

ROBERT HANDICOTT

FOR LENI RIEFENSTAHL

(classic documentary maker of the Third Reich)

You say you only wanted to make films.
But films consist, as memory consists,
Of images selected and recycled.
Your images are nightmares we forget
That we remember. A Platonic ray
Projects them on our eyelids when we dream.

Frame after frame hides more than it reveals
And falsifies by what it brings to focus.
You say you only wanted to make films.
But film, like memory, like history,
Is fashioned by philosophy, not fact.
Your photographs of Nuba men reveal
The old perspectives, poses statuesque
As any blue-eyed blondes of Nuremberg.

The labyrinthine archives of the mind
Hold many shadows, symbols, soundtracks, myths.
Our thoughts exist in their manipulation.
Are yours comprised of Riefenstahl alone?
Or are there scenes from others, filed in sleep
Against the conscious will, but cruelly strong?
Flickers of Dachau, Auschwitz, Buchenwald?
You, who helped shape these nightmare horrors, too,
Must sometimes cease from work, and see, and weep.