

*Sunshine Sketches of a Dark Garden* was the working title of a film that became *Infunde Lumen Cordibus*. This not, written as application for funding, outlines the ideas on permutation and collage I was brooding on while making the film.

### **Permutation, Collage, and Film Form**

It is always disconcerting to discover again that one is always just beginning. One would think that, after so many years of working in single medium and after dedicating considerable practical and theoretical efforts to assaying its potentials, one might have accumulated a repertory of compositional tropes that one would enable one to escape the necessity of submitting again and again to the requirement that one reconsider the fundamental potentials of the medium, or at the very least, that one might have worked an elementary understanding of his working principles. It is never so.

Of late, I have been reconsidering what makes film amenable to the form of the photomontage. Many of my films have taken photomontage as a central issue — sometimes as a more reflected upon topic, and sometimes as a more immediate and less deliberate construction. But a series of factors have combined to revitalize my thinking on this form of construction, which I shall venture to call “collage” hereafter, by adopting the fiction of considering the component images to be fragments of reality. Primary among the factors are the character of the film that I am just now finishing, *A Man whose Life was Full of Woe has been Surprised by Joy*, and a set of pressures that converged upon it. About two years ago, as I was just about to undertake work on the film, a number of thoughts occurred to me about that topic which intrigued Ejzenstejn for much of his brief life, viz., the format of the film frame and how it might be varied. This was not the first time that the topic had occurred to me, but in the past I generally considered that the only practical manner of overcoming the limitation of the established frame format was to construct an installation-piece, and, while I have no dislike of site-specific constructions, I have decided to restrict my efforts to producing work that can be put in a can and shown in homes and classrooms, and not just in art galleries. But, about two years ago, a number of factors conspired to bring me to reconsider how one might use mattes to reconfigure the enclosure that defines the space that contains a film’s images.

*A Man whose Life was Full of Woe has been Surprised by Joy* was not the first film in the making of which I used mattes — I used mattes to create collages of images in *The Art of Worldly Wisdom, 1857: Fool's Gold, Illuminated Texts* and the various films in the *Exultations: In Light of the Great Giving* region of *The Book of All the Dead*. Since I had used them so often, it

is somewhat astounding that I failed to consider that mattes form frames that can be used to address that issue that fascinated Eizenstein. But all these films used the divided frame in a more or less cubistic fashion or, to put the point more accurately, they used multiple images almost in the fashion of the combinations of images in David Hockney's photo-montages and those of his many followers in the practice.

Not only had I not thought about mattes as constituting frames, I also had given very little reflection to the collage nature of the constructions I used or to the effects of collage: I used multiple images as a means of dividing attention against itself (much as I did through the "polyphonic" use of text, image, narration and sound in those films) and was pretty much content to leave other implications of this form of construction unconsidered. However when I began making *A Man whose Life was Full of Woe has been Surprised by Joy*, I started to think in new ways about what was going on when various images were combined within the frame's rectangle — ways that would not be directed, as I had used them until then, toward the end of splitting the attention and of setting the sundered components against one another, but toward associative ends (similar to those served by some of the relations amongst the images that make an individual frame of *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*) in which the thematic linkages amongst the different images that occupy the screen at the same time explain their coexistence.

Indeed, in setting out to make *A Man whose Life was Full of Woe has been Surprised by Joy*, I did reflect on the contrast between the relations among the various images composing a frame of *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*—or, at least, some of the relations — and those composing a frame of one of the films belonging to the *Exultations: In Light of the Great Giving* region. These deliberations suggested to me that, unless one was to combine the various images into a single, imaginary scene like those we find in a René Magritte painting or a Jerry Uelsmann photograph (and I did not wish to do this), one must, in order to avoid setting them against each other, divide the frame into less geometrical components that I had previously. Thus I struck on the idea of using very elaborate, florid divisions of the screen, and hoped that their baroque qualities would draw attention to the frames themselves, and that the similarities and contrasts between these enclosures could be used to indicate something about the relations among what they enclose. I hoped these relations my help the viewers of *A Man whose Life was Full of Woe has been Surprised by Joy* create associations amongst the images.

This constituted the starting point for *A Man whose Life was Full of Woe has been Surprised by Joy*. I decided that the most direct and most flexible way to create these florid

frames was to build a new “optical printer,” in which the image to be refilmed would be projected onto a rear-projection screen, so that I might be able to use hand-cut mattes, hand-drawn images or hand-drawn masks, and texture screens . A friend and I built the printer, and I began work — and this work I was doing (as well as the new technical implement) exerted additional pressures on me to rethink collage and to understand it in new ways.

Others amongst the pressures that prompted me to rethink the potential of collage arose from happy events. Just when I had finished building this new piece of gear and was beginning to test it, I received an invitation to visit Italy; and, shortly after that, a second invitation. The first was for quick trip to introduce a single programme of my films, and the second was to attend a complete retrospective of my films (which, of course, left me with time to see a little more of the country.) One value these trips had for me is that, on the later trip, I reviewed many of my films, and it was this experience that brought me to think about some elementary features of them that I had not reflected upon earlier; it was there, too, that I saw *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* again, and it was that that made me consider implications of the associative use of multiple images that characterizes some parts that film. These were my first trips to Italy, and they affected me deeply; and what I saw as I visited many, many churches and art galleries, and simply walked through the centres of many cities, towns, and villages, increased the pressure to develop the film in a more florid, almost baroque, direction.

What is more I made my first trip immediately after having been released from the hospital following an emergency that resulted in massive loss of blood and left me very weak — too weak to carry my 16mm. camera. Wanting to work nonetheless, I decided to take along a Super-8 camera that I had never used; to ensure that I did not succumb to the temptation of using familiar methods, I also resolved to leave my Bolex at home. The portability of the camera and the low cost of Super-8 film reacquainted me with the pleasures of taking a diaristic approach — pleasures that I had known when 16mm. was more affordable and that I lost with the dramatic rises in the price of film stocks.

A diaristic approach to shooting itself almost ensures that the composition into which this raw material is combined will have some of the characteristics of a collage. For, when taking a diaristic approach to shooting, one shoots spontaneously, as intriguing or troubling events present themselves; and since there is rarely much coherence to what happens from day to day (especially when one is travelling and is not locked into a daily routine), one ends up with an assortment of quasi-autonomous fragments. Collage presents itself as an obvious way of assembling these fragments. But the format of my raw material reinforced the pressures

towards adopting a collage approach to composing the film, for the fact that the footage was on Super-8 meant that it could not be blown up to fill the full 16mm. frame without a considerable increase in grain. One way to deal with this is to simply to accept this increase in grain, and to find a film form that will accomodate the change in the images' texture that results from reprinting them, and the other is not to enlarge the images so much that they fill the entire screen. The latter was the tack I took, since it fit easily with the idea of using sections of the frame for different purposes.

Critical and theoretical work also exerted pressures that influenced the directions that my reconsideration of collage took. At the time I began *A Man whose Life. . .*, I was engaged in reflections on the nature of the lyric form; the results of these reflections appear in my articles for the Art Gallery of Ontario's film catalogue for the Michael Snow Project, the essay on Stan Brakhage that I wrote for the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, my essay on Ed Emshwiller to accompany Anthology Film Archives retrospective of his work, and in my forthcoming books, *A Body of Vision* and *The Films of Stan Brakhage: An Art Equal to the Body's Truth*. In these various places, I have elaborated the idea that the lyric form is characterized by rhythmic and syntactical structures that suggest they are formed by a mind operating in an atavistic mode. Such forms therefore valorize experiences that belong to a primordial order, and imply that it is the role of art to engender experiences of this mode.

The implications of these efforts for my creative work in film is that it posed for me the question why I find the lyric form so uncongenial. I feel that my own work really came into its own only after I rejected pressures to create lyrical works, and began using longer forms that included a greater diversity of elements and of forms of construction. The question of why I find the lyric form uncongenial has not been an easy one for me to resolve, for I find convictions about the role of art that the lyric form implies—that it suggests an atavistic or primordial form of experience—very appealing. Indeed, a central theme of all of my theoretical writing has been the idea that modernity consolidates itself through a hegemonization of experience — by eliminating all “deviant” modes of experience and authorizing only that mode of experience whose fundamental ways of representing the world involve a summoning of data before the court of experience and subjecting them to the tests of calculative reason. Since I hold these convictions, the claim that artworks belong to a domain that has protected a mode of experience that is both psychologically and historically more primordial than the mode of experience which modernity enfranchises is a proposition that I find very attractive. And even more, I believe that such is modernity's power that it has put even this small, protected zone under siege, as that

academic writing which treats the arts as discursive practice shows; and this attack imposes, on those of us who care, the imperative of concerning oneself with sheltering and preserving experience of that order.

Nonetheless, I cannot accept the claim (implicit in the form of lyric poetry and explicit in the principles of what once was called “New Criticism” and in the declarations of some of the abstract expressionist painters, some of the open field poets, and Stan Brakhage’s commentaries on film and filmmaking) that the role of art is to embody and convey the energies of primordial experience. Such claims seem to me to present only a limited view of the purpose of art. I believe that this conception of the function of art only became widespread as modernity tightened its grip and threatened to wring out of existence non-discursive modes of thinking; and that if one examines that art from periods prior to the Romantic era, one does not find evidence of the same sort of anxiety about artists’ using mixed modes of thinking. In Shakespeare’s writings, as in Milton’s or even in Blake’s (to take those three sublime examples), discursive and non-discursive modes of thinking coexist happily, as propositional and non-propositional linguistic constructs jostle up against one another. The conclusion, that more highly intellectual or analytic modes of response have aesthetic legitimacy (in the sense their presence does preclude the possibility that one’s response is truly an aesthetic response) is one of the implications of Marcel Duchamp’s art, which has certainly had an influence on me. So if, in one sense, most of my work has been collage, my interest in collage stems partly from its capacity to create antithetical sorts of responses and to include competing modes of experience in my filmworks. *A Man whose Life was Full of Woe has been Surprised by Joy* hyperbolized this character of my work.

I realize, of course, that one might allege (analogously to the way that modernists argued about representation), that the heterogeneity was a mark of an impure work, typical of an era before people distinguished the aesthetic realm from the non-aesthetic realm or aesthetic experience from quotidian or discursive experience. I have long found such arguments rather empty, as they reverse historical examination and theoretical formulation from their proper order in the process of inquiry by according theoretical formulations a normative role. I have preferred a post-modernist approach (to use that horrible, fashionable epithet), accommodating such an unmodernist use of a wide variety of forms of construction (to provoke as wide a variety of types of experience) as those of which the tradition has made use. I have tried to create works that encourage a greater variety of types of response (and was not restricted to those atavistic modes of responses that the modernists endorsed), for my character seems to demand that

what I create use modes of construction that encourage a discursive response as well a sensuous (aesthetic) response. My greatest delight in artmaking is to work with the tensions that arise from contraposing discursive and sensuous responses, or from contraposing analytic and ecstatic responses; and I believe I have plenty of precedents in the histories of art and literature for doing so. This is a part of the explanation of why I began using longer forms that include a greater diversity of elements and of forms of construction.

If the compositional approach I took to *A Man whose Life . . .* depended in large measure on the use of elaborate, even baroque, divisions of the frame, I can now imagine taking a more systematic approach to collage (similar in some respects to that I took in *Illuminated Texts*, but extended so that the material in the collage includes elements within the frame, and not simply, different shots, as is true for most, though not all, of the 1982 film), in order to generate sequences of images that have associative relations. This is what I propose for film I hope to undertake this summer, *Sunshine Sketches of a Dark Garden*.

As well as the aesthetic reasoning I have outlined, there are also technical motivations for my wishing to take collage in this direction; as is customary for me, these formal ideas developed as I played about with certain technical processes (something I tend to do between films, or when I hit a patch when I feel that any efforts I might make towards bringing a film closer to completion would only compromise it.) These explorations paid off, for just as the idea of using elaborate, almost baroque, mattes came to me as I toyed with the rear-screen optical printer I was in the process of constructing (and forced me to bring that project to a more usable form), so the idea for extending the collage principle down to the elements that make-up a single frame, and to extend it in such a way as to ensure that those elements have associative relations with one another, occurred to me as I was writing some programme code for computer animation. In a fallow period, and simply experimenting, mostly for the sake of keeping busy, I thought to write some very simple computer programmes for doing the transitions between images of the sort that have become popular in the last few years—transitions that look like venetian blinds opening to reveal a second image underneath the first, or curtains opening up to expose a second image behind the first, or random windows opening up one by one, until a second image has been completely uncovered. I considered these programmes as merely toy programmes — after all, one can see a number of such transitions on television on any given evening, and I had used similar transitions (almost to death) in the *Exultations: In Light of the Great Giving* region of *The Book of All the Dead*; but, in due course, working on this project provided me with a very simple insight that had a momentous impact on me: that such

transitions create a cascade of photomontages. I realized that it would take only simple alterations to the programmes that I was writing to change them from being a means of creating transitions between images to a means of creating photomontages that undergo continual alteration. I also realized that such means could be used to produce, for example, surrealistic objects of various sorts, *cadavres exquis* to artificial landscapes of the sort that Max Ernst's painting has made familiar. Indeed what I mean by saying that these transitions constitute a cascade of photomontages can be understood by taking almost any example from Max Ernst's *Une Semaine de Bonté*: imagine the principle incongruity (say, for the sake of example, one of the famous bird-headed creatures) and convert that incongruity into a dynamic form (having the form of the bird rolling over that of the human, so the person acquires a bird head, then a bird body, then bird legs.) This is what I hope to do in *Sunshine Sketches of a Dark Garden*. Of course, for every moment in the cascade of photomontages to possess visual interest and for its dynamism to contribute, moment by moment, to the photomontage's effect, the variations in the accolated shapes, and the evolution they undergo, must be adjusted for each new set of montaged elements — but that simply entails writing a new programme (by modifying a template), and I enjoy programming and this is something I definitely want to do, and have been working towards.

I feel considerable enthusiasm about the prospects of working with the new tools that I have been developing, for I believe that the computer presents us with new possibilities in joining together realistic fragments to fashion the most extravagant possible imaginings (as well as to give the purely imaginary a concrete form.) An advantage of collage is that the method does not utterly transform the raw material as it incorporates it into the whole the collage constitutes — the original, real thing is allowed a degree of autonomy, to testify to its real worldly origins; for this reason, the whole does not become purely and simply a sign of the imagination and its operations. What is just as important, the computer allows one to use controlled randomness, and I believe that this potential will sometimes be valuable in creating such collages. Indeed, the impression that the cascade of collages rolls on, beyond one's control (similar to the feeling that the computer determined montage of *Illuminated Texts* elicits) could be quite valuable.

I am hoping to find ways of creating “automated collages” (i.e., collages created with moving mattes, which dynamically reconfigure images) for *Sunshine Sketches of a Dark Garden* that will be in line with the aspiration that André Breton expressed for his art: that it would involve “the future transmutation of those two seemingly contradictory states, dream and reality,

which are seemingly contradictory, into a sort of absolute reality, a surreality, if one may so speak” (the first *Manifesto of Surrealism*.) At the same time, I believe that it will be important to the film’s overall effect to highlight the fact that the film’s extravagant forms have their origins in material reality, lest the tensions between the contradictory states become too relaxed.

The interplay between the imagination and reality has long been a theme of my work. My interest in this topic has had technical implications, amongst other consequences, for the desire to work with tensions that arise from the relationship of the real and the imaginary was what motivated me to undertake work in optical printing and digital image processing in the first place. This interest also provided one of the reasons for combining written text, spoken text, and images in the way I did in many films in *The Book of All the Dead*, for the unity of those films is only virtual, and never made fully present, while the components are real world elements — narrated passages describing actual(?) incidents, supertitles presenting citations from texts or describing experiences, andm by far the most important, held-held camera shots of unstaged events combined through montage. In *Sunshine Sketches of a Dark Garden*, I plan to make the real world origins of the material from which my collages are constructed by shooting in a diaristic manner again, using a hand-held camera to capture unplanned events, as my belief that one photographs best when one sets aside willfulness and simply seizes whatever the world provides for one’s attention, is simply too dear to me to forsake.

Until I finished my work on *A Man whose Life was Full of Woe . . .*, I had never considered the relation, however distant it may at times have been, that some forms of construction that are common in my work have to some forms of construction that the Surrealists favoured, or the relation that the ideas that motivated the Surrealists’ use of collage have to the ideas that have motivated my own use of collage. However, during the past several months, I have begun working on a book that considers film’s place in movements in twentieth-century art — that considers film’s role in the Dada movement, in the Surrealist movement, in the Constructivist movement, etc. These reflections have produced further ideas about collage that, in certain respects coincide with the ideas developed during those reflections I engaged in prior to, and during, the making of the film, but in other respects diverge significantly from them. After years of feeling intense scepticism about Surrealist art, which arose primarily from Surrealism’s involvement with illusionistic forms of construction (evident, *inter alia*, in the use of haptic space to which it frequently resorts), I have written myself into feeling grudging respect for their theoretical or programmatic pronouncements (as well as for their art) — respect enough that I have been considering exploring some of their practices in *Sunshine Sketches of*



*a Dark Garden*, and even of developing compositional techniques that relate to some of the methods that the Surrealists employed. And this of course (as even the Lautréamont quotation that is appears in nearly every primer of Surrealism — “as beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing-machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table” — makes clear) has brought me up against collage.

As I thought about the relevance that the founding ideas of Surrealism have to my films, I realized that my work, like that of the Surrealists, develops out of an urge to reconcile antithetical impulses. The desire to make a film that extends the collage principle down to the individual frame and to do so by using computer graphics technologies relates to my desire to make a film that reconciles antithetical impulses. For computer technology allows one to create juxtapositions of elements drawn from the real world, and to compose them into a stream of incongruous forms, that could never appear together in reality within a single real space. I have long understood that the urge to bring opposites together has been an important motivation for the forms of my work, but I had not realized that this fusing of the imagined and the real reconciles antithetical impulses that the Surrealists would have found familiar. This realization brought me to consider that possibility of engendering experiences that were even more radically antithetical than those the films I have made until now have evoked.

For, while collage can be used as Sergej Ejzenstejn and John Heartfield used it, to juxtapose thematically related elements to discursive ends, it can also be used as the Surrealists used it, to juxtapose apparently incongruous elements in a fashion that defies discursive interpretation, and so to animate a response of a more primordial sort. For any juxtaposition of incongruous elements that preserves the reality of its component elements, and that does not seem simply fantastic, is to some degree surreal — this conviction is the basis for Breton's definition of the Surrealist image in the first *Surrealist Manifesto*: “It is the marvellous faculty of attaining two widely separate realities without departing from the realm of our experience, of bringing them together, and drawing a spark from their contact . . . and of disorienting us in our memory by depriving us of a frame of reference.” Or, as Max Ernst commented, in “What is the mechanism of Collage,” when two objects (or, as Ernst termed them, “two realities”), irreconcilable in appearance, are joined with one another, on a plane which apparently does not suit them, we try to understand that coupling from a higher standpoint, and to take it as a manifestation of the marvellous. Out of the contradictoriness of two elements, a new reality emerges that, because it holds together elements that we ordinarily consider cannot coexist, this higher reality exerts a power to fascinate. It is this sort of sensation

that I hope to evoke with *Sunshine Sketches of a Dark Garden*.

I consider both the potential of collage to elicit an analytic or discursive response and its potential to engender a sense of the marvellous to be equally important. A collage of strangely accolated forms can sometimes evoke experiences of a sort that modernity has rendered obsolete — experiences that do not distinguish between dream and reality, between the inner and the outer realm — and overcomes the modern prejudice that quotidian reality is what is normative and any other reality (which it consigns to the realm of unreality) is the realm of the demonic. Such forms give a place to the marvellous and to its ally, the demonic, and show the marvellous and the demonic to be real; making this evident is my reason for proposing to use forms that seem broken, damaged, and extreme. I propose to create a cascade of continually altering photomontages that will be so extreme that it provokes exactly this experience. Yet I also want *Sunshine Sketches* to make clear that the cascade of continually altering photomontages was created by methods that balance intuition and reason, spontaneity and deliberation.

In *Sunshine Sketches of a Dark Garden*, I propose to use chance to help select the elements for the collage; this is in line with my interest in creating even more extreme antitheses of response than those I have previously used. Chance has the effect of rending the fabric of our quotidian representation of the world and allowing another reality (or, what is the same, conception of reality) to surge forth. “Whatever is inconceivable without contradiction is not possible,” medieval philosophers used to say. But the marvellous is anything that manifests contradiction—such contradictions are marvelous insofar as they expose the limitations of any construction of reality that is based on the principle of the excluded middle (roughly, the absence of contradiction), for to manifest contradiction it must in the first place exist (that is, be real.) Since a contradiction cannot be thought, the effect of a contradiction is to introduce a gap or a “spacing” in consciousness. A contradiction rends the tissue of our consciousness of reality so that, through the rupture in our (pre)conceptions, something *unheimlich* (uncanny) — something strange, marvellous, bizarre or terrifying — might reveal itself. As it lays ruin to our (pre)conceptions, it engenders disorientation and effects *dépaysement*. By producing a gap in consciousness, it has the same effect as the negative hallucination, that is to reveal the operation of thanatos, that same agency responsible in the first place for the compulsion to repeat. It is these capacities of contradiction that made the Surrealists crave incongruity and to admire strangely accolated forms, especially those whose disorienting powers had been created fortuitously.

These new understandings have motivated me to extend my previous work with collage, by applying collage principles both to the composition of the individual frame and to the sequencing of the "incidents" that the film presents. My goal in using these collage techniques is to create an even stronger awareness of the real worldly origins of the elements that the collage incorporates, and yet at the same time, to place these elements in a context so startling that it will make viewers see them freshly, and as marvellous. I have long been interested in formulating means whereby I might engender a sense of the theological import of profane things and a recognition that external and material situations correspond to inward conditions, and I believe that the new resources of computer graphics workstations provide exciting new ways of giving that evidence tangible form.

The exchange between the real and the imaginary proceeds in two directions, not only from imagination to reality (as occurs when incongruous forms are juxtaposed in images whose overall texture and form are realistic, but also from reality to the imagination as, through cinematography, reality provides the computer graphics artist with the materials for imaginative transformation. Reality's capacity to serve as the imagination's collaborator seems to me among its most important features. Thus my work on the various films in *Exultations: In Light of the Great Giving* region of *The Book of all the Dead* and on *A Man whose Life was Full of Woe has been Surprised by Joy* leads me to conclude that the working methods I am proposing lead to a more passionate consciousness of the sensory world, for it means that abandonment of accepted perspectives and cultivation of hitherto unforeseen possibilities. It implies the discovering of the infinite within the concrete forms of our ordinary experience. I hope that an approach which involves the continual reformulation of a few story fragments (I shall explain the principle of the repetition-with-variation I propose to use presently) will be able to elicit a sense of the possibility that a small number of concrete forms can be combined in nearly endless permutations, and can engender thereby a sense of "the continual coming-on of novelty" (to use William James' resonant expression.)

There are various means for highlighting the real-worldly origin of the components of the visual forms: One can emphasize the seams where parts of two images join together, for by doing this one creates a dialectic between the outside of an image (the boundaries where it is joined with the second image) and its inside, and so, by implication, between artifice and reality. Or one can present the components in many transformed versions, to imply the original from which they all derive (this was the approach that I took in *A Man whose Life was Full of Woe has been Surprised by Joy*.) Or one can use systematic procedures for combining the different

images, to suggest a “hands-off” approach, according to which both the content of the images and the ways they are combined are beyond the artist's will — that what brings these images together in a particular configuration is beyond volition.

The last means especially intrigues me at this time, and I shall employ it to make *Sunshine Sketches*. My reasons for wanting to employ more systematic means for combining new images in this new project than those I used in making *A Man whose Life was Full of Woe has been Surprised by Joy* also derive from reflections that were stimulated both by the experience of working with the new technologies I have mentioned (though, I hasten to point out, such working methods are not driven exclusively by technology, for I have taken such an approach to collage in the past, when I have not worked with any of the new electronic technologies.) When referring to the diaristic approach to shooting, I mentioned that such an approach demands a spontaneous response to whatever presents itself. For many years I have said (though only half meaning it) that I was glad to be a filmmaker, and not a creative artist, because a filmmaker's task is not to construct something *de novo*, but rather the blessed one of accepting the gift of whatever is given us. The most wonderful moments of shootings are those moments when one sets aside any expectations and disavows any hopes for what one wants to achieve, and simply opens oneself to the gift of the given. Filmmaking, I have said, is more an act of cherishing the gift of the given than of building a place of veneration. Taking a systematic approach similarly puts the film's construction beyond one's volition.

Taking a systematic approach has another advantage, that relates to the arbitrariness of the arrangements it engenders. The lack of fit between the segmentation produced by the system and the divisions natural to the objects to which the system is applied results in peculiar divisions of the original form. This is one of the fundamentals of cinematic montage — the consequences of such discrepancy are evident in montage passages in film in which the filmmaker gives him- or herself a set of rules for taking shots that have nothing to do with the internal development of what is being filmed—as when, for example, filmmakers give themselves the rule that, when shooting, if there is any movement in the scene they are shooting, the camera will always follow the principal movement in the scene, or, if there is no movement in the scene, the camera will follow the outline of its most prominent form, and to stop shooting whenever, say, one crosses a strong contrary movement or a contrasting shape. When these rules are followed, then the end of the shot does not cut the represented action off at one of its natural joints—rather the shot makes arbitrary incisions into the world, and what it excises does not conform to the segmentation of what it presents. If, moreover, these arbitrary

incisions into reality are joined according to some systematic rule that also does not take into account the individual shot's unique, internal dynamics, but only its external features (as when, for example, shots are juxtaposed because they possess contrasting spatial features—one presenting a two-dimensional space, the other an illusion of three-dimensional space—without taking into account the details of spatial organization peculiar to the two shots, one can create the impression that the cut that juxtaposes the shots brings together incongruous forms. In this way, it strengthens the film's collage features.

But the trick to making evident that one has taken a systematic approach to filming in order to open oneself to the gift of the given (but only in such a way as to find in reality what was already in the imagination) is to overcome willfulness, and it is the value of overcoming willfulness that is the foundation of the most important role of the systematic approach I propose for *Sunshine Sketches of a Dark Garden*. This has been one reason for my having stochastic processes decide features of my films. I have long been interested in moving beyond 'self-expression' (and the belief that self-expression is the essence of art I believe to be a phenomenon associated only with the post-Renaissance West) and to give evidence of the operations of nature itself (a far older, and more widespread belief about the role of art.) Willy-nilly, one must engage in constructive activities when making a film; but the principles upon which a film is built can have many sources: they can lie with the self (the imagination); or, if one can let the self dissolve, they can come from places beyond the individual maker and perhaps thereby can reflect the order of the first act of creation; or they can come from the point where external pattern and imagination—the outer realm to which the created object belongs and the inner world of imagined form—meet. If one can make evident that the place where the inner and outer world meet is place from the film's images arise, one has achieved my goal of strengthening the sense of cherishing the gift of the given.

How is that possible to make evident that the film's images emerge from the place where outer creation and inner imagination meet? I asked myself this question, but a possible solution to the problem was one that took a long time to suggest itself. At length it came to me, after watching the films of Harry Smith and Larry Jordan again (and considering how I might write about them)—though neither of those filmmakers uses the process that I have in mind. What I propose for *Sunshine Sketches* is this: first, to use stochastic processes to create a set of schemata, with actors and actions as variable. To give a few simple examples, one might have actors A, B and C, and a set of actions (e.g., meet, cross, join, surmount, cancel, excite) and chase, and random procedures might assign actors to the actions, and create a sequence of

actions (perhaps, for the sake of illustration, the following, A crosses B, B joins C, A surmounts C and C cancels B.) This amounts to a framework—something like logicians call a model—that can be interpreted in various ways: if A and B are geometric shapes, then “A crosses B” means that A passes over top of B, while if A and B are actors, “A crosses B” can mean that A does something to anger B (I am aware this is a play on words, but that is part of the point; how language inf(lects) the image is an issue that interests me enormously, and one which working with genotexts allows me to explore.) Suppose that one interprets this genotext to mean that A does something to anger B, and interprets a series of other genotexts in ways that similarly refer to human actions and human motivations; one is then left with question of how one might create an unfolding story for the sequences of actors and actions the model lays out (forming such a story of course becomes the work of imagination.) Of course, this means that the story seems somewhat disjoint, and the elements related to each other in a strange and mysterious way.

The method is not entirely unlike that which Harry Smith used in making his film, *No. 12* (sometimes called *The Magic Feature* or *Heaven and Earth Magic*), a feature-length animation that Smith made from images he collected from various sources. Smith described the process he used to generate that work in an interview:

"Generally speaking, [the *Mysterioso* film and *Heaven and Earth Magic*] was made by trying to collect interesting pictures, cutting them out, and then filing them. . . . Toward the end I had everything filed in glassine envelopes: any kind of vegetable, any kind of animal, any kind of this that and the other thing, in all different sizes. Then file cards were made up. For example, everything that was congruent to [*Heaven and Earth Magic*] was picked out. All the permutations possible were made up: say, there's a hammer in it, and there's a vase, and there's a woman, and there's a dog. Various things could then be done hammer hits dog; woman hits dog; dog jumps into vase; and so forth. It was possible to set up an enormous number of cross references.

This was all written on little slips of paper, the file cards -- the possible combinations between this, that, and the others. The file cards were then arranged, in an effort to make a logical story out of it. Certain things would have to happen before others: Dog-runs-with-watermelon has to occur after dog-steals-watermelon. . . .

First I collected the pieces out of old catalogues and books and whatever;

then made up file cards of all possible combinations of them; then I spent maybe a few months trying to sort the cards into logical order. A script was made for that. . . . The script was made up for the whole works on the basis of sorting pieces.

I should like to take Harry Smith's creative method to a higher level of abstraction. Where Harry Smith began with a set of concrete images, I would like to begin with a set of variables (the "x," "y," and "z" of high school algebra classes) that can stand for a range of elements, with a set of interpretations (a number of interpretations for x, equivalent to saying, "let x represent a square" or "let x represent a male person"), and with a set of functions (which can be expressed, for the purposes of computation, in Prolog — my favorite programming language, and a language much used in the field of artificial intelligence — in the form "passes\_over(x,y)," which means that x passes over y.) A function of this sort I call a genotext. To explore these means of creating with genotexts more fully, I intend to develop a set of interpretation for the same "plot armature," involving different orders of visual forms — to interpret the same "plot unit," say, passes\_over(x,y), using different types of visual forms: abstract visual forms, forms depicting spatial relations amongst objects, and forms depicting human interaction.

For each interpretation, I propose to create, through a controlled stochastic process a script for a story (i.e., a sequence of genotexts) The control will result largely from the restrictions that must be put on the various happenings—restrictions that are analogous to Smith's stipulation that his plot elements must be sequenced in such a way as to make "a logical story out of it" and his realization that to make a story out of it, "certain things would have to happen before others: Dog-runs-with-watermelon has to occur after dog-steals-watermelon." (Most of my ideas for this derive from Prof. Wendy Lehnert's application of graph theoretical ideas to the sequencing of narrative elements .)

Further, I intend to find ways to ensure that the viewers are aware that same armature -- the same genotext -- informs actions belonging to two different visual registers (abstract forms, forms depicting objects assuming various relationships in space, and forms depicting actual human interaction.) By using the same story armature several times, giving our "model" a sufficient number of interpretations that people might discern the common structure, I hope that this repetition-with-variation will highlight the creative role of the imagination in providing interpretations for the models—or, in other words, will make explicit the interplay between roles that chance and human decision-making plays in giving the film its shape. I also hope that this

repetition-with-variation will help some viewers to see that a genotext — a verbal construction — account for every element in the set of its interpretations, and that this will encourage some viewers to consider the interrelation between words and images in the film.

Furthermore, to the end of ensuring that viewers are aware that same armature shapes incidents belonging to the different visual registers, I wish to intersperse, through both serial and simultaneous collage, a number of interpretations of the same series of connected plot units. I believe that, for example, combining abstract forms and forms depicting human interaction within the same frame will help to make the armature evident. I hope that giving evidence of the armature that determines the sequence of human events will allow me to make the narrative more disorienting and more fantastic; this, of course, is in line with my desire to make a piece that radicalizes collage methods. This interlacing of forms belonging to different visual registers is a principal reason for my wanting to create “automated collages.”

To indicate that material for *Sunshine Sketches of a Dark Garden* comes from the real world, and has not been invented, I shall, as I noted above, work with shots of unstaged incidents, taken with a hand-held camera, and without deliberation; it is an article of my faith that evidence of the spontaneous nature of shooting gets inscribed into the shot, just as the spontaneous character of a jazz improvisation gets inscribed into jazz music. Such evidence that the raw material for the collages was produced using spontaneous, open form methods will be essential to the impression that the work is not a product of will, and that its contents are unplanned events that captured the filmmaker’s interest and, more to the point, that captured his imagination. To leave myself open to accepting such gifts as the world provides, I must shoot without a plan, and with very few preconceptions. Thus, the “functions” that our plot model will work with will have to be decided (mostly) after watching the initial footage; once these plot functions are decided upon, abstract footage can be generated to illustrate the various functions. More hand-held footage will also be produced at this point — this time with preconceptions influencing the selection of what to shoot and how to shoot it. (Thus, this cycle, of first shooting the raw material, without any notion of how the shots might be associated into a script, then developing a script, then shooting some more will involve another sort of interplay between imagination and reality.) This method will also guarantee that the plot actions will be distributed over a number of characters (the identity of “x” and “y” will change from shot to shot, ensuring the narrative does not consolidate the images into a single, readily apprehensible story line; this dispersal should help make evident that process of fragmentation and recombination make up this work, and so should strengthen its collage aspect.



By developing the film's structure using stochastic means, I hope to make evident that my role in making the film has been rigorously curtailed and that I have surrendered control to another generative power. Harry Smith said about the use of automatic methods of the sort that he used to generate *Heaven and Earth Magic*, "Somebody, perhaps Burroughs, realized that something was directing it, that it wasn't arbitrary, and that there was some kind of what you might call God. It was just chance. Some kind of universal process was directing these so-called arbitrary processes; and so I proceeded on that basis: Try to remove things as much as possible from consciousness or whatever you want to call it so that the manual processes could be employed entirely in moving things around. As much as possible, I made it automatic." Because I agree so very deeply with the ideas that Smith states here, I plan to use stochastic means to "remove things as much as possible from consciousness" and to allow a higher process to control what is going on. In doing so, I propose nothing truly original — after all, composers John Cage, LaMonte Young, Christopher Hobbs and George Brecht have all used related means, to similar ends (and John Cage first employed such compositional methods several decades ago.) Further, Hollis Frampton used ideas from graph theory, ideas about graph connectivity, in his writings on narrative. Nor is it something new even in my own work, as I have often used open field methods to the same end — I have even used graph theoretical techniques and ideas from the field of artificial intelligence in a previous film, to decide the sequences of images (the transitional networks used in *Illuminated Texts*.) What I am proposing, then, is to extend the means that I, and others, have used previously, by applying new technologies in image-making and the new science of script analysis (from the field of artificial intelligence, and especially from the work of Wendy Lehnert and the Yale School of Artificial Intelligence, for Lehnert has worked out a pretty precise formalization of "the graph connectivity of plot units.")

Structures that derive from permutational methods of the sort just described have interested me as well because they non-hierarchic structures (since a set of permutations accords absolutely equal value to each of the elements of the set that undergoes permutation, as every element appears an equal number of times in the permutation set, and in every possible position in the permutation set); and I believe it an unwarranted aesthetic restriction to work with established forms of construction (for example, perspectival or narrative constructions, or harmonic-tonal musical constructions) that result in privileging some of the works elements over other. Structures that derive from permutational methods of the sort just described have interested me for another reason: anyone who has toyed with permutations knows that, as more

elements are introduced, the number of permutations of those elements rises rapidly, and so attains staggeringly large dimensions. Structures that derive from permutational methods therefore furnish a means for demonstrating the imagination's vertiginous freedom.

In fact, I have used permutation to produce serial variations before: many years ago (1975) I made a film entitled *Permutations and Combinations* that used a small set of images, some of which had sounds associated with them, and which presented serially the set of permutations of those images (and sounds) arranged in such a way that the film had a mirror structure, so that the second half of the film is simply the first half shown in reverse (what interested me in the result was that both the first half and the second seemed to have an accelerando form, when one would have expected that if the first half of the film appeared to speed up, that the mirror image of the first half would seem to slow down; that there was no real speeding up or slowing down, since every image was presented for just one frame, also intrigued me.) I also set myself the task of creating, for the entire *Exultations: In Light of the Great Giving* region of *The Book of All the Dead*, the greatest “musical” variety that I could conceive creating out of a relatively small set of images and sounds. With the last of the *Exultations* films, I pushed the intuitive approach to generating variety through recombination as far as I can, for the time being, imagine taking it. So with this project, I am now proposing formalizing this approach, so as to carry it further using new means that have become available only in the past few years.