

Brakhage at Concordia [Bourget Building, January 26, 2001]

transcribed by **Lys Woods**

BRAKHAGE: So the subject, as I understand it, today, is the home movie. Is that right? (Inaudible answer.) Cheryl Simon? (laughs) Oh, I'm sorry...oh dear. Hello. I'm sorry if I kept you waiting. (Richard Kerr: "That's the advertised concept, but umm..") Yeah. Okay, well it's a good place to start. Because first of all I think it's all home movies. Everything else is hubris and hyped bullshit really. It's all home movies. It's all, at best, amateur. Now usually it's not good enough to be called amateur, but amateur is certainly, as you speak French so regularly here you know, means lover. And for all the people who despise the term and make fun of it and use it as a derogatory term, the truth of the matter is that there is nothing greater on earth than to actually be able to extend your love and to express your feeling of love for those that you do love, and maybe I'm a big romantic; that will be soon clear, but I think it's something I share with most people that haven't been too recently disillusioned by some abuse of that term.

Now that's the other problem, a lot of people have abused love just horribly in our time. First of all the dictionaries and the etymologists have that the word so applies, is so misapplied that one can say: "I love sunsets, I love tomatoes, I love my mother, my father, I love my sister whom I just had a big sibling rivalry with. I love my cat, my dog; I love the president. I love the flag"—so on. "I love these toys. I love my job," you don't hear that too much, but anyway, the word gets so diluted that it, finally it's something that one can't in fairness use when you encounter the real feelings of affection, not just to a mate, say, or a wife or husband, but to a good friend even; you say, "Well, how can I use that word that's so dirtied by various usages?"

So, it's a word like art that needs to be to some extent protected. Not to be niggardly about it. Certainly, wherever one feels a real sense of loving compassion one should express it and acknowledge it. Or where one feels art one should at least hopefully hope something's art, but one shouldn't be too sure 'til you've lived with it for awhile, or that it be culturally such 'til it has been around for awhile. And one of the problems, and likenesses that film shares with love, is that always love is having to be regenerated, and its terms are always newly come upon in any given language. And usually are come upon meaningfully when one actually has such a suffusion of feeling that there's no other term that will do. And then one hopes one has the term left to use at that moment.

Similarly, film has been around, not long enough to be fairly called a cultural art, and we don't know that it will be. How long can it be preserved? People keep having ideals about this. I can tell you the outside ideal I've heard at the moment, is that a tight-packed, twice-washed, well made interneg that's packed airtight in cellophane, you know like a heavy saran wrap, will last probably for 170 years with no noticeable change in color or deterioration of line. So...but nothing's been around for 170 years so we don't know for sure, but it seems, by all the things I've read, a reasonable hypothesis. Love of course, unless one is thinking of it as lasting beyond death which real lovers certainly do, of course, also has a life limitation as itself on earth, however one's designed it. The other thing you can say about art, in any sense, and love that's related and is certainly more particularly true of film, though we don't know if it is one (an art) or not, is that you can

say that it will be personal and individual, as personal and individual in the appreciation as it has to be in the making. And why does it have to be in the making? Because in the making one wishes to create something that's absolutely essential to oneself, and will express the truth--the most truth that anyone can know. And though people do everything they can socially to abort this truth it still remains unarguable that every single person is absolutely unique on earth, and there's never been anything like you or me or any of us here ever before, or ever conceivably could be. And that also... what even makes that more maddening and almost frightening beyond belief, that every moment that keeps being more and more true; that is, every moment is new. This moment is new. What I said just a few seconds ago is past now. And this is new for each of us, because each of you have brought to this, experiences by the billions probably, that no one else on earth has ever had.

In addition to which we know that in our cellular structure wherein we're most alike, most liken to each other that at least one can set up a body of medicine that, to some extent, can cure most of us of some of the same diseases or ills. But the truth of the matter is that cells, those that are involved in cells and look at them closely enough to see their individuality know that there are no two cells in anybody's given body that are at all alike, and if you want the most maddening exercise of this; I mean, there are reasons why even though you don't see all the cells of any particular body, you can soon come to feel that that must be so as you don't find any that are alike, and furthermore that there are rational arguments and laws which suggest that that must be true. The most wonderful exercise, and you can easily do it in this weather: get a little piece of black velvet, go out and catch a few snowflakes. And then take your magnifying glass and look at them. There's only about six forms of snowflakes but I defy you to find two alike, and if you do and if you can keep them frozen solid enough to show them, you've made the Guinness Book of World Records. And then when you look and see how unique and individual within this very limited form that each have. Like you know there's the...however many pointed star snowflake, there's the hexagonal snowflake, and so on so forth: there's just very few forms. And then you look at those in your little hand, and you have to have sub-zero weather and not breath on them and watch them through your magnifying glass, and then look up and see (them) coming down everywhere, everywhere, piling up on the ground everywhere, and then you have some sense of what your own cellular system is, as distinct from

anybody else's collection of individual and unique cells.

And all of these must somehow collaborate with each other in various ways or we die. I mean they have to get together, and I've seen this on a really microscopic level, where you have individual heart cells have been separated out and each of them make this little tiny pulse and each of their pulses are slightly different. Different rhythm. Then you nudge them together on a petri dish, and get several of them together and one of their pulses begins to dominate the others and then they're all beating like a little group of six or seven and finally thousands of them hundreds of thousands finally getting together to make up the beating, the complex beating, of the four chambers of the heart which really doesn't have a ka-thump, ka-thump, but it has four chambers in complex interaction that make at least eight and when you count in the beats of the less noticeable or hearable beats of the valves opening and closing and so on, you have really a great super jazz drumming instrument which also is unique and distinct from any other person's and which is unique and distinct from moment to moment. But we do share under certain pressures the beats speed up and become faster with their own rhythms, but faster or slower sometimes become unbearable under certain unhappinesses like failed love is one of the worst if not the worst. Then the pain that is felt in the whole chest and which becomes integral with the heart's felt agony is again absolutely unique but one wants needs to share it somehow. It's too big for the chest. Too big for one person so they go ka-boom, ka-boom, ka-boom (rhythmically tapping his chest) and thus begins the dance, thus begins music, and finally they get the hollowed drum and whack, whack (pounds seat) and send it for miles with more complexity as they listen more and more to their heart and it is unique beat to that person's, just his or hers attention to it, as to what it is, and that's the beginning of music, and therefore the art of music. And finally, then, other things are added like a hollow reed that can play some of the tones that one can hear in the ear of the nervous system, and eventually bassoons and who knows what all—you know: bagpipes to lead men into war and the whole thing, a juke harp, and whatever, but so it is with film. And it all is home movies.

I tell you when I first really realized it; I always kind of knew it in myself, but when I first really realized it, when I was privileged to be invited to a special afternoon final performance of the restored Judy Garland film, uh god help my brain, James Mason, Robin Bickford, (audience help), *A Star Is Born*, thank-you, thank-you. And I was surrounded in the afternoon

by mostly Hollywood people, you know, that were just, I mean, not just famous people but people just from the neighborhood. And as the movie which was an old movie was unraveling, I began hearing people speak up quite openly like they do in livingrooms you know when they show the home movies they say, "Oh, do you remember when that drugstore! You remember that drugstore that's where Uncle Harry got ...," and so on. And you know, meanwhile the camera's moved on and followed Judy Garland and moved out of the scene, and it went on like that the whole thing and then someone was telling someone else, quite openly like they would in a living-room, saying, "Oh it was terrible what happened to Charles Bickford he's such a great actor, but he ran foul of," I forget which producer, some producer, "and they black-balled him and he didn't have any work for thirty years." And now he gets a final before he died, he did his great final thing in *A Star is Born*. And all these stories came pouring out from all these people. Then I began going to other shows in Hollywood whenever I went to town, and I found this was not uncommon, and you don't get in the little, sort of like, regular movie theatres, you know like the A-plex theatres or something in Westwood, but you get it if you got out into the neighborhoods at all. People discuss their home movies because that's the town where most of these movies are made. And certainly it's the town where most of the people came from who made the movies. So, so they're traveling in Egypt and doing the *Queen Of Sheeba* or whatever, but it's still some movie star down the block and how she did it, and how Hollywood it was, and is.

Well, having had that idea I began to investigate the word amateur and I began to study more the home movies of people which I also had, just by rote, always sort of despised. I mean what an imposition: somebody goes to Wyoming with their wife and mother-in-law and whatever, their children, and they photograph the trip and they want to show you their pictures from Wyoming. And they are not you know they don't know how to handle a camera, the camera was new, and things are overexposed or underexposed or superimposed or clacking loose in the gate or whatever as a first experimentation that I ever really fully experienced in film was in so called home movies. Then you begin to find when you look into it there are reasons for, it is not by accident that the mother-in-law's face is superimposed over some brown bear's face, you know (laughter). It's not by accident that certain things are overexposed and so dark you can't see them at all. But meanwhile there's a running commentary that is denying the whole thing and is saying, "Oh, I'm sorry

this is terrible, I know, and this is boring." And I really found that the most boring part of it was the constant apologia that came from these amateurs for being what they were. I mean, after all, there was clearly more love involved in most people's photography of the baby, than ever I've seen in a Hollywood movie, more real love. And expressive, too, the kind of humbleness with which, well, some people aren't humble and then they're vulgar amateurs.

But, at any rate, when someone lets him or herself be themselves with the camera in hand and not worry about being a professional or something, they photograph with such tenderness and such beauty, the baby, the first steps of the baby, they try to get everything you know, because it's all passing, anyone with a baby sees that, "Now you see it, now you don't. They no longer throw their spoon on the floor," you know. It's over. It's all gone; It will never happen again, 'til their a teenager, you know. It's all over. And did they get it, a hold on time. You know, something that will last is the point. Something that's removed enough from the roughage and sometimes outright horror and excruciating difficulty of raising children, the impossibility of living with another human being. And all people should be told this when they plan to get married. It's utterly impossible to live with another human being. And then see if you can beat that. Cause many people beat that. They manage to do it forever--forever. And if not literally, forever, somehow forever in the heart. But in the meantime, pictures have been taken. And the scrapbook is nice, but it has its limitations, but to actually be able to share with each other the movement, the movement of the baby, the movement of one's own heart. I've literally watched a lot of movies, of home movies, where you can see the heartbeat of the person photographing. You know it goes like that (makes pulsating signs with his hands). And you look at the edge of the frame, and you've been influenced by this whether you knew it or not, but if you look at the edge of the frame. The edge of the frame is going like this (makes film frame with fingers, and pulses in and out). Cause the filmmaker is trying as hard as possible to hold his or her breath you know to not move, but the heart, cause they're pressed against the face and they're having these feelings, the heart is doing this to the frame-line (demonstrates a shaking frame). So I started letting that in, doing everything I could to encourage that to come into my work.

There was a point where my 16 mm equipment, all but the camera, were stolen from my car in New York city. We had no place to live, we had no other place

to park than where we did, so it wasn't negligence, it's just that we were unlucky and someone broke in and took all this equipment. And I arrived back in Colorado all completely downed, you know, and with three kids, four at that point, and had to move back in with the in-laws—that terrible defeat—and had nothing to work with. And I had about 40 dollars, so just kind of as a gesture that we weren't coming in to mooch on them, I said, "Well, I'll go to town and buy some groceries," and as I was in town I passed a little shop, and in the window was a little shoebox, with a little tiny 8 mm camera, 3 rolls of unexposed film, a couple of exposed rolls, a little editor, a little, tiny things, all fit into a kind of shoebox. It stuck out a little bit here and there. But there it was for \$20. So I bought it, and that's how I began the psalms. And then I bought \$20 worth of groceries.

And the *Songs* thus began, and my conscious involvement, not with the aesthetics of Sergei Eisenstein or the other great masters that I had been consciously inspired by, but I began to wean myself off of that enough so that I could open up to the world of the news reel, which is another kind of home movie. Our trip to the Second World War front is no more or less devastating than many peoples trip to Wyoming. It's more deadly, of course, and more world serious. But, I mean, the hand-held camera is the same. The beating of the heart can be felt the same. I had the good luck to meet some of the great newsreel photographers of that era; in fact Pete Smith who was, when he was an 18 year old kid, sent out on a dumb assignment from his Pathé studio to photograph a big German blimp coming in and docking out in New Jersey. As it turned out it was the Hindenburg. He had a Mitchell which weighs, I don't know, 100 pounds in itself. He had a huge, very expensive 50 pound tripod: he had 150 pounds, he's a slight, 18 year old kid, he's hand-cranking, it's a hand-cranked Mitchell, and this whole thing blows up in front of him. And he lifts this off the ground...Is there anyone here who hasn't seen the explosion of the Hindenburg? (Answer in the affirmative.) Ah, well, you will eventually, it will show up on TV or something. It's just incredible. You see this dirigible, it's filled with, alas, hydrogen, that just explodes in fire everywhere, and people hurling themselves out of the windows down to the ground, and many died, of course. And he's lifted this thing up, and he's hand-cranking, and you can feel at times as he stands like this (shaking arms); I don't know if it's the heart or just the muscles beginning to shake from the weight that he's holding, he's like that mother that picks up the car to get the tire off of her child's leg. He had super-human strength, and made,

again, one of the great home movies of all time—all too human. They had a wax disk going, so the cameraman's supposed to comment literally on what he's shooting, and he used foul and profane language constantly while photographing this, and got fired when he got back to the company, when they heard the disk. The head of Pathé was super-Christian and said: "Fire that kid." He brought in the greatest piece of newsreel footage, probably, in the history of the form. And he was fired because he was so moved. He didn't remember cussing. He said, "I wasn't ordinarily a kid that cussed," but the most awful obscenities came out of him as he witnessed this horror in front of him. So that was the home movie part of it that we did not get to see in the newsreel theatres.

Make it up for yourself, restore it, wherever possible—that was the all too human side coming out along with the incredible sense of a human body moving behind this imagery, and the pulse, I say, of muscles that are cracking under the strain of, he's hand cranking which doesn't permit the greatest subtlety of heartbeat or anything to come through, but certainly the body's trauma is very visible at the edges of the frame, along with the incredible horror of what's happening before your eyes.

The greatest image of such...that I've ever seen of the heartbeat in film, is not made by clutching the camera to the self, but in the most amazing way. It's, now I'm going to have trouble remembering the name, Indian women, did, umm, forgive me my brain is just...Yes, Ellie Epp, thank you. You, remember the one she did when she went home. What's that called? (inaudible suggestion) Yeah, that's a great one too, all of her films are great, but the one when she went back to her Indian reservation. And, it's the last work, alas, that we've seen from her. And photographed the house where she grew up, and the cold, bleak, she was like upper B.C., you know, cold and barren land. And she went out on ice, and set the camera up on a tripod, and is photographing a spate of barren ice. But she's holding the camera and I guess because it's on the ice, and the whole thing somehow it puts her heartbeat at the fame's edge, across this whole frozen landscape; you know, like the one spot of warmth anywhere visible in a thousand miles in all directions or whatever is her heart beating at the edges of the frame. So there's a home movie to be sure. Ellie Epp...Reason I've forgotten her name is, I mean I love her work, but no one writes of it or speaks of it anymore. Do you show it at all? Have you seen some...(inaudible answer) *Notes In Origin* ⁽¹⁾, yeah so there's one to rent sometime if you can, cause I think

that's, not just because of this one shot, but because the whole thing is somehow imbued with that sense of absolute persona, desperately needing to see and see in such a way that's unique, that's honest, because if we are unique, and I defy you to say we're not. You're really going to have to think that through and if you can prove we're not then you'd be one of the top philosophers in the world and the US army will love you for it, and the CIA and so on..., and the boy scouts. But if you can't prove that then your stuck with that in order, if truth is a value, if that's what we need to have long-lasting, and if truth has anything to do with the arts, and there's another tough philosophical question to tackle, then it must be unique or it's a lie. The extent to which it is not new is a cover-up.

Now there are elaborate forms of cover-up. Hollywood is probably the best in the world at it: they coverup all their uniqueness of person and amalgamate it and get something that the bankers will approve, and then along come a few people that are allowed to be mavericks, like Scorsese and so on, to help the cover-up; they're like token people, you know. The rest are expected to behave, and move straight down the marshaled line, and not be risking millions of dollars--perfectly reasonable, from a horrific industrial standpoint. But they have to go to such great lengths to cover-up uniqueness of person. It is very, very tough, very difficult; It is like dressing for the prom or something like that, you know what I mean. You have to pretend you're being unique, like you have a different colored dress and you don't want the same dress as anyone else or the same suit. Well, the suits, men aren't really supposed to try to be unique so they should all look exactly alike--like undertakers. But the women should look like flowers or something and be in different colored dresses, and it's all to give the impression of uniqueness, but, of course, it is anything but. It is so horrendous; it's like the beauty contests or something, you know. Let me burrow in on that a little bit, because a little girl was murdered in my town; principally, because she was a beauty queen at the age of six, and they've written about everything else, including how they can't seem to catch her parents, no one seems to, has even subpoenaed her urologist who treated her over a hundred times, for things that Cyril Wecht, the greatest autopsist in the country has said absolutely and undeniably, indicate constant sexual child abuse for a long time before her death.⁽²⁾ And all kinds of movies, I'm sure you've seen some of them, alas, where she comes out in her little cowboy hat, and does her little Las Vegas number, and wiggles her behind and so on. And, brutally murdered, and nobody brought to trial for the matter. I mean, how did I get

onto that, (audience member: "Prom?") Prom, yeah, prom will get you there (much laughter). Well, that's where it begins, she just had it a little early. And then after the prom, you're supposed to go over, and they slip you some drug at the frat house, and rape you, you know, etc., and themselves in the process. So, there it is: people get sold down the river, all trying to be alike. But, I mean, literally, here was this child, oh it's so awful; I mean, one of my boys best young friend's was in the classroom with her, so it's leaned in heavily on us. The whole town, the little children particularly have suffered horribly from it, because for a long time the police were suspecting Santa Claus. There's this old guy that lives up in the hill and he comes down every Christmas cause he has a natural beard, and he plays Santa all over town. And police had him under suspicion, not the very obvious people who almost certainly had to have done it. But, again, as I say, the urologist was not called in to testify. Nobody was really investigated, because this is high powered money that's involved with Boeing and government work, and so on, so the cover-up was just enormous.

And, uh,...Aaahhh the prom. The prices we pay for the--in terror, I guess, of loneliness--that we pay in order to have the illusion of being like each other. And then, sort of like the last fling is teenage-ness, first loves and so on. And one falls in love and you think, "Aahh, at last, it really is true." This other person feels just the way I do. And I feel just the way they do. And particularly when we're having sex, we're just one. We're absolutely one creature. And then, maybe after sex, maybe at breakfast the next morning, who knows, but one or the other says something, and the other one says, "What?" (makes a face of startled incomprehension and chuckles) And this little tear in the fabric of this illusion; and then they begin talking, and soon there will be the first quarrel, but they say, "Well that was just the first quarrel that doesn't..." But really it's the first hint of reality in this vast cover-up illusion that people are alike, and if people use love for that reason, they end up, as most people do in my country these days, divorced, shortly after, because the greatness of the adventure is, you begin to find out this other person isn't like me at all. They don't even like the same things I like ordinarily, or very few of them, in yet they're staying with me for some reason--why? You know, the terror of that, the collapse of illusions in that moment, the fear that suffuses both of them; they're making love and suddenly they're recognizing that the other person is not feeling that same way: that a man does not feel the same way as a woman does or vice versa, when they're making love--My God, you know, "And I thought you liked that!"

Meanwhile, fear, like an aura of fear, which is awful ugly, it smells like soap and milk, comes out from under people's armpits, and surrounds them. And they have their first challenge for the great adventure of life: the love of the other, of the alien, of the completely alien creature out there that I'm somehow with, that's impossible to live with, but we're somehow doing it, and so on. Now, the antidote to all this horror and silliness, to the prom, to the illusions, the wrong usages, I would take it, of love and so on, are really the arts, because arts, not because artists are greater people, they're really, and I've know most of them, and they're, present company excepted, they're mostly shits of the worst order, they're absolute...you wouldn't want one living next door (much laughter) to you, think about it: Vincent Van Gough living next door, coming over to borrow your ear and a cup of sugar every morning-- Good God! That was a nice pun cause he doesn't have his own anymore, he cut it off and so on--you know, he wants yours. They're really, really difficult people, for the most part; though, I have noted, there's a new generation that's the most puzzling of all that tend to be very sweet artists, and I've said to one of them that I'm quite close with and work with even on the step-printer, and said, "Mary Beth, you don't have to cut your ear off, but you're going to have to scream and stamp your foot every now and again or you're setting too high a standard for artists, you know, it will drive the rest of us crazy. She is so sweet and kind, and her friends Zachary and Eric, they're sweet and kind, too and they're great artists, and I look at them in astonishment, to have endured Kenneth Anger, Harry Smith, Jack Smith, all those Smiths, you know (much laughter). Paul Sharriss, who has the record for outright horror. You know, you've invited so and so to come to speak to your students: what will happen? You see if you can get them there sober rather than drunk, or maybe in some cases you want them drunk rather than sober. I mean, but they're certainly unique. Now the great trick would be to find a way to be this in the workplace but not spilling all over the society and wrecking lives, including each others. I mean, most of my generation is dead, most of them from one form of suicide or another. Some of them are worse than dead, they're in asylums or what not. They cracked up under the strains of everything. So there's very left, and I'm sort of looking forward to some home movies that can be made in a less stressful neighborhood of the psyche. You know, something that can feed... Well, I mean I'm not saying that those films that they made weren't necessary. I mean, the world certainly, absolutely needed it in the teeth of the atomic bomb; it needed to know the full spate of black magic. And Maya Deren, who was a terror to live with too, and

I lived with her, Kenneth Anger, Perry Smith, from the inside gave a balance; that is, an aesthetically balanced work, which is one of my first definitions of art, and would be of home movie, too, for that matter, balanced imagery of black magic and of the desire to have power and control over the earth and over other human beings. So, anyway, all these things are clouding up into my mind: people not easy to get along with, but now we have a chance, I think, or I'm sensing it's happening, it isn't something I'm wishing for. I had given up wishing for anything, to tell you the truth, in terms of the arts, cause they are an absolute, below any imagined bottom in the United States. And in case you think they're all that much better in Canada (much laughter), let me just give you one figure that will probably surprise you. I checked it out, it was so surprising I couldn't believe it. The city of Berlin, the city, spends more money on the arts, all the arts, including film, than the United States and Canada as countries together--the city of Berlin, and Paris is probably not far behind. You know, so what's happening here, you know, well: "Stamp them out. Get rid of them, as quickly as possible." Given what they're doing these days, it's probably destroying a whole generation of artists, is giving them, what's that God damn... Ritalin that we have to fight all the time. The kids come out with a piece of brilliant genius and they come home and... (lost material; change of tape).

I mean, history is one of my hobbies, and the only antidote is the arts. For one thing, because they are unique and individual and they start with that truth, and starting with that truth they appeal to the uniqueness and individuality of anyone else in the audience, which is why most people hate them to begin with. Because they don't want to feel unique and individual, they want to go to the movies and spread their legs, and their 3 year old adult mind and be raped... gently, with a happy ending; or a sad ending that's meaningful that can have you go out and talk about it over coffee or whatever, and it's ridiculous, actually, and I love the movies and I go, and I do just exactly that: I spread my legs, and I get my mind down to about 3 years old, and I enjoy myself thoroughly; but I know what's being done to me, and I know when it's over its finito. I don't wander out onto the street and suppose that life is like that. It's an escape, you know. It's not probably good for the brain, but it's not as damaging as liquor is to the liver. So, I put up with it, and it's a big deal in my life. But let's don't be confused about what it is, I mean it's an outrageous lie. And like anything where you think you buy off the stress or the strain— with drugs, liquor, anything, misuse of love, your children will live for you, all these horrors, you know, go to war, and save the world. Again, the antidote

is in the arts. Now whether film will achieve that kind of stature and meaningfulness, we don't know; we live in a time where many people hope so, and they work for that. And they work from the grounds, all of them, whether they know it or not, of home movie. Move only along the line of your love, move only...amateur, a-ma-teur, lover, be a lover, as a lover be lover want to be, themselves, unique and individual. And a wise lover wants the one he or she loves to be unique and individual, as well. And move along those lines with whatever means you have, and my, you know god given means, the thing that was given to me that I could do and what I really wanted to be was a poet, which is cheaper, has higher respect, is the art I like the best, and so on. But I said, "No, you can't be a poet. You're not a good poet." (laughter all around) And I found it out, lucky enough, early on by living with some poets and being honest about it, they were honest about it, and I became the filmmaker I am. But I made my first film thinking I was Jean Cocteau making a movie, you know. But, so, I'm given this thing I can do, and I have very little choice, and it's the best thing they'll let me do with any meaning to myself—twenty-five minutes later. So, I can...it has to be unique and individual because I am; it has to be honest or god help me. I mean, one of my definitions of art is it is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you god. Now the last part is even dropping out of the courts, you know; people aren't making people say god, cause nobody knows who's anybody's god is anyway, and it doesn't matter, that's probably the right thing to do in the courts, but in the workroom each person has to have something that's comparable to what some people would call god, or the all being, or the zeitgeist, or whatever you want to call it or have it be...the unconscious. The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you god. And tell me why would any amateur home movie maker film in any other way unless he or she were, very mistakenly, trying to be a professional. You say, "I'm a professional," the kids say, "Yeah, what ya mean?" That's like saying, "I am the father, you do what I say, because I'm the father and you're just a little kid. I'm the professional, now stand still and smile... Bbbrrrrrhhh(makes the noise of a whirring camera). "Blow out those candles. Nooo, light them again, they didn't do it right. Did you make a wish? You didn't look like you made a wish. Do it again." Bbbrrrrhhh...you know, that kind of upbringing. But the true amateur is stumbling around, her or she can't hardly get the film in the camera, they don't know how to work it, and they get it kind of together and they hope it's working right. And it goes: "Katcha, katcha, katcha," like that. And you get this wonderful blurred scene with the little kid

sitting with lights flickering like this (waving arms), and then they stop and say, "Something's not right," and then they get in there and they make the hoop right, get the thing closed, you know, and then it's overexposed or underexposed cause they put their finger over the thing that's supposed to save them from that, you know, the electric eye. They're so impassioned they don't realize they have their finger over the lens, even, you know, so you get movies with like the passionate, shaking fingers of the mother with the child sitting, trying to blow out the birthday cake. I mean, you get all these wonderful things that anybody can relate to, that inspires anybody to be him or herself, that is to be a perfect fool, which as we know, people are.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Notes in Origin* is a 1987 Canadian short film.
2. Brakhage is referring to the murder of JonBenet Ramsey, in Boulder, Colorado in 1996.