

# Film Poems 2



At Land by Maya Deren

## Moments/Histories/Feelings

A new programme exploring the relationship  
between poetry and film and film and poetry

Featuring work by: Stan Brakhage, Maya Deren, Anton Hecht,  
Humphrey Jennings, Sandra Lahire, Leighton Pierce, Peter Todd.

## Programme Notes

LUX Cinema London 25th October 9.00 pm Box office 020 7684 0201  
ARNOLFINI Cinema Bristol 29th October 2.00pm Box Office 0117 929 9191  
RIVERSIDE Cinema London 19th November 2.30 pm Box Office 020 8237 1111  
then touring to selected venues

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a touring programme

Moments/Histories/Feelings Film Poems 2, curated by Peter Todd  
screens at 9.00pm Wed 25.10.2000 at The Lux Cinema London and then  
tours to Arnolfini Cinema in Bristol, Riverside Cinema London, Triskel Cinema Cork,  
Broadway Nottingham, Cornerhouse Manchester and other selected venues.  
The programme is subject to slight variation. Running time approx 90 mins.

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support of The Arts Council of England, the bfi touring unit, Lux Distribution,  
the South London Poem Film Society, as well as all the film makers or their estates, to  
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The work in this programme, and Film Poems below, come from  
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The programme can be booked through  
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Film Poems opened at The National Film Theatre London in February 1998 and is  
still touring. It featured - Manhatta, Sheeler/Strand USA 1921: Bells of Atlantis, Ian  
Hugo USA 1952: Meshes of the Afternoon, Maya Deren, USA 1943: Hugh  
MacDiarmid A Portrait, Margaret Tait, UK 1964: Aerial, Margaret Tait, UK 1974:  
Mile End Purgatorio, Guy Sherwin and Martin Doyle, UK 1991: Darwish, Shafeeq  
Vellani, UK 1993: Out, Peter Todd, UK 1990: Blue Scars, Ian Cottage, UK 1994.

Stan Brakhage's life-long devotion to poetry is well-known, and no poetic work has been more important to him than the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound. So, it is by way of the *Cantos* and Brakhage's epic film *Dog Star Man* that I would like to examine an aesthetics of visual-verbal expression Brakhage shares, not only with Pound, but with a number of other American Modernist poets including Charles Olson, Robert Creeley, Michael McClure, Gary Snyder and Allen Ginsberg, to mention some of the best-known.

Let's begin with that well-known maxim of Modernism, "make it new," which entered the English-speaking world by way of Ezra Pound's *Canto LIII*:

Tching prayed on the mountain and  
wrote MAKE IT NEW  
on his bath tub  
Day by day make it new  
cut underbrush  
pile the logs  
Keep it growing.

新  
日  
日  
新

The four characters mean: "make new, day by day, make new." According to legend they were inscribed on the wash basin of Tching T'ang (reign: 1766-1753 B.C.), who founded the Shang dynasty and was regarded as a model king. According to Robert Morrison's *Dictionary of the Chinese Language*, the first character, *hsin*, derives from "hatchet, to erect, and wood," and means to "to cut down wood. Fresh, new; to renovate; to renew or improve the state of; to restore or increase what is good." Pictorially, the character includes a schematic tree at the lower left and an axe on the right. The second character, *jih*, represents the sun and denotes "day," "daily," "every day."

"Make it new" is generally taken to mean: start all over again, break the moulds and banish the models of the past, address the modern world in a thoroughly modern language of radical, unprecedented originality, but in *Canto LIII* it carries rather different connotations. As Bruce Elder writes in his recent book, *The Films of Stan Brakhage in the American Tradition of Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein and Charles Olson*, "make it new" is intended by Pound "to promote the Confucian ethic of a continual personal and cultural renewal, and sometimes to advocate the revitalization of tradition, by dispensing with what has become outmoded and inventing forms appropriate to the time." Pound's juxtaposition of the original Chinese written characters and his own translation/interpretation of them is, in itself, an expression of that "renewal" and "revitalization of tradition."

Charles Olson, the central figure in the post-World War II American school of "Black Mountain Poets" and an exponent of Pound's poetics (but not his politics), produced his own version of "make it new" in a short poem entitled "A Translation":

King Tching T'ang's inscription:  
AXE TREE SUN  
The Axe to put away old habit  
New as the young grass shoot  
Wrote Kung interpreting TREE  
look to a constant renovation LOOK to  
as each new day  
look: the sun!  
on the bath tub:  
AXE TREE SUN

While Olson's "translation" puts the original, ideogrammic sense of "make it new" into words, it loses the visual, pictographic quality of Tching's motto retained in Pound's version.

Even further removed-visually, pictographically-is Henry David Thoreau's allusion to Tching in his classic celebration of nature and individualism, *Walden*, published in 1854: "I got up early and bathed in the pond; that was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I did. They say that characters were engraver on the bathing tub of king Tching-thang to this effect: 'Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again, and forever again.'" While Thoreau *lived* the meaning of Tching's motto (including using an axe to chop down second-growth pines so that he could construct his cabin on the edge of Walden Pond), his prose rendition differs strikingly from Olson's and Pound's.

That difference can be traced, at least in part, to a single essay, *The Chinese Written Character As A Medium For Poetry*, written by the American Sinologist Ernest Fenollosa and published posthumously in 1919. Pound, who edited Fenollosa's manuscript and arranged for its publication, declared the essay a new *ars poetica*. It might also be, unintentionally of course, the first *ars cinematographica*.

Like Robert Morrison, whose dictionary I quoted earlier, Fenollosa assumed that Chinese written characters communicate through combinations of stylized, rudimentary pictures, such as the axe and tree in *hsin* and the sun in *jih*. (Most contemporary experts on the Chinese language insist that literate Chinese do not "see" the pictorial representations in the characters as they read them, but that doesn't mean they aren't there and visible to the knowing eye.) But the crux of Fenollosa's argument is that any noun is originally "that which does something":

A true noun, an isolated thing, does not exist in nature. Things are only the terminal points or rather the meeting points, of actions, cross-sections cut through actions, snap-shots. Neither can a pure verb, an abstract motion, be possible in nature. The eye sees noun and verb as one: things in motion, motion in things, and so the Chinese conception tends to represent them.

A footnote offers as examples, "Axe *striking* something; dog *attending* man=dogs him"-images that could have come directly from Brakhage's *Dog Star Man*.

Brakhage's film is too complex-formally and thematically-to summarize here, but for present purposes it is enough to note that the film's protagonist is a woodsman (played by Brakhage) who, with his axe and dog, climbs a mountain to chop down a dead tree. As the film comes to a conclusion, images of chopping are associated with cutting the film, in both the literal and film-editing sense of the term. Brief, superimposed images, flared ends of rolls of film, bursts of coloured light, and fragments of film frames with their sprocket holes visible flash across the screen, as if they were chips of the dead tree sent flying by the impact of the axe's blade. The montage of images metaphors the editing process itself: cutting out "dead" material so that vibrant, living images can grow into a new, organic whole. To cut/edit film is to "make it new."

The new "it" is not only the work of art, but also the viewer's visual perception, which is renewed and enriched by its engagement with the film's imagery and editing. By shaping the light to convey the dynamism of "things in motion, motion in things," Brakhage generates a direct, immediate, subjective experience of the flash and surge of energy (what Fenollosa calls "transference of power") that infuses nature and animates representations of its processes in the visual language of film-and in Chinese ideograms. Seeing becomes a voyage of discovery, an "adventure of perception," as Brakhage has called it, rather than a passive reception of sense data automatically converted into predetermined and increasingly abstract hierarchies of knowledge.

Pound's most explicit reference to this active, engaged, creative act of seeing appears in *Canto XCIII*, where the "make it new" theme (repeated several times in earlier cantos) acquires a new character, literally and figuratively:



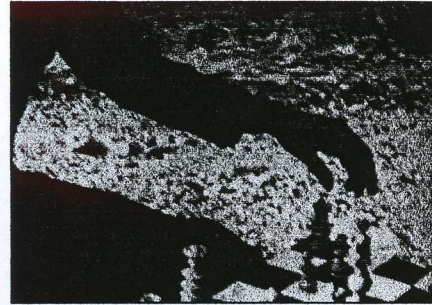
The additional ideogram is defined as "to see, observe, perceive," and according to Pound it depicts an eye on running legs, making it the perfect ideogram to sum up Brakhage's accomplishments as a filmmaker. His work as a whole, not just the end of *Dog Star Man*, is devoted to visual renewal, to an active engagement with the visual world, to seeing with the luminous eye of cinema.

On first seeing *At Land*, it is difficult not to be blinded by the sheer beauty of Maya Deren herself, and it is with a sense of surprise that one discovers on successive viewings yet another aspect, yet another image or sequence, yet another door to be unlocked in this brilliant visual poem. Deren spoke about poetry being 'vertical', creating visual forms for invisible feelings, as opposed to the 'horizontal' linear structure of a plot. *At Land* is 'horizontal' only in that it has a central protagonist who leads the viewer through a labyrinth of scenarios where any notion of logic or linearity is soon abandoned and poetic or 'vertical' concerns take over...

...But it may be unproductive to define and interpret too much. *At Land* embodies the experiences and sensibilities of a woman in search of a social and sexual identity, and it speaks to other women, across barriers of time and language, in a mythological sense. In the sequence on the beach,

filmed in such a way as to transcend 'real' time, the woman seems to embody all time: it is as though she were walking through history and into the future. To Deren herself, the film deals with the "curious dislocation of an individual" in a relativistic world, with "her inability to achieve a stable, adjusted relationship to its elements".

Margaret Warwick. *Monthly Film Bulletin* June 1988.



### Amateur Versus Professional by Maya Deren

The major obstacle for amateur film-makers is their own sense of inferiority vis-a-vis professional productions. The very classification "amateur" has an apologetic ring. But that very word - from the Latin "amateur" - "lover" means one who does something for the love of the thing rather than for economic reasons or necessity. And this is the meaning from which the amateur film-maker should take his clue. Instead of envying the script and dialogue writers, the trained actors, the elaborate staffs and sets, the enormous production budgets of the professional film, the amateur should make use of the one great advantage which all professionals envy him, namely, freedom - both artistic and physical.

Artistic freedom means that the amateur film-maker is never forced to sacrifice visual drama and beauty to a stream of words, words, words, words, to the relentless activity and explanations of a plot, or to the display of a star or a sponsor's product; nor is the amateur production expected to return profit on a huge investment by holding the attention of a massive and motley audience for 90 minutes. Like the amateur still-photographer, the amateur film-maker can devote himself to capturing the poetry and beauty of places and events and, since he is using a motion picture camera, he can explore the vast world of the beauty of movement. (One of the films winning Honorable Mention in the 1958 Creative Film Awards was *ROUND AND SQUARE*, a

poetic, rhythmic treatment of the dancing lights of cars as they streamed down highways, under bridges, etc.) Instead of trying to invent a plot that moves, use the movement or wind, or water, children, people, elevators, balls, etc. as a poem might celebrate these. And use your freedom to experiment with visual ideas; your mistakes will not get you fired.

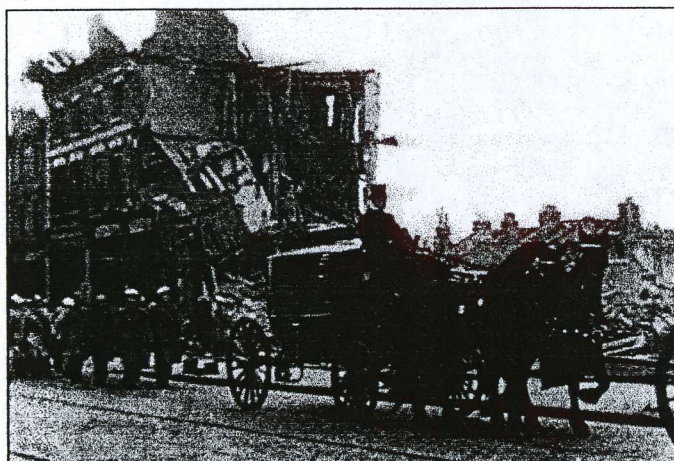
Physical freedom includes time freedom - a freedom from budget imposed deadlines. But above all, the amateur film-maker, with his small, light-weight equipment, has an inconspicuousness (for candid shooting) and a physical mobility which is well the envy of most professionals, burdened as they are by their many-ton monsters, cables and crews. Don't forget that no tripod has yet been built which is as miraculously versatile in movement as the complex system of supports, joints, muscles, and nerves which is the human body, which, with a bit of practice, makes possible the enormous variety of camera angles and visual action. You have all this, and a brain too, in one neat, compact, mobile package.

Cameras do not make films; film-makers make films. Improve your films not by adding more equipment and personnel but by using what you have to its fullest capacity. The most important part of your equipment is yourself: your mobile body, your imaginative mind, and your freedom to use both. Make sure you do use them.

Excerpted from the forthcoming volume, *Essential Deren: Complete Film Writings* by Maya Deren, Copyright 1965, 2000 by the Estate of Maya Deren.

1936. Jennings was a member, together with Herbert Read, Andre Breton, Roland Penrose and others, of the Organising Committee of the International Surrealist Exhibition which opened at the New Burlington Galleries; London in June and ran for a month. He contributed to *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*, edited by Roger Roughton, both his own material (poems and prose 'Reports') and translated poems by Paul Eluard and E.L.T. Mesens, describing himself at the time as someone who had 'survived the Theatre and English Literature at Cambridge (and) is connected with colour film direction and racehorses'. In the autumn of 1936 Jennings, together with Stuart Legg, David Gascoyne and Charles Madge discussed the need for an 'anthropology of our own people' - a subject which had arisen out of the crisis over the Simpson divorce and King Edward VIII's impending abdication. This was the genesis of Mass Observation.

Humphrey Jennings: Film-maker, Painter, Poet. Editor Mary-Lou Jennings.



Charles Madge has said virtually all that needs to be said on Humphrey Jennings's idea of the Image, but in parenthesis I may mention one source on which he drew which might be overlooked - the syncretic images of the Tarot. Two of these especially are recurring themes in his paintings - the Chariot, resolving itself into horse-team and locomotive; and the '*maison Dieu*', the house struck by fire from heaven. The latter was one of Humphrey Jennings's key images many years before the war made the symbol actual, and provided him with the theme of his film, *Fires Were Started*; but it was, to his astonishingly objective mind, in the very nature of a symbolic situation that it must produce itself, as an event, in historical actuality. This must follow from the fact that history, as Humphrey Jennings, like Blake, conceived it, is the realisation of human imaginings.

Humphrey Jennings by Kathleen Raine ICA pamphlet 1951.

Just as *London Can Take It* used a war correspondent's despatch for its commentary, so this film (*Words for Battle*) uses passages from various well known works, once again illustrating Jennings' dislike of personal invention in art and his belief in the use of 'public' material. Various favourite writers are used (Blake and Milton especially) as well as the music of Handel. Jennings is here trying to reinterpret the words and music in the light of the contemporary wartime situation, and his method is at its clearest and most striking in the final sequence, when, as Jim Hillier says, 'the noise of tanks and Handel's "Water Music" take over the soundtrack. The film becomes wordless, and the final images follow the faces of ordinary men and women, in and out of uniform, while the music and noise reach their climax. The values and the greatness implicit in the quotations are transferred to the ordinary people who represent continuity with the past and are both the source and the embodiment of its values.'

Stylistically, the film shows Jennings moving further away from the merely informative use of commentary and from the formal organisation of his material along basically narrative lines. Jennings' creative use of natural sounds is also very much in evidence: like Cavalcanti, Jennings' experiments with sound are almost as important as his unusual visual sense, though the innovations in both fields are, of course, linked. Particularly striking is the way in which the soundtrack is often used not to complement or reinforce the images, but to contrast with them, thereby complicating our responses and setting up all kinds of strange associations.

bfi Distribution Library Catalogue 1978. Written by Julian Petley.

In this film centred around Sylvia Plath's poem " Lady Lazarus ", images at once realistic, metaphoric and hallucinatory counterpoint the haunting voice of the poet which is interwoven with a chuffing steam train, galloping hooves, a tango and a throbbing circus wurlitzer. She speaks her poetry in a British Council recording of October 1962. Summoned by the ouija board of her poem " Ouija ", her voice makes her resonate in the cinema-goer's space which is also the tomb of Lazarus. She rises insurgently as, clothed only in her words, she forecasts the posthumous retailing of her bones:

" The peanut - crunching crowd  
Shoves in to see  
Them unwrap me hand and foot  
- The big strip tease. "

In this sideshow she is always a " smiling woman " who is only thirty, with her ironic " dying is an art " tones. Instead of being a pathologised freak, she fire-juggles with her words and strips away at the papery - over cracks in the status quo. She connects with the unrigidified sexuality of adolescence, that always proposes beginnings, traumas and possibilities.

Set against Sylvia's readings of some of her classics ( " Daddy ", " Ariel ", " The Applicant " and " Fever 103 " ), as well as " Lady Lazarus ", the visual track travels through scenarios of the poems themselves, down the coast of Massachusetts and into photographs of the poet as child and student. The film is arrested in the New York of the Rosenbergs' scapegoating and electrocution during the McCarthy regime. Then it descends into the mental hospital where Sylvia was first patient and later secretary. Original footage of a performer-as-filmmaker stages these vignettes from Sylvia's political and intimate history.

The structure is a circular whirling fairground carousel of all the images as they are caught in windows, each one flaring incandescent then fading into night. The projections of the poet's own journey across the Atlantic, to London are directed into her last flat in Camden. Her own watching silhouette is seen backlit and illumined at her window. She becomes her own lantern, and chandelier, as she defies the ECT treatment that would have extinguished her memory. The gaze of the performer and of Sylvia in her photos looks back at and addresses the film spectator. Stark white flesh and blood-red lips and wounds fade into mellowed photographs. Night pales into the cornflower colours of morning, into the " blues " of 4.00 a.m. when Sylvia rose and wrote.

The film seeks Sylvia's Lady Lazarus spirit in the memento mori of her moment, at the same time as in the film process itself. The enclosed set of her flat and its light sources reflect how her memories zoom in from an infinite void and drive on beyond her lifetime. At the end, as she speaks " Ariel ", she shoots herself off as an arrow. She is at the same time the cauldron ( of morning and mourning ) that receives the arrow. So, embodied in her words, her euphoria and macabre humour fuse with her cinematic eye. The montage accompanies and syncopates with Sylvia's text, rapping with her or flickering in silence. Double exposures layered with black-and-white create a radial rather than a linear structure. Motifs return and shapeshift, creating a free-floating index of signs.

On BBC Radio, in 1963, Sylvia introduced her " Lady Lazarus " reading by saying: " The speaker is a woman who has a great and terrible gift of being reborn. The only trouble is, she has to die first. She is the Phoenix ... She is also just a good, plain, very resourceful woman."



A not-so-still-life in the back yard with children, water, fire, and a few other basic elements. This is another contemplative painterly piece in Leighton Pierce's on-going "Memories of Water" series. While the ultimate effect is intended to be poetic (and maybe even transformative), it is simultaneously a study in the laws of optics - an exploration of refraction, diffraction, diffusion, reflection, and absorption.

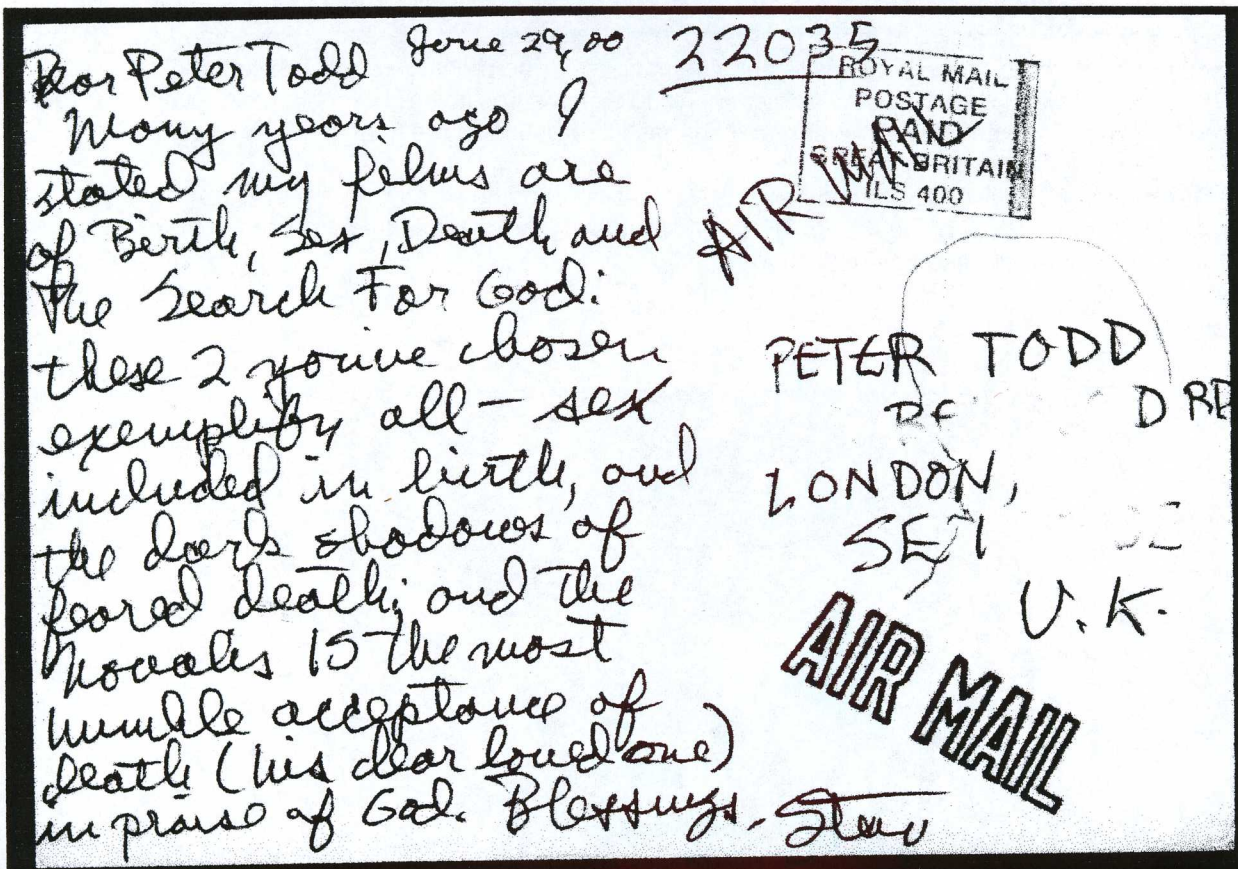
This film began as a part of a series I was planning on "Science for Filmmakers." This was to be the segment called "Optics" and would have demonstrated principles of refraction, diffraction, reflection, absorption, diffusion, etc. To do this, I set up a complex arrangement of water sprinklers, mirrors, glass, and small fires in my backyard. I was to shoot a single 400 foot shot (10 minutes) at 120fps (in 2 minutes) that traversed the complex optical pathway. As it happened, things went wrong during the shot so I was forced to take two shorter takes and face the fact that the original plan had failed. The next day I shot an additional 6 minutes (glass in smoke and the chair) as an improvised supplement which allowed me, in editing, to shift the film toward a more contemplative, poetic piece.

Leighton Pierce.

A window pane is a paradox of sorts, as it unifies two opposing functions. On the one hand it separates the 'inside' from the 'outside' while the two spaces still remain visually connected. Glass, like water, can also flow, and both substances also share the qualities of transparency, refraction, and reflection. It is in this last quality that 'inside' and 'outside' can merge into one image. The accompanying crystal clear soundtrack, which ranges from a groaning swing to a crackling fire, very effectively contrasts the diffuse qualities of "Glass."

Arjon Dunnewind IMPAKT Festival Catalog 1998 (Utrecht, The Netherlands).

WINDOW WATER BABY MOVING.      FIRST HYMN TO THE NIGHT - NOVALIS.      Stan Brakhage.





Some years ago Peter Todd made a half-hour short film for Channel Four entitled *The Shoreline*. Essentially a conversation piece about the state of the nation in the forties, the film touched obliquely but effectively on the themes of race, class and education during the war. Indeed recognising a particular resonance, the film was shown for the first time as a companion to Humphrey Jennings' quintessentially British war time documentary *A Diary For Timothy*.

And yet *The Shoreline* was emphatically not a period piece, and Todd's unfashionably personal and poetic view has stayed with him through the years as the films have got shorter and the conversations turned into monologues. Much of this has of course been due to a lack of funding (and one supposes commercial potential), and it would seem that those in control of the purse strings cannot cope with a short film that has no ironic or 'post-modernist' slant, where what you see is what you get. This has led Todd into the realms of what he terms 'no budget' film making, and the quaintly named 'poem film'.

While berating the fact of what might have been had the funding been forthcoming, it has to be admitted that Todd has perfected the art of making absorbing films with very little money. Perhaps his approach has become more oblique over the years, but the intensely personal and poetic vision has remained. Moreover it is heartening that not only are actors of substantial reputation, no doubt recognising his gift, willing to appear in his films, but that his work has gained a steady reputation at film festivals throughout the world and that many independent cinemas in this country have programmed his films with their main features.

The minutiae of daily life is his forte, approached from an oblique and poetic angle. His latest film *Diary* is no exception, and deals with what you and I would call defining moments in our lives. Large and small, these are moments such as birth, death, serious illness, but also great moments of history on the political stage. How do we define these moments? How do we recognise them? What do they mean to us? How do we cope with them? What gives us the strength?

To answer these questions Todd has devised a monologue spoken by four different actors: John Woodvine, Kathleen Byron, Simon Day, Dona Croll. Not all the monologue is revealed at once and parts are repeated several times. Images of daily life accompany this text. Office life, traffic, views from a train, stations.

Drawing from personal experience, for example, Todd has Simon Day ask his employer for time off because his father is seriously ill; the poignancy of the statement 'I know this is not a good time, I think you've agreed. I'm going anyway' suddenly giving way to the crowing of rooks on the soundtrack. Indeed in Day's affecting performance Todd seems to have found an effective alter-ego, while Dona Croll allows him to observe the reactions of someone outside his circle not participating and perhaps fully understanding his particular 'defining moment'.

In many ways this is the most straightforward of Todd's short films. Certainly it is the least ambiguous or enigmatic. Perhaps this is because the subject matter is so intensely personal. What Todd appears to be saying is that extraordinary events occur in ordinary surroundings, and ordinary surroundings are transformed by those events. Nowhere is this more apparent (but perhaps rather too obvious) than the scene in which Charing Cross station is transformed by the use of a colour filter while a (presumably) new born baby cries on the soundtrack.

Ultimately how do we cope with these moments? What gives us the strength?

'With love', says Todd.

The love of and the love for other people.

'Tell him I love him. Tell you I love you. I love you. I love you...'

Poetry is often defined as pin-pointing an ordinary moment to show its true beauty and significance, in which case with *Diary* Peter Todd has made a true 'poem film'.

I AM ROMEO. Anton Hecht.

I AM ROMEO, was a project constructed through a series of workshops with pupils at Ferryhill as part of my residency for the Year of Visual Art 96, it consisted of going out with costumes and a group of pupils and attempting to get the local populace to say lines from Romeo & Juliet. We used two cameras to give us different textual qualities, Betacam & High 8 which also allowed us to document the process. It looks at the connection between performance and theatre, and further to this the relationship of process to product. It was constructed in conjunction with Simon Northrop, video artist for the Peoples Centre North Shields. The Organising Principle was to open the text of Romeo & Juliet up and give it a relevance to the people of the area, to use some of the conventions of Vox Box TV combined with fly on the wall documentary techniques to create a product that deconstructed itself as it progressed & so fused concept art with community art, for I feel that the devolving of power within community art can fully resolve the Barthean ideas involved with the "Death Of The Author". In a way the heart of I AM ROMEO was the performance in the town for the days of filming, and the end video is a comment on this experience. The basic premise of getting the public and children to say lines of Shakespeare was a simple device, but with many ramifications. The result after filming was that everyone involved in the project had a deeper interest in and understanding of Shakespeare. In this way what is seen as an inaccessible text seemed to become clearer. Putting it on the street was a comment on it's inaccessibility as well as perhaps the impoverishment of language. I AM ROMEO is an epic, but an epic of the everyday.

Romeo & Juliet is a constructed text, used by theatre companies, but I hope that our approach to the text has been performative, while still in its own way looking at sub-text, but actually using the lines to rather than construct artificial characters, to show the personalities of the people saying the lines. The title derives from 'Spartacus', the scene when the Romans ask for Spartacus, and all the slaves reply "I am Spartacus" in the same way that all the slaves are Spartacus, so we are all Romeo, with the text a part of the fabric of our culture, and having a general meaning, though various mediums of love... of romance. Further to this, Ferryhill is a nonedescript kind of place, and what we have attempted is a transformative process wherein the text and our interjection lays a new meaning not only on the people but on the town as well. So in some ways I feel that this work is a homage to 'Wings of Desire' which attempts a not too dissimilar process with Berlin and its populace. We have attempted a form of Brechtian frame break that we feel has allowed us to fully explore and resolve the sometimes conflict between process and product, theatre and performers, documentation and the live happening.



For more information on Stan Brakhage try, Stan Brakhage: The Filmmaker as Poet in Allegories of Cinema American Film In The Sixties by David E James ISBN 0691-04755-3, for more information on Stan Brakhage and Maya Deren try, Visionary Film The American Avant-Garde 1943-1978 by P. Adams Sitney ISBN 0-19502486-9, for more information on Maya Deren try, The Legend of Maya Deren A Documentary Biography and Collected Works by VeVe A. Clark, Millicent Hodson, Catrina Neiman ISBN 0-911689-14-1, for more information on Humphrey Jennings try, Humphrey Jennings: Film-Maker, Painter, Poet edited by Mary-Lou Jennings ISBN 0-85170-118-3.

With Borrowed Eyes. Extract from Abbas Kiarostami talking to David Sterritt about his new film 'The Wind Will Carry Us' and about his unique form of Poetic Cinema. Film Comment July/August 2000.

*There are some filmmakers who say what you just said and proceed to make films that don't tell stories - that really are abstract, with form and color and movement but without pictures conveying a narrative. Has that approach, ever, interested you?*

Every movie should have some kind of story. But the important thing is how the story is told - it should be poetic, and it should be possible to see it in different ways. I have seen movies that didn't attract me or make a lot of sense while I was looking at them, but there were moments in them that opened a window for me and inspired my imagination. I have left many films in the middle because I felt I already had an ending. I felt quite complete and fulfilled with the movie, and if I stayed longer that feeling would be ruined, because it would keep telling me more and forcing me to judge who is the good guy, who is the bad guy, and what's going to happen to them. I prefer to finish it my own way!

*Much of what you say describes how poets work more than how novelists work. It's interesting that your most recent film, The Wind Will Carry Us, draws its title and some of its text from poetry. Are you trying to move farther in that direction - toward cinema as poetry rather than cinema as novel?*

Yes. I feel the cinema that will last longer is the poetic cinema, not the cinema that is just story-telling. In my library at home, the books of novels and stories look brand-new because I just read them once and put them aside; but my poetry books are falling apart at every corner, because I have read them over and over and over! Poetry always runs away from you - it's very difficult to grasp it, and every time you read it, depending on your conditions, you will have a different grasp of it. Whereas with a novel, once you have read it, you have grasped it. Of course, this doesn't encompass all novels. There are stories that do have a poetic essence to them, just as there are poems that are much like a novel. The poetry we had to memorise at school was all that kind - dialogues between a caterpillar and a spider, and that sort of thing. They weren't trying to teach us poetry in the true sense, they were trying to train us and develop us through Poetry.

## MOMENTS/HISTORIES/FEELINGS FILM POEMS 2

WINDOW WATER BABY MOVING - STAN BRAKHAGE. USA. 1959. 13 MINS. 16mm. DIST- LUX.

" [Brakhage] continued to make short lyrical films that mark one of the great periods of American avant-garde film. In this series of films-*Window WaterBaby Moving, Cat's Cradle, Sirius Remembered, The Dead, ....*(he)] invented a form in which the film-maker could compress his thoughts and feelings while recording his direct confrontation with intense experiences of birth, death, sexuality, and the terror of nature." P. Adams Sitney, Visionary Film.

"..Brakhage's treatment of the birth of his daughter. Here he unleashes the full power of his technique, so apt to become abstractly unintelligible when left to his own devices, on a specific subject. The result is a picture so forthright, so full of primitive wonder and love, so far beyond civilisation in its acceptance that it becomes an experience like few in the history of the movies." Arthur Winsten, The New York Post.

AT LAND - MAYA DEREN. USA. 1944. 15 MINS. 16mm. DIST- bfi.

"Mythology, the role of the female, and the use of the camera as a tool manipulating time and space are all present in AT LAND." bfi Avant-Garde Catalogue. " This brilliant visual poem.." Margaret Warwick. Monthly Film Bulletin.

WORDS FOR BATTLE - HUMPHREY JENNINGS. UK. 1941. 8 MINS. 16mm. DIST- bfi.

"In his best films - Words For Battle, Listen to Britain, A Diary for Timothy,...he composes films exactly like a poet. Images and sounds are juxtaposed so that the whole is infinitely richer in its significance than the sum of the individual parts ..". David Robinson, National Film Theatre programme notes. Including extracts from Blake, Browning, Kipling and Milton.

LADY LAZARUS - SANDRA LAHIRE. UK. 23 MINS. 16mm. DIST - bfi.

"Lady Lazarus is a visually woven response to Sylvia Plath's own readings of her poetry. These readings plus extracts from an interview given just before her [Plath's] death provide an anchor for a film which celebrates her macabre humour and cinematic vision. A carousel of images in windows, an atmosphere of constant metamorphosis; her poetry as cinema." Sandra Lahire.

GLASS - LEIGHTON PIERCE. USA. 7 MINS. 16mm. DIST - LUX.

"A not so still life in the backyard with children, water, fire and a few other basic elements. This is another contemplative painterly piece in Leighton Pierce's ongoing "Memories of Water" series. While the ultimate effect is intended to be poetic (and maybe even transformative), it is simultaneously a study in the law of optics - an exploration of refraction, diffraction, diffusion, reflection and absorption." Leighton Pierce.

FIRST HYMN TO THE NIGHT - NOVALIS - STAN BRAKHAGE. USA. 4 MINS. 1994. 16mm. DIST - LUX.

"A hand-painted film whose emotionally referential shapes and colours are interwoven with words (in English) from the first Hymn to the Night by the late 19th century mystic poet Friedrich von Hardenburg, whose pen name was Novalis." Stan Brakhage, Canyon Cinema Catalogue.

DIARY - PETER TODD. UK. 1998. 8 MINS. 16mm. DIST - LUX.

"...a haunting short film by Peter Todd, crafter of poetic ruminations about ordinary life..No special effects: just a camera trained on nondescript surroundings, made poignant by the soundtrack's medley of voices and the director's sensitivity to the layers of emotions that shape the most ordinary of lives.." Geoff Brown, The Times.

I AM ROMEO - ANTON HECHT. UK. 1996. 8 MINS. VHS. c/o. LUX.

"..a project constructed through a series of workshops with pupils at Ferryhill..it consisted of going out with costumes and a group of pupils and attempting to get the local populace to say lines from Romeo & Juliet." Film Publicity