in reading.

The owner had skinny legs and one of those wide, flat bodies with a little belly. If he lied down flat, he'd be a pancake.

He thought about how the heavy books in his room had been leaning far over to one side and sprawling open for so long that their covers were warped out of shape.

How he had begun to leave out the letters of certain words and had to read the words over again carefully, adding the missing letters and afterward printing some words a second time above the illegible script.

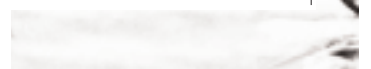
The words were plainly not his, anyone could see that someone had typed them and then he squeezed things in here and there.

The sort of words that he used himself all the time but didn't care to see written down.

The floor had been mopped and would never dry.



still: *Destroying Angel*.





PHILIP HOFFMAN'S CAMERA LUCIDA

by Brenda Longfellow

For years, Hoffman has been introducing his work with an apocryphal story about how, at the tender age of fourteen, as the designated documentarist of family life, he was asked to photograph his dead grandfather in his coffin. It was an indelible experience for the young man—his first dead body, his first photo assignment. So traumatic was the experience, in fact, that he put the film in a freezer and could only develop it years later. This story is recreated in Hoffman's latest work, *What these ashes wanted* (2001), and whether or not this event represented a primal scene in the gestation of Hoffman the filmmaker, what is apparent in the body of films he has produced over the last twenty years is a profound meditation on the relation between death and the image, on the distinction between the sensual, phenomenal world and the moment of time frozen in the flatness of a mortuary image.

In *Camera Lucida/Reflections on Photography*, a book that serves so resonantly in reading Hoffman's work, Roland Barthes argues that photography has a historical relation with the "crisis of death" which he sees evolving in the second half of the nineteenth century. Instead of trying to locate photography "in its social and economic context," he argues:

... we should also inquire as to the anthropological place of Death and of the new image. For Death must be somewhere in a society; if it is no longer (or less intensely) in religion, it must be elsewhere; perhaps in this image which produces Death while trying to preserve life. Contemporary with the withdrawal of rites, Photography may correspond to the intrusion, in our modern society, of an asymbolic Death, outside of religion, outside of ritual, a kind of abrupt dive into literal Death. Life / Death: the paradigm is reduced to a simple click, the one separating the initial pose from the final point. (92)

Even with the incredible proliferation of image culture, the representation of



still: *What these ashes wanted*.

1. Perhaps only the AIDS crisis and the politics of representation it has generated has forced images of death and the dying body again into public consciousness.

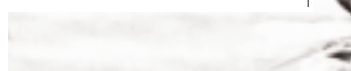
death, actual death, as opposed to the plethora of fictional deaths that fill popular culture, remains, as Amos Vogel puts it, “the one last taboo in cinema” (qtd. in Sobchack, 283). If natural death in previous centuries was integrated into the life of the community and culturally naturalized through ritual and religion, the increasing medicalization and technologization of death in the West removes the experience from everyday life and places it within impersonal legal and medical institutions. In these new contexts, death remains antiseptically invisible and shrouded in a veil of prudery.¹ Outside of the consistently diminishing power of official religion, the personal, emotional and philosophical content of death has barely begun to be addressed.

Vivian Sobchack has argued that the taboo of representing death in our culture is powerfully connected to “the mysterious and often frightening semiosis of the body” (286). Death, in this instance, represents one of those primal threshold states, marking the distinction between being and non-being, the transformation of human matter from one state into another. The act of photographing a corpse is experienced as trauma precisely because the corpse confounds these distinctions. “The dreadfulness of the corpse,” as William F. May notes in *The Sacral Power of Death in Contemporary Experience*, “lies in its claim to be the body of the person, while it is wholly unrevealing of the person. What was once so expressive of the human soul has suddenly become a mask” (qtd. in Sobchack, 288).

A corpse conveys the shocking transformation of the subject into a brute objecthood, devoid of consciousness, devoid of intentionality, devoid of what May refers to as “the revelatory power of the body.” For the young Phil, what I believe was traumatic about photographing his grandfather’s corpse was not only the cruelty of the silent and still body of a loved one but the insight the experience yielded—that photography, as a technology of reproduction, is inherently complicit in the transformation of subject into object. Every photograph, Barthes writes, is a reminder of Death because every photograph opens up that irreparable gap between the intentionality and sensuality of the lived body and the “flatness,” as he puts it, of the photographed body. Every photograph confronts us with the real absence of the loved one and with the irreversibility of time’s relentless progression. Every photograph is tinged with melancholy, the loss that is ontologically inscribed in its very technology.

On the Pond (1978), Hoffman’s first film, is paradigmatic of the importance of this insight in his work. This is certainly the film where the role of the photograph as an organizer of memory and index of an irretrievable past is the most prominent. The central structuring element in the film is a series of black-and-white family photographs of Phil, his parents and three sisters. The photos are all related to winter recreation, mainly ice skating and playing hockey at a pond in front of the family cottage. The sound is entirely non-synchronous. Mapped onto

still: *passing through/torn formations.*



this division between sound and image, moreover, is the irreparable gap between the past of the images and the present of the auditory track which is filled with the family's shrieks of recognition, delight and unabashed nostalgia. At one point, Phil's sister laments "I want to go back," and it is precisely this desire and its ontological impossibility that structures the emotional content of the film. The voice of the filmmaker, however, is rarely heard in the family chorus although he implicates himself in the general family nostalgia through a visual recreation featuring a young boy playing hockey on a pond. In this repeated image of the boy, Hoffman seems to take up that desire articulated by his sister, dissolving the veil between past and present through an act of imagination and filmmaking that revivifies a moment from the past. But it is a false and impossible note, a fantasy of a return to boyhood only made possible through the intercession of a fictional signifier that is as removed from present reality as the archive of family photos.

As other writers in this collection are providing detailed readings of Philip's middle works, I want to linger on only the opening images of *passing through/torn formations* (1988) as an additional indication of the thematic that I see running through all his work. *passing through/torn formations* opens in silence as a hand-held camera continually pans over the face of Babji, Phil's maternal grandmother, who lies dying in an institutional setting, a hospice or hospital with a cool institutional veneer that has been somewhat humanized by the family photos, mementoes and cards pinned to the wall by her bed. Phil's mother is feeding Babji, whose face, without her false teeth, is ravaged and skeletal. The camera lingers over the protruding veins in Babji's thin arms, her stiffened hands, her gaunt cheeks, her eyes black with pain. Her "creatureliness," as Sobchack puts it, is foregrounded by the palpable fragility and vulnerability of her all too human body. Here again, Hoffman finds himself in a room recording a death. The trauma, however, is acted out by the persistence of movement, by the repetitions of the camera's pan refusing to rest in a final composition, continually moving toward the curtain on the window as if to escape the claustrophobia of a room of the dying and of death. The eerie silence confounds the sequence's location in a real time and sends it, reeling, into the future—an image "catastrophe" in which the knowledge of certain death is already vested in the present/past of the image (Barthes, 96).

In *Camera Lucida*, while Barthes claims that the cinematic image (as opposed to the still photographic image) avoids this sense of catastrophe through the continual unfolding of one off-screen space into another, it is clear that he is referring to the shot/reverse shot grammar of classical cinema and not to any particular ontology of the moving image. Indeed, in an essay that might in some respects be seen as the inspiration for Barthes' insights in *Camera Lucida*, André Bazin argued for the inextricable connection between photography and cinema

precisely through their mutual capacity to “embalm time” against the certainty of death (1967). Bazin erases the traditional difference between cinematic and photographic relations to time through a more profound consideration of how both media are produced (through the photo-chemical action of light on film) as traces of the real.

A crucial distinction needs to be made, however, between fictional and documentary signifiers in film and photography. Vivian Sobchack argues that this difference inheres not so much in the property of an image as in the phenomenal experience of a spectator. As spectators, we have an entirely different relationship to the representation of bodies that we believe share the same world as we do. Unlike the fictional signifier of death or of bodily destruction which can be figured solely for entertainment value, the indexical nature of the body image represented in documentary (and in experimental documentary) calls forth an ethical space, according to Sobchack, “the visible representation or sign of the viewer’s subjective, lived and moral relationship with the viewed” (292).

This is why, for me, the image of Phil’s mother feeding Babji is so moving. It calls forth a flood of memories of feeding my own parents on their deathbeds. And while using all of the experimental cinematic codes that defy realism—repetition, overprocessed stock, silence, etc., the sequence, nonetheless, conveys the past/presence of an actual lived body, one that solicits our profound empathy.

If the body in the opening sequence anchors the film in a relationship to the real and to the acknowledgement of impending death, the remainder of the film proposes memory, storytelling and retracing the past as defences against that inevitability. As rich and layered as a dream, the film voyages between Poland, the land of Babji and Phil’s mother’s birth, and Kitchener, home of Uncle Wally, the crazy one, the black sheep, the family skeleton. If family history was registered as overly bucolic in *On the Pond, passing through/torn formations* delves into the other side, the dark histories of madness and murder, abandonment and depression, the stories that the public archive of family photos does not tell. Supported by the richly textured pans of stones, crumbling fences and pavements, *passing through* is metaphorically associated with an archaeological dig through history; the result, however, is not a seamless whole artifact but a jagged and disjointed assemblage of multiple shards of stories. Like the dream, these stories are as layered, as the images themselves, one on top of the other to form a palimpsest of memory—memory as palimpsest. No coherent gestalt or linear family history can be forged from these fragments. What is left to the filmmaker is to bear ethical witness to that impossibility, to continually record and photograph life, hunting and collecting images of everyday life against loss and against forgetting.

Early in Hoffman’s new film we see a long, silent sequence featuring his late partner, Marian McMahon, frolicking in the snow near what would eventually



become their farmhouse in southwestern Ontario. Marian, as she was in life, is full of spirit and mischief—playing to the camera with that goofy quality that Canadians take on in the dead of winter. There is something so fundamentally idiosyncratic about her image: the funny, red earmuffs, the vintage striped scarf, the thickness of the woolly socks pulled over her jeans—those stubborn details that affirm the irreducible uniqueness of the individual, that persist despite the inevitability of human mortality. They are what Barthes defines as the punctum—the accidental, the coincidental, the telling detail which “pricks the spectator.” For Barthes, this is the order of love:

... the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially. In the Photograph, the event is never transcended for the sake of something else: the Photograph always leads the corpus I need back to the body I see; it is the absolute Particular, the sovereign Contingency, matte and somehow stupid, This ... in short, what Lacan calls the *Tuché*, the Occasion, the Encounter, the Real, in its indefatigable expression. The off centred detail ... the materiality of the particular that won't and cannot be named. (40)

If so much of Phil's work involves a meditation on death and the image, that meditation has its most personal articulation of this theme here in *What these ashes wanted*. It is a film explicitly about death, about the particular death of Marian, lover and life partner, and about the emotional fallout experienced by the filmmaker as a result of that loss. It is a film about mourning, about how to mourn, about styles of mourning. In the latter part of the film a question is posed by Marian in voice-over: “What ritual would you invent for death? Would it be public or private?” Hoffman responds “Public.” This film is his public elegy and while intimately and achingly sad, it is also a film about redemption and the redemptive possibilities of that mourning.

In *Mourning and Melancholia* Freud describes mourning as a process “so intense” that it resembles a temporary psychosis. Overcome with grief, unable to reconcile oneself with the painful actuality of loss, the subject clings to the lost love object “through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis ... Each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object is brought up and hypercathected,” but each is met by “the verdict of reality” that the object no longer exists (253). In normal “successful” mourning the narcissistic satisfactions of the ego win out and, though a painful and slow process, libido is eventually withdrawn from the lost object and transferred onto a new one. Proper mourning, according to Freud, is like a narrative—it has a beginning,

middle and end (in that order) and its goal is to restore order, to reintegrate the subject with the world and the reality principle.

But what if the proper route is resisted and the subject refuses to disassociate affective connection with the lost loved one? In one of the most lyrical sequences in his new film, a text by Hoffman dissolves over a photo of a seaside landscape taken by Marian in Spain:

... if I could brighten up this part of the picture, I might illuminate the conditions of her death, the mystery of her life and the reason why, during the instant of Marian's passage, I felt at peace with her leaving, a feeling I no longer hold.

His body still longs for her, he confesses, his mind still imagines her, his soul still aches. The loss remains fully present.

In *Mémoires: For Paul de Man*, Derrida puzzles as well with this issue of "proper" mourning.¹ In Freud's view, successful mourning is equivalent to the assimilation of the object into the self and to an eventual forgetting of the loved one. But does this assimilation, this "eating of the other," Derrida asks, not erradicate the irreducible alterity of the other? This is a profoundly ethical question for Derrida: how to honour the otherness of the other while at the same time acknowledging that within the act of mourning, the other is always an object—"image, idol, or ideal" that one constructs oneself.

For me this is the resonance of the film's second long sequence, which uses video footage of Marian working in her day job as a VON (Victoria Order of Nurses). In the footage, she is the most punky and weird of VON's—butch haircut, smoking cigarettes, speculating philosophically on the issue of touching a stranger's body. At one point, however, she confronts Phil (hiding behind his heavy 3/4-inch camera in the back seat), accusing him of not understanding how difficult it is to be filmed and how much the camera mediates and makes strange their relation. It is an important moment precisely because it honours the otherness of the other. The only sync sequence in the film, it anchors Marian in her lifeworld not simply as an image, idol or memory, but as a sensate and intentional subject in her own right, and one, furthermore, who explicitly defies the naturalness of a camera recording her image.

What one misses in mourning, speculates Derrida, is the response of the other, the voice of the other, the return serve in the dialogue that has structured the couple. Making the film in her absence, with the bits of images and audio fragments left behind, allows Hoffman to reconstitute that dialogue. In one sequence, for example, images of a trip to Egypt fade in as the voice of Marian,

1. Much of my argument re Derrida is drawn from Penelope Deutscher, "Mourning the Other, Cultural Cannibalism, and the Politics of Friendship (Jacques Derrida and Luce Irigaray), *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol.10.3 (1998), 159-184.

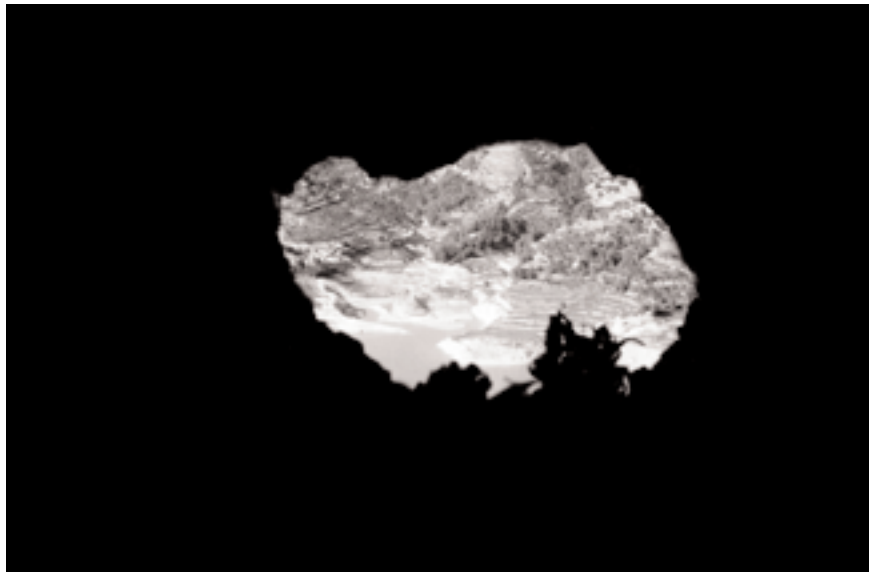


photo: Guadalest, 1997.



waking up from a siesta, recounts a dream: “We went back to Canada. Everything had changed but it was somehow familiar. Mostly I remember walking in the snow with you.” What the film does is implicate itself in this dream, remembering and imagining for Marian. The recounting of this dream, of course, lends a retroactive meaning to the opening sequence of Marian in the snow and is linked, associatively, with later sequences of shadows of two people falling on a snowy lane.

The recovery of the loved one’s voice is also undertaken in the sequence featuring the photograph Marian had taken in Spain, although the voice can only be present in its absence, as a printed text superimposed over the image. In many ways, this sequence in which texts by Marian and Phil both endeavour to tease out a meaning ostensibly hidden in the photograph, acts as a fulcrum for the entire film. For Marian the image “reawakens a bodily memory” and reminds her of a time when she was becoming acutely aware of extraordinary bodily changes that, retroactively, seemed to signal the return of an illness she felt she had been cured of. Going through her effects after her death, Phil discovers this text written by Marian and clipped to the back of the photo. His text introduces and closes the sequence, reflecting on Marian reflecting on this image, seeing in the photograph a mysterious and cryptic relic that might reveal “the conditions of her death” and “the purpose of her life.” The photograph itself is banal, a seaside landscape, a tourist image, conventional and undistinguished. Yet the photo functions as a blank slate, a void whose meaning is produced associatively entirely through personal memory and projection. In this way, the sequence condenses the series of questions that I’ve argued are central to Philip’s work. How does meaning adhere to an image? How do images organize memory? How does death and the absence of the loved one imbue the image with its beauty and mystery?

In *Mourning and Melancholia* Freud experiences some difficulty in definitely distinguishing between the two psychic states. In one instance he posits melancholy as an unresolved form of mourning, where instead of assimilating the other into the ego, the ego identifies with the lost object: “the shadow of the object fell upon the ego [and] the ego is altered by identification” (258). For Derrida this is one formulation of love where the other is taken into oneself, not to obliterate difference but to preserve otherness, an otherness whose effect is to alter one’s being. While I do believe this is the style of mourning and love that Hoffman proposes in his film, let me suggest that Freud’s alternative conceptualization of melancholy may be of some use here. In the second formulation, melancholy is without a specified object. The subject experiences overwhelming sadness but cannot attribute it to any particular cause: it is a generalized sense of loss. This generalized sense of loss has an uncanny resonance with a thematic that I have argued is central both to Barthes’ formulations in *Camera Lucida* and to the cinematic oeuvre of Philip Hoffman. In these instances, melancholia is inspired, not



only by the particularity of this death, but by an acknowledgement of Death itself—its inevitability beyond the fleetingness and ephemerality of life. It is this emotional quality which makes photography and experimental film among the more melancholic of arts.

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DUETS: HOFFMAN IN THE 90s, AN INTERVIEW

by Mike Hoolboom

Philip HOFFMAN: After finishing the autobiographical film cycle, I wanted to play again. I brought a super-8 camera along with me to Banff in order to do some sketching. I began exposing a frame at a time while zooming, or moving the camera. The result was a Cubist kind of taking apart of the world. It splays the frame, making the image move. Because of its extreme speed, it was necessary to slow the image down afterwards, controlling the speed via re-photography on the optical printer. The lightness of the camera allowed me to play along with my subject in a musical way. This kind of shooting, or being in the world, marked the end of one kind of working, which was much more personal and traditionally “documentary.”



still: *Chimera*



HOOLBOOM: Why was it important to break the space up?

HOFFMAN: It was in the air. The Berlin Wall had fallen, film had become media, computers were everywhere and fragmentation ruled. The cycle of personal film work I'd finished allowed me to travel and show the work, and *Chimera* (15 min., 1996) was the result. It was photographed in Banff, Finland, Russia, Egypt, England and Australia.

HOOLBOOM: Despite lensing for years all over the globe, your shooting style is very consistent.

HOFFMAN: I felt electric. Like I was touching eternity. These camera gestures create rhythms at the speed of light following an inner-outer sympathy. I was doing a fair bit of inner work at that time—trancing, meditation, yoga—so what was coming to me in image was symbolically meaningful. I had my own narrative, no matter how abstract it might appear to others, but instead of people and places, which are a part of a social world, it became another kind of journey. *Chimera* began in 1989 during the Banff residency and took seven years to shoot and edit.

HOOLBOOM: The shooting blends one place into another.

HOFFMAN: It shows a world breaking down, and the images express the energy of change. The film doesn't insist that market people in Cairo's Khan Khalili and London's Portabello are the same, but that they share an energy related to colour, shape and form. That's why some of the film is abstract, to evoke these pleasures of sharing.



photo: shooting *Chimera*.
Photo by Marian McMahon.

In *Technilogic Ordering* (1994), by contrast, the fragmentation is political, reworking of media images of the Gulf War. The collisions mean more because lives are being lost, along with their representation. This sketch of *Chimera* is simply one way to experience the world. As a viewer you're only moving forward, like the stream of images that come to us through TV, or the Web. *Chimera* is a representation of that way of being in the world. Gathering speed. But in the third and concluding part of *Chimera*, I finally go back, and this return offers a critique of the first two sections, where each image replaces and erases what's gone before. In the final section a man plays electric piano in a Russian square, and this is intercut with scenes from a Finnish rave, and the great rock Uluru. Uluru is a sacred Aboriginal site, which I photographed from a distance. It stands boldly through it all. This speed finally brings us back to making pancakes in the kitchen because, despite virtual velocities and cyberspace, at the end of the day you have to go home and make supper.

I had a lot of trouble finishing the film, in finding the shape for these sketches. I finally returned to its original idea, which is contained in the title. *Chimera* is an animal in Greek mythology that combines the head of a lion, the body of a goat and the tail of a serpent. For the first time in my making, I didn't have a narrative to hang the structure on, so I was guided by myth, and the beast's embodiment of diversity and fragmentation. The first section begins with a roar on the soundtrack and proceeds with an accelerated drumbeat and a scream, which I associate with the roar of a lion. The second section has a very ethereal soundtrack, which is the goat on the mountain, "up in the clouds," where he finds his place. The final sec-

tion is the serpent. It is filled with sibilant chanting, which brings on transformation.

There were many things in my life that I pinned to these scenes. They are returning now in my making because I couldn't deal with them at the time. I encountered three deaths while shooting this way. The deaths are not shown or even alluded to in these films, but they lie underneath each of them. Waiting.

Chimera's original super-8 footage was being blown up to 16mm by Carrick Saunders in Montreal. I gave him a call to see how it was going and his wife answered. There was some commotion—she left the phone and didn't return. I phoned later that night and discovered he'd had a heart attack and passed away.

HOOLBOOM: He died while you were on the phone?

HOFFMAN: Yes. And you don't know why you're part of it. Of course this is an awful tragedy for Carrick's family, but I didn't know him. As a witness to his death, I felt I was being given a gift, and that I had to do something with it. I just wrote it all down in my journal, but couldn't figure on how it would become part of *Chimera*.

In the second instance, I was crossing a bridge over the Thames, just coming out of the Moving Image Museum, where I'd shot their history of cinema exhibit. I was blurry eyed. I stepped out on the bridge, where a stranger looked me in the face, got up on the bridge and jumped. I spied him through the cracks, already going underwater without a struggle. Dazed, I wondered if I should film him. And didn't. A man came by and asked if he'd jumped. A woman arrived from the other side of the bridge and said she'd call the police. That's when I came 'round. I'd been stuck in that existential moment where you see someone who wants to die. Do you let him? Should you do something? Can you? I ran to the other side of the bridge and met up with a policewoman who didn't have a walkie talkie. I kept running until I found another cop who said they'd got him. A pleasure boat had come by and picked him up. What a coincidence, this man wants to die but a boat chances along. I asked the cop if he could let me know what happened, and that night I got a note: "The bloke who jumped in the creek is alright." Both these events made me think about death, and how little control we finally have.

HOOLBOOM: Tell me about *Technilogic Ordering* (30 min., 1994).

HOFFMAN: The Persian Gulf War was a made-for-TV affair that filled me with anxiety. I watched the war with some of my students at Sheridan College, where I was teaching. A couple of them—Heather Cook and Stephen Butson—began to collect images as a way of thinking about the broadcasts. It's like when you have a lot of nervous energy you go for a skate. You have so much anxiety watching this stuff and you have no control over it.

During our gathering I found a VCR with a computer chip that fragmented the image into Muybridge-like box frames. This machine allowed you to play the image, change the size and number of the boxes onscreen—do you want nine, 400 or 1600?—and scroll them from left to right, like reading or media literacy.



We collaged some of the different footage we'd collected, inserting commercials, movie fragments and sports into news broadcasts of the war. Among other things, we wanted to show the difference between Canadian and American coverage. While many Canadian commentators questioned the necessity of the war, the Americans were blindly patriotic. As we discovered later, all the war footage had been cleared by the Pentagon, so it appeared bloodless and techno-centric. It was mayhem at a distance. The boxes were a visual way of commenting on the reports, making patterns out of this destruction and allowing the pictures to critique themselves.

The montage featured many heavy-handed collisions. Kitchen cleaners were juxtaposed with images of the Iraqi army being "cleaned up." Airplanes from *The Wizard of Oz* smoked messages across the sky: "Surrender Dorothy." There was a nationally televised football championship going on at the same time, which blurred the line between sports and war. Both featured the same mass hysteria. Once the editing was done, the video footage was transferred to film because in order to really see television, you have to look at it somewhere else, in a movie theatre for instance.

HOOLBOOM: Like much of your work in the 90s, this film began as a collaboration.

HOFFMAN: After my personal work in the 80s it was time for the author to die. I wanted to relinquish control, explore ways of making that would expand the palette. In the early 90s I started three projects that had in common sketching, collaboration, and smaller-format technologies [other than 16mm]. With the help of Vesa Lehko and other friends in Finland, *Chimera* was turned into an installation. *Technilogic Ordering* was made with Stephen Butson, Heather Cook and



still: *Opening Series*.

Marian McMahon, who naturally helped with all of them.

In *Opening Series* I collaborate with the audience by offering a film in parts, each in its own painted box. I ask the audience to arrange the boxes in the order they would like to see them on screen. The film not only runs differently each time, but provides a picture of its audience. *Opening Series* arose out of questions of inter-activity, which too often means people watching computer screens instead of relating to one another. In moving the boxes around the audience has to collaborate and eventually come up with an order.

Following *Opening Series* are three collaborations: *Kokoro is for Heart* with Gerry Shikatani, *Sweep* with Sammi van Ingen and *Destroying Angel* with Wayne Salazar. By the mid-90s, I'd committed to hard-core collaboration.

HOOLBOOM: *Kokoro is for Heart* (7 min., 1999) has a feel of daily ritual and naming.

HOFFMAN: I met Gerry Shikatani at Sheridan College, where he worked in the writing department. Gerry's a poet, a Nichols protégé. He writes sound poetry, novels, and food reviews for the dailies. One morning Gerry came up to the farm and we went for a drive, not thinking about making a film at all. We wound up at a gravel pit, and I pulled my camera out of the truck while Gerry interacted with the space of the pit, moving rocks and branches around. I shot two rolls of 16mm reversal. When I got the footage back I noticed the registration pin was slipping, so there were periodic stutters in the image. Trained as a cinematographer, I saw these as flaws, though Marian said they were like Gerry's voiced poetry. He works with the structure and gestures of language, and the flipping frame reveals the structures of vision strained through the machine.

I optically printed the whole film one-to-one and two-to-one. So each picture had a double, one for each of its makers. Then I cut the film into twelve parts, and put them into twelve separate boxes for *Opening Series 3* (7 min., 1995). The audience would choose the order they'd be screened in. I made the paintings for the box covers by using natural materials like seeds and sunflowers, along with family photographs and paint. Then I put a blank canvas on top of the painted ones, laid them on the ground and drove over them with my truck, so every picture is doubled as well.

As an interactive work, the film began its life as part of the *Opening Series* experiment, where the audience affected the order of the film by arranging the boxes. We also ran it as a performance at Cinecycle, where Gerry sat in front of the projected image rapping out his sound poetry. Later, we fixed the order of the film, made a final print and renamed it *Kokoro is for Heart*. So the performances served to find a satisfying fixed order. But it can still run as an open-ended work in the performance setting.

Kokoro is the Japanese word for heart, or life force. Here, it's the heart of the land, speech or breath. Gerry is shown as part of the landscape but separate from it, and his words on the soundtrack [a blend of Japanese, French and English], are a way of knowing or naming the land. They're the language of the land or a landscape of language.

HOOLBOOM: Tell me about *Sweep* (30 min., 1995).

HOFFMAN: One of my interests in making the film was to go to Kapuskasing, because that's where my mother settled when she first came to Canada. My grandfather, Driououx, came to Canada to work as a lumberjack. He eventually ran a poolhall and pushed moonshine on the side. The area they lived in was actually called Moonshine Creek. My grandmother, Babji, ran a rooming house. I asked my mother to recollect Babji's stories for the film, which she does while looking at family photos. One of these shows the family gathered for Christmas dinner. Mom says this picture makes her feel happy, because at Christmas everything would go well. But I knew from my own growing up that visits to Babji and Driououx's would always start in fun, but often end with a plate of food hitting the kitchen wall. I pose these questions to my mother through narration, and her answer is evident in the grain of her voice. The violence and abuse in the household remains in her trembling speech. This is where our forgetting and the things we care not to tell come to reside.

This makes me think of Marian's work, how the past lives in the present. The fears we don't get over become part of our everyday life.

My mother's image returns at the end of the film when I zoom in on her, followed by a zoom on me, as a reminder of that repressive pain, which flashes forward from the beginning of the film to its end, as suddenly and ferociously as the past takes over the present.

HOOLBOOM: Your collaborator is Sami van Ingen and his journey is also a per-

sonal one.

HOFFMAN: Sami's great-grandfather was the American documentary filmmaker Robert Flaherty. He made ethnographic "classics" like *Nanook of the North*, which was shot in Canada. While it is considered one of the first verité documentaries, most of the scenes were staged and rehearsed. It offered a particularly white view on native practices, and was made in a time when white meant "objective." Sami wanted to return to some of the places that his grandfather had been in order to deal with this part of his family's history.

While we were making the film, a feature-length, France-Canada-produced drama was released about Robert Flaherty, which reveals a love affair he had with a native woman. Everything was suddenly out in the open. Sami and his family already knew this, but no one dared to speak about it. They were keepers of the legend, the great genius, the family name. Our film begins with a suggestion that we will hear details of family history, but Sami didn't want to go further in that direction, so the film arrives at more general conclusions. We used archival home movies showing white men's journeys to appropriate the north. Sami's great-grandfather was just the most famous person who went up there. So while we couldn't speak of the family legacy, we could show white men hanging around the native camps, and the effects they had. These scenes are intercut with shots of Sami and I dozing around a pool on our way home amidst spring blooms, implicating us as part of another wave of white explorers. The film has a strong visual thesis, but parts are missing. It's like the deaths I encountered while making *Chimera*: real life overwhelmed its representation.

HOOLBOOM: The film shows the two of you traveling north by car, meeting people along the way and entering a Cree reservation. This journey ends when one of the native guides takes you across the water to Fort George.

HOFFMAN: Fort George was one of a series of British forts built in the north, and Flaherty would have traveled through there. The Fort is gone, but we found an old Hudson Bay Company trading post still standing, which we filmed. I say in voice-over: "You're not going to find your grandfather here. It's gone now. It's over." Around the building we discovered a lot of beautiful driftwood. Earlier in the film we showed the dam, and talked about how the need for hydro-electric power overwhelmed native protests, and how their burial grounds were flooded because the dam raised the water level. This driftwood is also a result of the dam. These are the bones of the forest, the ruined culture. The driftwood was shot in high-contrast stock, with the haunting call of Canada geese in the distance. Then we have a lunch of canned fish and tomatoes, which we film because all we can do now is film ourselves. We've come all this way to shoot the making of a sandwich.

Throughout the trip many of the native people we met asked us to film them. During the dam protests, so many white journalists had been up to visit they were used to it. They'd even built a motel just for visiting politicians. A motel in this small village, which had a huge teepee as the local supermarket! We always refused, saying we don't want to tell your story, this is up to you, and it always has been. So the film's critique of ethnographic filmmaking shows the failure of white culture to integrate, proposing a movement alongside instead of the usual pictures of control.

At the end of the film, during dinner, I showed our native host Christopher Herodier how to use the camera, and he shoots us eating. I left him with the camera, saying, "Give me a surprise." When we got back to the city and processed the roll we discovered that Christopher had filmed a teepee against a backdrop of new housing, and the two of us against a sunset, slightly out of focus.

When the film was finished, Petra Chevrier invited *Sweep* (1995) to screen at the YYY Gallery. I called Christopher and asked if we could show our work together. He had made a videotape called *Chiwaanaatihtaa Chitischiiuu* [Let's go back to our land]. It shows a Cree protest against the building of another dam, the canoe voyage from Fort George to Great Whale, the singing and the outrage. The two pieces played together for a month and it was very satisfying. It reflects our approach of living cinema.

HOOLBOOM: Can you tell me about the title *Sweep*?

HOFFMAN: To shoot the drive northwards we rented a motor that ran the camera very fast, giving us super-slow motion. At the head of the shot the motor's still gaining speed, so you get a fast motion that is overexposed, which then turns into slow motion at a regular exposure. This gives a sweeping motion to the image, a sweeping of landscape and driving. *Sweep* is also sweeping the road clean, trying to start over again, sweeping away Flaherty.

HOOLBOOM: *Destroying Angel* (32 min., 1998) features another collaboration. How did that begin?

HOFFMAN: I met Wayne Salazar in Australia in 1991 at the Sydney Festival. The curator Paul Byrnes had invited me to show all my work. In Sydney, Paul would take you to supper every night with a small group of filmmakers and curators, and Wayne was party to that. It was a marvelous time. Soon after the festival I visited Wayne in New York, and awhile later he called to tell me he'd contracted AIDS and was very sick. He was going to tell his mother, who lived in New York State, so I invited him to come up to the farm and relax and meet Marian. That's when we started shooting. I don't know how these things start. Maybe it's just that you're always shooting film, and when people come you keep shooting and then films start.

The farm reminded Wayne of his rural youth, the day trips he used to take with his father, who worked as an insurance salesman. Wayne's bad health made him wonder how long he was going to be around, and he felt compelled to deal with his father, who had abused him as a child. They hadn't seen each other for years, but Wayne decided to go see his father and tell him he had AIDS. This all became part of the film. The first weekend he came he got along well with Marian, and they spoke about personal histories, and her themes of remembering and forgetting. He was very sick then, and taking a lot of pills. The drug cocktail hadn't been introduced yet, so he was tired and depressed. It was Wayne's idea to make the film and I felt my role was to assist. He'd made a short video about Cuban artists, had seen a lot of films as a curator and had been painting since art school, but really had no experience making personal film work. Which is fucking hard. During the making, I felt I was back working on *Road Ended at the Beach* (1983),

because the struggles were the same. *Road Ended* took seven years to make, trying to give shape to these concrete bits of memory, working without a script, and letting the camera respond to experience as it's happening. I stayed patient, trying to help give Wayne an outlet. I learned more about his struggles of growing up gay, dealing with his macho father's disappointments, and how he and his lover Mickey were finding a way to live.

It began as a film about our fathers, but it quickly became clear that mine was no match for his. The stories of Wayne's abuse created too much of a contrast to my father's sympathetic parenting. I shot sequences and told stories that were part of an early cut, that might one day join another film. But there was so much anger and need on Wayne's part that I had to withdraw. The decision was made when my partner of twelve years, Marian, was diagnosed with cancer, and a week later, during a biopsy, she died. We stopped making the film, and when I climbed up out of the hole, that's when I moved my voice out of the film. I needed to make my own film about Marian, her life and the grieving. Marian was already part of *Destroying Angel*, asking Wayne questions on video about his meds, and AIDS and everyday life. Wayne felt close to her and asked if her story could be developed more in the film, if we could show this passing, and I felt that would be right.

HOOLOOBOOM: You show Wayne and Mickey getting married.

HOFFMAN: Back in San Francisco, Wayne got healthier, which was partly the drugs, diet and exercise. But the film had a lot to do with it as well. Wayne and his partner Mickey decided to get married. Mickey is Austrian, so an Austrian TV crew arrived to shoot them for a news program on San Francisco gay life and marriage. And I thought, yes, we have to have this in the film. Their reportage was typically television. It opens with a shot of the Golden Gate Bridge, then moves into the gay bars, and sexual activity and dancing and high-pitched screaming, but in our film, we inserted a shot of Wayne and Mickey walking down the street buying flowers. Very everyday. It's a nice moment because it shows how television creates stereotypes.

HOOLOOBOOM: Why did they want to get married?

HOFFMAN: They were in love, of course. But I think it was a political decision as well. In a culture that doesn't accept their sexuality, it was a step towards gaining the same rights as heterosexual couples.

HOOLOOBOOM: Wayne speaks of his father surrounded in darkness, directly to the camera, outlining a history of ignorance and abuse. But when we meet his father at the wedding he looks so benign.

HOFFMAN: The film reveals how the monsters of our past live in us. He's become an old man, no longer shouting abuse at Wayne. But it doesn't change what he did. He hurt Wayne, and neither of them could deal with it. They held onto this pain for years. At the ceremony, Wayne says it hasn't always been easy with his father, who then breaks in and proposes a toast to Wayne and Mickey. He says that he's from Guatemala, a culture where gay people exist only in the closet. And then he wishes Wayne and Mickey happiness in their life together. But it took the making of our film to release this fear. It's Wayne who's done the work to

recover his past, and the evidence of this work is *Destroying Angel*. While the early passages of the film are drawn from Wayne's point of view, the ceremony at the end is shot in a verité style by the Austrian video crew. Finally, we're seeing something outside of Wayne's frame. He's no longer telling his story using voice-over. We enter another side of him, and this adds in a profound way to the information we get about his relationships.

Wayne called me last week, a year after his father died. He said, "I don't recognize that guy in the film." He was referring to himself. People use different tools to create change in their lives. Some use work, or alcohol, or art. Wayne doesn't need to talk about his father that way anymore. This is a familiar feeling for me. *passing through* (1988), for instance, was a grieving for my grandmother Babji. You hope these rituals of filmmaking resonate for others.

Marian's death is revealed in *Destroying Angel* and people say, "You must find that hard to watch," but I don't. I love her images, her voice and her writing. After Marian's death, while looking up references to bring her Ph.D. thesis to completion, I dwelt for hours on the small, hand-scribbled writings she left on the texts she was reading. No matter how esoteric or academic the text, her response would always tune in the personal, the everyday. She came back to life for me through her writing. The film I'm working on now attempts to deal with the traces she's left behind, so that I might better understand our time together and learn something about death and life. The dead carry on longer than the living, and it seems that the force of a life lived is stronger once it ceases to exert itself ... its silence and mystery ... majestic.

HOOLBOOM: The title *Destroying Angel* suggests an angel that returns to wreak vengeance, a once purity that's now armed.

HOFFMAN: It's also a mushroom, one of the most deadly and poisonous. The poison is the virus, which brings pain and suffering, but also transformation and change and growth.

There's an eating sequence in the film shot at the farm, where Wayne is making us dinner. In the early 90s there was still such a fear of casual infection, you know, he could cut himself and infect us, but instead there's only celebration. We're living right now, the camera's floating around the food and we're having a ball in the face of it all.

HOOLBOOM: Much of your work in the 90s is more hermetic and difficult than your autobiographical cycle. What would you say to those who feel your work, along with others in this small field, is willfully self-enclosed, unnecessarily obscure, interested in formal issues in a medium that itself is coming to an end, and on the other hand suffers from solipsism and narcissism?

HOFFMAN: Yes—and? It lives with me and that's what is important. Often circumstances collect around you and you have to make the film as well as you can without knowing why until later. Sometimes you get a song out of it, sometimes a mumble.

HOOLBOOM: Is it important to finish work or is it just the process that's impor-

tant?

HOFFMAN: I need to bring everything to some kind of completion. I learned from my dad how to start and finish things in the factory when I used to make boxes every day. Screening your work and receiving feedback is an important part of the process. We experimentalists may not get the TV audience, but that's alright. Our work has a different purpose. We're the people behind the stage sweeping up the old act and getting it ready for the new show.

People who try and push boundaries are part of a lineage that's a much thinner thread than CNN or Cineplex, but it's continuous, it's a living history. We're carrying this on, and maybe I'll make just one film that's important, that will have an effect on people. I hope I haven't made it already. If I've always held on to the personal it's because I believe that what I've lived has a shape, an organic world that can be shared, through film, with others.



photo: Philip Hoffman.





NO EPITAPH

by Karyn Sandlos

When Ann Carson writes “... death lines every moment of ordinary time” (166) she suggests that mortality resides in the quotidian details of our lives. Time, as we know it, is a progression that is measured by clocks, calendars, the passing of days, the changing of seasons. When a loved one dies, the knowledge of time passing may allow us to briefly hover over the tumultuous reckonings of the present and imagine an afterwards—a prospective view that makes the immediate impact of loss bearable. But in the midst of bereavement, ordinary time is a view from the proximate clutter of a present that can’t envision a future, a heightening of the minor drama of death that permeates the everyday. For Carson, the kind of death that “lines every moment” doesn’t quite amount to an event, to the actual fact of Death. Rather than surviving death, we live it.

What took place every day was not what happened every day. Sometimes what didn’t take place was the most important thing that happened.

Marguerite Duras, *Practicalities*.

Death is a recurring fascination in Phil Hoffman’s oeuvre, a body of films that seem to rehearse a penultimate death that will take Hoffman to the outer and inner reaches of grief. In the film cycle that concludes with *Kitchener-Berlin* (1990), be it the figure of a young boy lying dead on a Mexican roadside or an elephant falling at the Rotterdam Zoo, death is an indelible presence that is, paradoxically, often left out of the frame. After 1990, by undertaking a series of collaborative works (*Technilogic Ordering* 1994, *Sweep* 1995, *Destroying Angel* 1998, *Kokoro is for Heart* 1999) and inviting audiences to order the progression of his



still: *What these ashes wanted*

Opening Series films (1992 ongoing project), Hoffman explores, and in a sense instigates his own death as filmmaker. Phil's latest work, *What these ashes wanted* (2001), documents the abrupt death of his late partner Marian McMahon from cancer, and the film is a declaration of bottomless grief. But since assuming the role of familial custodian of memory at the age of fourteen, the death that Hoffman has been rehearsing is his own.

What these ashes wanted is populated by the familiar—even banal—images of home and family that I have come to expect from Hoffman, but here he makes use of the ordinary to evoke a profound experience of loss. Hoffman's iconography is the immediate material surrounding him: a garden alive in summer and dead in winter, the view from a hotel window, highway traffic signs, the stone wall of a Mennonite schoolhouse near his parent's cottage. In the unexceptional, *ashes* finds a gentle rhythm that acts as a refrain throughout the film, proposing a way of seeing how extraordinary loss illumines the daily practice of death-in-life. The film is not a story of surviving death, but rather of living death, of making life hospitable to the tremulous burden of mortality. Hoffman's carefully crafted attention to the minor details of loss makes the presence of death in the ordinary fabric of life acutely felt.

If you can read this you are standing too close.

Epitaph for Dorothy Parker.

Bereavement has become a thriving industry in Western culture, replete with therapeutic approaches and self-help strategies that instruct on how to grieve well

and for discreet periods of time. Many forms of bereavement counseling treat life after loss as a healing strategy, a way to reach toward a time when grief will be less shattering, when the pain of loss will be less present. Funerals also act as occasions for shaping and articulating grief, and for marking the distinction between the mourner and the mourned, a kind of reality check that affirms what the mourner at once understands and resists knowing. And it may well be the case that loss is far too amorphous and terrifying without the formal containers into which we are compelled to pour it. Hoffman's project is, however, less committed to protocol and more concerned with a practice of bereavement that mixes psychic disintegration with the provisional solace gleaned from secular therapies or devout rituals of mourning. Early in *ashes* we partake of a playfully private moment shared between Phil and his late partner Marian McMahon, the first of several sequences that will draw us into the small circle of their relationship. Heavily bundled against the cold, they frolic, home-movie style, in the yard outside the schoolhouse, not far from Mt. Forest where they will later make their home. The camera moves erratically across the stone wall of the school house at close range, and an uncomfortable proximity is created as we observe an intimate game from which the burdens of the world seem to fall away. Phil touches the wire fence, feigns electric shock, and laughs. Filming this moment, the couple play at death while reaching for posterity—for permanence—bringing the underlying tension that haunts *ashes* to the surface.

People may die and be remembered, but they only disappear when they are completely forgotten, when no one ever uses their name.

Adam Phillips, *Darwin's Worms*.

It was Freud's observation that dreams are populated by incidental images and fragments of experience from conscious life. The death of a loved one, he noted, is often obliterated from the dreamscape only to return to memory with unusual force upon waking (78). Perhaps, then, in the midst of grief the unconscious makes itself known through a heightening of the minutiae of waking life, like a long, laborious swim under deep water where every movement, every sound, and every glimpse of color and light are attenuated. The irreconcilable clash between psychic longing for the lost loved one and the reality of absence is less an event than a palpable emptiness, a heightened view from the disruption of experience that seems to have fallen out of step with the continuity of time. In *ashes*, the rough-hewn fieldstones of the schoolhouse contrast the meticulously rendered brick facade and pillars of a more monumental structure, a relic of ancient history. A figure walks slowly past an Egyptian temple, appearing, disappearing and reappearing from behind the columns. When the body is absent, this sequence implies, the shadow remains.



A person will walk through a hundred doors to carry out the whims of the dead, not realizing that he is burying himself away from the others.

Michael Ondaatje, *Anil's Ghost*.

Several years before her death Marian asks Phil, “If you had to make up your own ritual for death what would it be? And would it be private, or shared?” Phil responds that it should be shared, and his tone resonates with the force of this deeply held conviction; for Phil, death is a lived practice that must necessarily be shared if one is to live at all. It is often said that funerals are for the living; but how, precisely, does ritual help us grieve and move on? With this question in mind, I often visit cemeteries and wander amidst gravestones belonging to people I have never met. Something troubles about the tone of epitaphs. The words say that the loved one is gone. Etchings in stone mark the finality of death, but they don’t account for how life is inhabited by death—and still lived. The severing of attachment and the abruptness of absence may be life’s most shattering experience, yet loss itself has a lingering presence in life. Loved ones leave, but the inevitability of death, if not desirable, is wholly enduring.

Death, although utterly unlike life, shares a skin with it.

Ann Carson, *Men In the Off Hours*.

ashes is no epitaph, no tribute to the passage of time or the solace of monuments. In his latest work, Hoffman remains in his own time, a daily practice of loss lived precariously on the margin between disintegration and ritual. A voice on Phil’s answering machine quotes the poet Alfred Corn observing “in times of great grief it is important to go through the motions of life until eventually they become real again.” When Phil films Marian making calls on her route as a home care nurse, he rides in the back seat and watches her face in the rear-view mirror. Caught up in the demands of the everyday and the immediacy of the task at hand, Marian thinks out loud about how peculiar it feels to provide intimate physical care to complete strangers. In illness, she observes, the body becomes public property. The conversation takes on a heightened anxiety as Marian describes the awkwardness of the situation, and her inability to talk with Phil about things she really wants to talk about while he complains about the weight of the camera. The nuances of Phil’s response are missed in an exchange in which Marian teases him for failing to appreciate the gravity of her insights. The conversation becomes a speculation on the daily minutiae of loss—the disappointments, missed connections, and absences that act as small rehearsals for the larger drama of death.

Although I never met Marian McMahon, I remember her in a very particular way. I was a new graduate student waiting for a meeting in the hallway outside a professor’s office. Wanting to absorb the culture of collegiality and ideas, I studied

my surroundings. The walls were plastered with memoranda: posters advertising political rallies, calls for papers, and cartoon strips—the clutter of academic life. What I recall most vividly is a poem that was taped to the door directly in front of me. Reading that poem, I felt a momentary break in time that I have yet to understand.

Perhaps there are no accidents. I had skimmed the eulogies on e-mail, and heard fragments of conversations in the hallways about a colleague who had passed away. She was a doctoral candidate, and she died of cancer just as her dissertation was approaching completion. The poem was written by one of Marian’s professors, but it read as if her hand was urgently tracing his words ... *I am still here.*

She might have spoken the words, or whispered them.

It is a common clinical experience that bereaved people fear that talking about the person they have lost will dispel their contact with them.

Adam Phillips, *On Flirtation*

ashes speaks most profoundly through a story that Hoffman struggles to put to words, not only because he cannot bear to articulate his loss directly, but because language itself can only approximate the void that is absence. In *ashes*, loss is evoked through a reordering of referentiality, a fragmentation of the details Hoffman depends upon to order his world. A window provides the only source of light for a darkened bedroom. Although the light fluctuates, it is impossible to determine when it is morning and when it is evening. The camera hovers on time lapse. Are seasons passing, or merely hours? Formless images, shapes, and shadows are intercut with lush scenes of the garden awash with the color of emotion, with the vividness of an image one might wish to have shared with a lover. Anecdotal remnants of Marian—her own voice on the answering machine as well as messages from friends and family before her death—procure the flavor of shared lives, recount daily events, confirm appointments, and announce the birth of a baby girl.

A nurse calls, wondering what to do with a blouse left behind at the hospital.

It is possible that we have no idea what secular grief is; what grief unsanctioned by an apparently coherent symbolic system would feel like.

Adam Phillips, *Promises Promises.*

Obsessing over the hidden meaning of a photograph taken from inside a cave, Marian reflects on learning to live life “from the inside out,” from the midst of

happenings yet to be understood, yet to be integrated into a coherent realm of experience. Transposed in text across the darkness of the cave's interior, her reflections on loss—in this case the loss of memory—resonate with Phil's own struggle to articulate his grief. The power of naming, Marian insists, gives experience its credibility. Attuned to the capacity of the symbolic to legitimize, Hoffman takes ritual as an entry point directly into the midst, the incoherent centre of sorrow.

"Seventeen's the number," Hoffman repeats, "One is for one, and seven is for doing." With childlike insistence, he translates a personal lineage of life and death into a number game. "She was born on May seventeen, and died on November seventeen. My Dad was born on April seventeen, my uncle was born on April seventeen, and my grandfather was born on April seventeen. Seventeen's the number. One is for one, and seven is for doing." Seventeen, we are told, is the number of Phil's hockey jersey, and of his seat on a plane, and it is the number entered in his log book on the day an elephant fell down at the Rotterdam Zoo. Seventeen is just a number, a minor detail easily discounted in the rush of daily experience. But in Phil's efforts to account for a series of happenings from the midst of bereavement, seventeen becomes the number, the numerology of loss.

Ladybug, ladybug, fly away home. Your house is on fire and your children are gone.

Hoffman's method is that of reiteration without redundancy; loss, we are reminded, is never just this loss. In *ashes* we learn that Hoffman is once removed in the order of his siblings from an older brother who died at birth. Because the child died so soon, the priest refused to perform the funereal rites that would have legitimized this life in the eyes of the church. But funerals are meant for the living, and this disavowal prompted Phil's father's departure from the church. Later, this man would have another son who would also be named Phillip. Upon completing his first film, *On the Pond* (1978), Phil changed the spelling of his name from Phillip to Philip, marking the distinction between his life and that of his lost brother with the absence of a single letter.

Good mourning, in Freud's terms, keeps people moving on, keeps them in time ...
Adam Phillips, *Darwin's Worms*

What becomes of grief that traditional practices of mourning cannot, or will not, contain? *ashes* suggests that ritual serves us less as a remedy for grief, and more as a glimpse of ordered time from outside the midst of our daily reckonings with loss. When her mother died, Ann Carson scanned the pages of Virginia Woolf's diaries in search of something, following Woolf's own premise that there is



pleasure to be derived from “forming such shocks into words and order” after the fact of Death (165). On the day after the funeral, Carson sat at her desk, books spread out before her, looking not for meaning, but for the comfort of structure. I turned to Carson the week I was finishing this writing, the day I had to pause, unexpectedly, to write a eulogy. How can I write my uncle’s life? I wondered, barely upright before a blank screen, caught in the midst of this unexpected death, of my memories, his personal life, this public declaration, the faces of my family, my anguish, my rage.

He didn’t just die, he was taken.

Sudden death doesn’t begin to feel real until you see its impact etched across the faces of the people standing directly in front of you. Or, as in the case of my uncle’s death, until I read the horrible truth in what would otherwise have been an ordinary newspaper headline, on an ordinary day. Even then, these were cues that only hinted at what I should feel. Everywhere it said that my uncle was gone, but I could not write of his life in the past tense. I could not write “My uncle was a committed painter for over three decades.” In writing that “he has been painting all my life” ... has been, and *will be*, I clung to the present perfect, the tense of continuity. *I do not release him*, my uncle’s friend choked from the podium on the day of the funeral with an urgency that cut through my carefully measured sentences, my own attempt to fashion the expression of my grief. With those words came another break in time. If mourning requires our participation in the flow of time, *ashes* insists that we live with death in capricious ways that exist outside of this ordered progression. Perhaps learning to live “from the inside out” means learning to live while dying at the same time—learning to live *with* death and not despite it. Loss, it seems, is a persistent presence.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Sarah Abbott is a filmmaker at large.

Shary Boyle is based in Toronto, with the odd extended exception. Her practice revolves around drawing, painting, and the production of small book works. She is mainly concerned with articulating the personal.

Variably a chef, college lecturer, frame carpenter and web designer, **Mike Cartmell** divides his time between les bas fonds of Buffalo and his canoe in Temagami. Recently a number of friends encouraged him to return to filmmaking, and he is grateful.

Tom Chomont is a filmmaker turned video-maker currently living in New York City. He began making films in 1963 and videos in 1991.

Janieta Eyre is a Toronto-based artist who works chiefly in photography. The pictures reproduced in this volume derive from her first two major bodies of work. The first is entitled *Rehearsals*, which stages scenes of her own death. The second, *Incarnations*, features the artist alongside her doppelgangers in serial masquerade.

Su Friedrich is a New York-based filmmaker whose work has won numerous awards and is widely screened and broadcast throughout the U.S. and Europe. Since 1978 she has made thirteen 16mm films and one videotape. She has had several retrospectives, including one at the Whitney Museum. Friedrich is also a teacher and sometimes writes about film.

Chris Gehman is a Toronto-based filmmaker, film and video programmer, and occasional film writer. Chris has done extensive programming for organizations such as Pleasure Dome and Cinematheque Ontario. He is currently the Artistic Director of the Images Festival of Independent Film and Video.

Peter Greenaway is a celebrated UK filmmaker who began making short films in 1966, and entered the world of feature filmmaking with *The Draftsman's Contract* in 1982. Along with his films, he is a well-known photographer, painter and art curator.

Peter Harcourt has studied at the University of Toronto and at Cambridge University. He has worked for the British Film Institute and taught at Queen's University, York University and Carleton University. He is the author of *Six European Directors* (1974), *Movies & Mythologies* (1977), *Jean Pierre Lefebvre* (1981) and a personal memoir, *A Canadian Journey: Conversations with Time* (1994).

Ron Heydon has a degree in Communications from Concordia, and currently resides in New York City, where he works as an archivist of visual imagery and as a technical writer. He has kept a journal these last thirty years and intends, one

day, to synthesize it down to a moderate size for publication—a sort of trip through the end of the 20th century—starting from Regina and ending in New York.

Mike Hoolboom is a prolific film and video maker, writer, and advocate for artists' film and video. He is the editor of *Inside the Pleasure Dome: Fringe Film in Canada* (1997) and the author of *Plague Years: A Life in Underground Movies* (1998).

Chris Kennedy is an American-born, Canadian-educated film and videomaker and writer who now spends his time in Toronto. His day job is Distribution Manager at V tape.

Richard Kerr is an associate professor at the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema at Concordia University. He began making films at Sheridan College in 1976, and has produced over a dozen short films and videos that have travelled the world. In 1993 he was the subject of a major retrospective at the MacKenzie Art Gallery, entitled "Overlapping Entries."

Robert Lee is interested in architecture.

Deirdre Logue is an independent curator and a film, video and performance artist living and working in Toronto. "*Enlightened Nonsense*," a collection of short films, was exhibited at YYZ Artists' Outlet in 2000. She is currently producing an independent feature film made collectively by ten Canadian film and video artists from across the country. She has exhibited her film and video works internationally.

Brenda Longfellow is currently co-chair of the Department of Fine Arts, Atkinson College, York University, where she teaches film studies. She has written extensively about women's cinema in *Screen, Cine-Tracts*, and the *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*. She is an award-winning documentary filmmaker whose films include *Our Marilyn*, *Gerda*, *A Balkan Journey*, and *Shadow Maker*.

Roy Mitchell is a serious experimental filmmaker who would understand all the theory if he had studied harder.

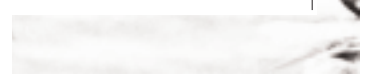
Cara Morton is a filmmaker who merges personal experience and reflection into her art-making process. She has received her MFA from York University and is currently living in northwestern British Columbia.

Matthias Müller is a German filmmaker who has produced more than thirty experimental film and videos. In 1996, he co-curated the first German festival of diary films at the Bielefeld Kunsthalle.

Jeffrey Paull teaches movie making. Philip Hoffman was a student of his many years ago.

Gary Popovich is a Toronto-based artist who has made twenty films and videos.

Steve Reinke is an artist and writer best known for his work in video. Currently, he is a professor at the University of Illinois. His work has been exhibited widely



and is in many collections, including The Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Pompidou (Paris) and the National Gallery (Ottawa).

Daniel Reeves began making video work in 1979. Combat experiences in Vietnam were the driving force behind his early videotapes, which developed from preparatory work in sculpture, photography and film, culminating in *Smothering Dreams* (1981). Subsequent tapes have addressed inhumanity, dispossession and social upheaval with a lyrical sensibility, and from an outlook informed by Eastern philosophy.

Jeremy Rigsby is the program director for the Media City Experimental Film and Video Festival in Windsor, Ontario.

Karyn Sandlos is a writer and filmmaker, and a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at York University, Toronto. She is the chair of the Board of Directors of the Images Festival and a member of the programming collective for Pleasure Dome.

Polly Ullrich is a Chicago-based artist, writer and art critic.

Darrell Varga is a filmmaker and lecturer in Film Studies at various universities. He is currently writing a PhD dissertation in the Department of Social and Political Thought at York University, Toronto.

Michael Zryd teaches Film Studies at the University of Western Ontario and writes about avant-garde/experimental film and documentary.



LIST OF WORKS

Films

What these ashes wanted (56 min., 2001)
Opening Series 4 (10 min., silent 2000)
Kokoro is for Heart (7 min., b/w, 1999)
Destroying Angel (32 min., 1998) (co-maker Wayne Salazar)
Chimera (15 min., 1996)
Sweep (30 min., 1995) (co-maker Sami van Ingen)
Opening Series 3 (5 min., b/w, 1995) (co-maker Gerry Shikatani)
Technilogic Ordering (30 min., 1994)
Opening Series 2 (7 min., silent 1993)
Opening Series 1 (10 min., silent 1992)
Kitchener-Berlin (34 min., 1990)
river (15 min., 1979-89)
passing through/torn formations (43 min., 1988)
?O,Zoo! (The Making of a Fiction Film) (23 min., 1986)
Somewhere Between Jalostotitlan and Encarnacion (6 min., 1984)
The Road Ended at the Beach (33 min., 1983)
On the Pond (9 min., b/w, 1978)

All films are 16mm colour with sound, unless otherwise noted.

For information regarding Philip Hoffman's films, contact:

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Video Installations

Parabolic Senses (with Gerry Shikatani) (30 min., video/film, FSAC, 1999)
Chimeras (50 min., multi-screen video/film, 1997)
Chimerae (17 min., video, 1996)
Ahead of the Rest (10 min., video, 1995) (installation at Union Station, Public Access, Toronto)
Technilogic Ordering (52 min., 1991)

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