



Excerpt from Martha Langford,
**Scissors, Paper, Stone: Expressions of Memory
 In Contemporary Photographic Art**
 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 59-61

5 | A FORGOTTEN MAN

In theatrical presentation, Locke's Way begins, as this chapter has begun, at the very end of creation that is the act of imposing of title. "This is the end," says the narrator, holding up a colour snapshot of a dead woman. "But there was a beginning, with him and her." In installation, Locke's Way is a continuous loop, something like the roll of paper that ran through Jack Kerouac's typewriter and became the manuscript of *On the Road*, and very like its manic expression of disappointment in the human condition:

Dean took out other pictures. I realized these were all the snapshots which our children would look at someday with wonder, thinking their parents had lived smooth, wellordered, stabilized-within-the-photo lives and got up in the morning to walk proudly on the sidewalks of life, never dreaming the raggedy madness and riot of our actual lives, our actual night, the hell of it, the senseless nightmare road. All of it inside endless and beginningless emptiness. Pitiful forms of ignorance ... He made one last signal. I waved back. Suddenly he bent to his life and walked quickly out of sight. I gaped into the bleakness of my own days. I had an awful long way to go too.¹⁰

To trace all the expressions of memory in Cumming's work from *Reality and Motive* to *Locke's Way* is also "an awful long way to go." The work is copious and multivalent, sometimes seeming to lash out in all directions, against all closely held opinion, moral, social, and ideological. A consistent feature of these attacks is Cumming's undermining of our fundamental beliefs in photographic images. If we associate photographs, especially personal photographs, with certain kinds of knowledge and memory, Cumming's examination of the evidence will suggest that they are "endless and beginningless emptiness. Pitiful forms of ignorance," that nevertheless preserve the lustre of our dreams.

The distance between proud sidewalks and senseless nightmare roads is no distance at all; in real world, real time, everyday experience, they merge suddenly; we collide with ourselves, as other. Kaja Silverman describes something of this as she examines her response to negotiating her way through crowds of homeless people in Berkeley, California, where she lives. Their outstretched hands are part of Silverman's regular routine – arbitrarily, she gives to some, not to others – but she cannot get used to them. The very presence of this population sets up a "specular" panic to which she confes-

