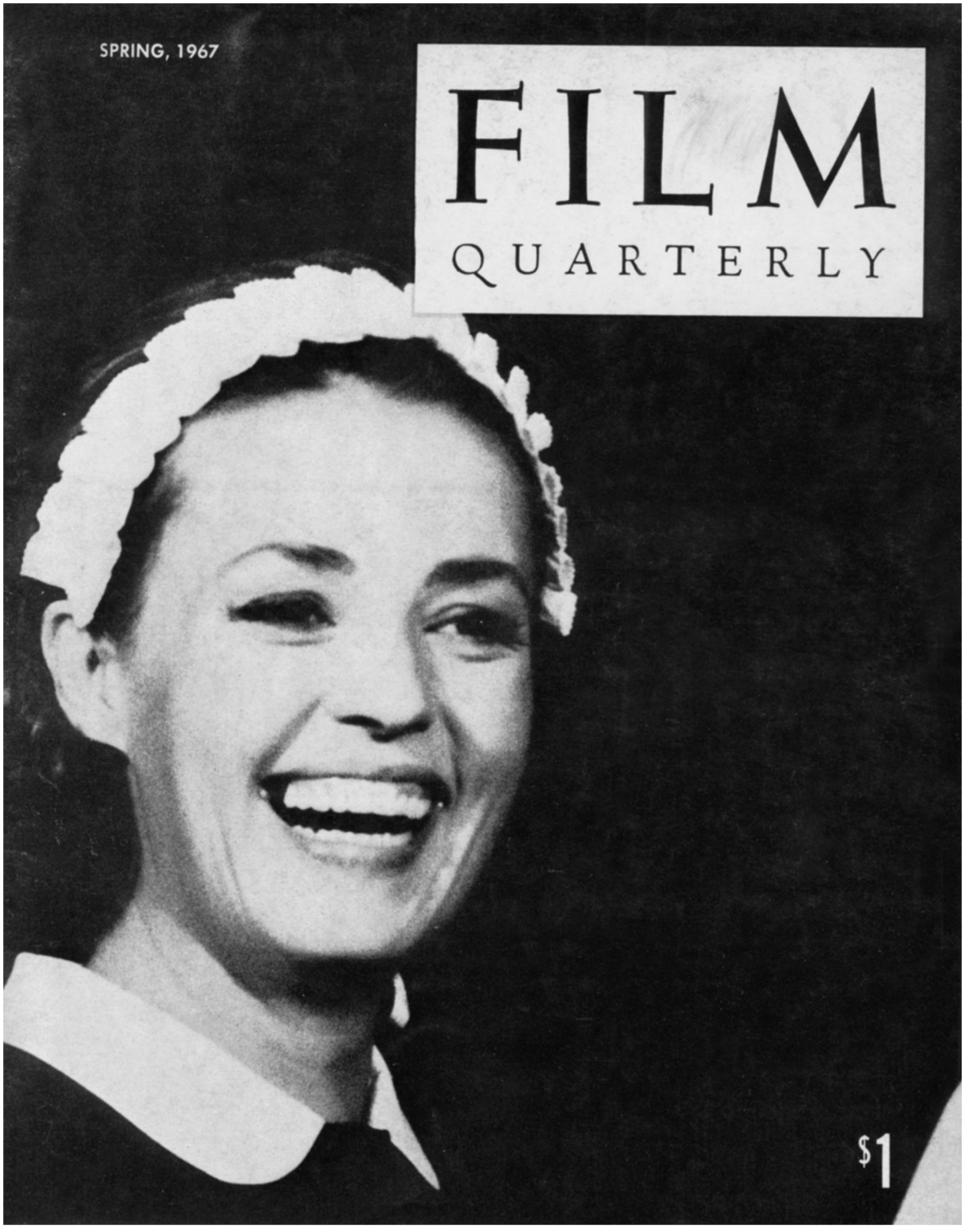
SPRING, 1967

FILM QUARTERLY



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DIRECTOR'S SHOWCASE

Marcel Pagnol	MARIUS FANNY CESAR . . . and others soon
Barbara Connell/Wm. Jersey	A TIME FOR BURNING
Lou Stoumen	THE NAKED EYE
Jean Renoir	BOUDU SAVED FROM DROWNING
Julien Duvivier	THE DEVIL AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
Georges Rouquier	FARREBIQUE
Rolf Thiele	TONIO KROGER
Bert Haanstra	ALLEMAN
Jean Vigo	A PROPOS DE NICE
Peter Whitehead	WHOLLY COMMUNION
Derrick Knight	TRAVELLING FOR A LIVING
Jiri Trnka	THE HAND
Richard Williams	THE LITTLE ISLAND
Tamas Czigany	ST. MATTHEW PASSION
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Gerald Potterton	THE RAILRODDER

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CONTEMPORARY FILMS, INC.

828 Custer Ave.
Evanston, Ill. 60202

267 West 25th St.
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San Francisco, Calif. 94109

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LET THE JURY JUDGE

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FILM QUARTERLY is published by the University of California Press, Berkeley, California 94720. $1.00 per copy, $4.00 per year in the U. S., Canada, and Pan-America. Elsewhere: $1.80 per copy, $7.20 per year. Editor: ERNEST CALLENBACH. Assistant to the Editor: MARIGAY GRANA. New York Editors: ROBERT HUGHES and JUDITH SHATNOFF. Paris Editor: GINETTE BILLARD. Rome Editor: GIDEON BACHMANN. London Editor: PETER COWIE. Advisory Editorial Board: ANDRIES DEINUM, AUGUST FRUGE, HUGH GRAY, ALBERT JOHNSON, NEAL OXENHANDLER, COLIN YOUNG. Views expressed in signed articles are those of the authors. Indexed in *Art Index*. Published quarterly. Second-class postage paid at Berkeley, California. Printed in U. S. A.

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late about why, in so many recent spy movies, the hero is betrayed by this woman—but I tried, and couldn't come up with much. George Segal, an utterly charmless actor, gives a terrible performance as Agent Quiller; he's supposed to be a thinking man's secret agent, but James Bond looks positively bright by comparison.—STEVEN FARBER

The Shameless Old Lady sounds wonderful on paper, but doesn't look very good on film. Everybody has been captivated by the *idea* of a movie about a 70-year-old widow who decides to abandon family and respectability for a last fling at life via motorcycles and beach parties and some madcap young companions. But little that we see in the film is engaging; it takes so much time getting started, pays so many talky visits to the widow's children that it rarely gets around to showing us the old woman gone hip. When she dies suddenly at the end, and the narrator tells us that she relished both of her lives—as wife and mother, and then as an eccentric individual alone—we may even wish that we'd seen the movie he's describing. This one is inoffensive enough, but it's all promises.—STEVEN FARBER

Time Lost and Time Remembered has been certainly one of the most unappreciated films of the year. The critical reaction has been scandalously unsympathetic, wrong-headedly assuming that the spectator is supposed to sympathize with the leading character. In the most lyrically styled sort of film, Desmond Davis presents us with Cassandra Healy, a pretty Irish girl, full of dreamy illusions about life and love, who returns to her native village after a long absence and unhappy marriage in London. She wants to take up life again with her long-ago lover, and to recapture, as much as possible, the atmosphere of her youth. Of course, Cass is a ninny, self-centered and totally damaged by her provinciality and by having seen too many bad films. Davis tells us a great deal about Cass, if only one would bother to pay attention. She is a pure Joycean figure, a creature trapped by simplicities and the accepted sameness of a happy atmosphere; just about *any* other world would be too foreign for her. Once the spectator accepts this fact (and Davis does not bludgeon you with the obvious—he shows you everything), then the tragic qualities of the film override its faults, which are mainly in the writing. Such a film as this is strongest when the camerawork of Manny Wynn creates episodes that haunt the memory: a long swingaround of music (John Addison—a great score) and imagery describing the routines of Cass's youthful days during the summers past. As Cass stands in front of a television store, some portentous lines from *Antigone* illuminate her city isolation and despair; or the sequence in which she suddenly sees a bicycle against a London wall and impulsively steals a ride on it, seeming to ride into the past again. These are moments of great cinema, and perhaps actress Sarah Miles has already become so expert that it is difficult *not* to sympathize with her. Perhaps, too, we have grown too accustomed to being impatient with films that have the slow rhythms of life within them; in this era of hipness, high camp and nudie flicks, a tragic parable about a little nobody musing on the Irish seacoast is easily shoved aside. But there is much richness in this film, a quiet, sad, immutable quality, and it deserves another chance. Its day of rediscovery will come.—ALBERT JOHNSON

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK, cont'd.

shown) these reasons count for little if the fundamental judging function of the festival is distorted (as is demonstrably the case) or discredited (as is arguably the case among many film-makers) by the pre-screenings.

The remedy is obvious: film-makers thinking of entering, and persons who are asked to serve as jurors, should make it a condition of participation that *all* films submitted remain in competition and will be shown to the jurors—although not all necessarily in the public showings, nor in full if the jurors do not desire it. The 16mm festivals are designed to further the cause of the independent, unusual, sometimes unprepossessing or difficult film; they must take pains to ensure that their procedures do not come to constrict this essential function. If there are to be juries, the jurors must do the judging; the responsibility cannot be diffused without causing embarrassment to jurors and resentment among entrants.

FULBRIGHTS

The workings of the Fulbright Program for study abroad have always been rather obscure, and the application procedures are cumbersome, like most academic bureaucratic procedures. It seems likely, therefore, that students who might be interested in and qualified for the program have not applied.

Hence we have attempted to secure current information about the possibilities of film study at the various foreign film schools. Few general statements seem to be possible, since each case is evaluated on an individual basis by various screening committees, first through the Institute of International Education, 809 United Nations Plaza, New York 10017, which administers the program in this country, and then through Commissions in each country, which are responsible for the actual placement of each student. However, the facts seem to be these: (1) Grants are for a one-year period. Since the film schools all have longer programs, this means that financing of subsequent years must be privately arranged. (2) No support is provided for dependents except in special cases (e.g., $50/mo. for spouse in Poland). (3) Travel expenses for the student himself, to the country in question and return, are provided. (4) Proficiency in the language of the country is required. However, proficiency is judged by the candidate and his local advisors. Language needs in film study are severe, and a conversational knowledge is essential for serious work. (5) Rumors have been current that because some instructors at IDHEC were politically unacceptable to the United States, no Fulbrights were awarded for study there. However, several Fulbrights *have* been awarded for IDHEC, and IIE states that more would be considered. (6) Because the first years of study in the foreign film schools comprise chiefly theoretical and general studies, American students anxious to get their hands on film have generally been disappointed and have stayed enrolled only for brief periods.

PERIODICALS

Take One: The Canadian Film Magazine is published every other month by Unicorn Publishers, P.O. Box 1778, Station B, Montreal 2, Canada. Six issues for $1.50. The second issue of this lively new magazine contains a piece by Paul Krassner on the ad pornography nobody complains about, a suitably mosaic-like interview with Marshall McLuhan, interviews with two Canadian film-makers (one in French, one in English), some thoughtful comments on the kind of "reality" that works in TV, and reviews of films from recent festivals.

Cinim, published by the new London Film-Makers' Cooperative, is edited by Philip Crick; 2s.6d. per issue. First issue contains a manifesto by Jonas Mekas, notes on Godard by Raymond Durgnat, and a short piece on Canudo. Mimeographed.

PETER HARCOURT

Luis Buñuel: Spaniard and Surrealist

As a view of life, surrealism begins with the recognition of the disruptive violence at the center of man and with his essential isolation within the civilized conventions of polite society —conventions apparently designed to frustrate his instinctual needs. It thrives upon sharp contrasts and unexpected juxtapositions, upon images that acknowledge the unalterable irrationalities of human life. For it is essentially pessimistic. Like Freud, its patron saint and intellectual apologist, surrealism has gloomy prospects for the future development of man.

As an organized movement, it really began in Zürich during the First World War. Though not yet called surrealism, the philosophical and artistic movement that formed itself around Hugo Ball and Emile Hennings at the Café Voltaire in 1917 was made up of refugees from all the countries of Europe, people exiled from their homelands by the violence of war. In the midst of the destruction, there flickered the tiny hope that all this violence might help to bring about a better world. As the old world crumbled, man could begin again, and this time could be true to both his individual and social needs. And of course, Lenin himself was in Zürich at that time.

After the war when it moved to Paris, the Dada movement—as this preface to surrealism called itself—underwent a change.[1] Hugo Ball had already surrendered leadership of the movement to the Hungarian poet and madcap, Tristan Tzara; and once in Paris, Tzara himself was gradually eclipsed by André Breton who, borrowing the term from a play by Apollinaire, first began talking about a philosophy of "surrealism":[2]

> I believe in the future resolution of two states (in appearance so contradictory), dream and reality, into a sort of absolute reality: a *surréalité*.

It was under Breton's leadership that the surrealist movement began to consolidate itself into something like an organized system of thought. Central to its philosophy was the determination to honor the claims of the subconscious and to accept the validity of the confusion of our dreams. From this concern, which recommended less a methodology than a state of heightened awareness, certain tendencies could follow. To begin with, the art product itself could appear as less important than the insights it recorded. Speaking of the comparative poverty of French surrealist verse, Anthony Hartley has written:[3]

> The result of artistic activity, the poem or the painting, is seen as merely incidental to the inner regeneration of man brought about by the *ascesis* involved in its production.

These are somewhat the same terms in which Harold Rosenberg has talked about action painting; it is the aesthetic that has led to the current fashion of disposable art.

Secondly, in their concern with encouraging a state of heightened awareness (itself leading quite naturally to the present psychedelic craze), the surrealists could very easily become obsessed with the pathological, with the sadistic or masochistic recesses of the mind. The writings of de Sade had been enthusiastically rediscovered, and many of the surrealist anecdotes that appeared in Breton's *Littérature* from 1919 to 1924 showed the same concern with gratuitous violence that, back in the 1790s, had characterized de Sade. But most accessible to us today (and perhaps most relevant to film) are Dali's anecdotes that we find scattered through his *Secret Life:*[4]

> I was five years old, and it was springtime in the village of Cambrils, near Barcelona. I was walking

in the country with a boy smaller than I, who had very blond curly hair and whom I had known only a short time. I was on foot, and he was riding a tricycle. With my hand on his back, I helped to push him along.

We got to a bridge under construction which had as yet no railings of any kind. Suddenly, as most of my ideas occur, I looked behind to make sure that no one was watching us and gave the child a quick push off the bridge. He landed on some rocks fifteen feet below. I ran home to announce the news.

During the whole afternoon, bloodstained basins were brought down from the room where the child, with a badly injured head, was going to have to remain in bed for a week. The continual coming and going and the general turmoil into which the house was thrown put me into a delightful hallucinatory mood. In the small parlor, on a rocking chair trimmed with crocheted lace that covered the back, the arms, and the cushion of the seat, I sat eating cherries. The parlor looked out on the hall, so that I could observe everything that went on, and it was almost completely dark, for the shutters had been drawn to ward off the stifling heat. The sun beating down on them lit up knots in the wood, turning them to a fiery red like ears lighted from behind. I don't recall having experienced the slightest feeling of guilt over this incident. That evening, while taking my usual solitary walk, I remember having savoured the beauty of each blade of grass.

Partly true, partly fictional (our common sense makes us assume), such an anecdote is nevertheless extraordinary in its combination of sadistic violence followed by a minutely detailed registration of the senses, as well as in its implicit flouting of the conventional sentimentalities about the innocence of childhood. It is not irrelevant to bear such an experience in mind when we come to contemplate the moral complexities of Joseph in Buñuel's *Diary of a Chambermaid.* To be appreciated, such an anecdote demands from us an analyst's patience and suspension of a moral point of view. We are asked not to applaud or to condemn, but simply to understand.

However, if this aspect of surrealism could slip into the excess of moral nihilism, it could also lead into an apparently opposite state of mind. It could equally be concerned with spiritual regeneration, with the perfection of the self. Indeed, this had been the pattern of many of the Dadaists. As far back as 1921, Marcel Duchamp had given up the imperfections of life and art for the perfection of chess (we've seen him playing chess, of course, with Man Ray in René Clair's *Entr'acte*); and even before that, Hugo Ball, depressed by Tzara's uncontrollable antics and his own ebbing faith in any external change, had withdrawn from the scene, concerned to find in private "the most direct way to self-help: to renounce works and make energetic attempts to re-animate one's own life."[5] In this way, the philosophy of surrealism could be seen as a discipline. In one of Breton's more self-questioning statements, he seems to acknowledge this: "Dear imagination, what I like about you is that you do not forgive."[6] On this level, surrealism comes to represent an obligation to oneself, a determination not to cheat one's own feelings, not to deny the necessity of the "dark gods" within us (to borrow Lawrence's most appropriate phrase). Certainly for Buñuel, the ethic of surrealism was seen as both a liberation and a chore:[7]

> Surrealism taught me that life has a moral meaning that man cannot ignore. Through surrealism I discovered for the first time that man is not free. I used to believe man's freedom was unlimited, but in surrealism I saw a discipline to be followed. It was one of the great lessons of my life, a marvellous, poetic step forward.

Yet this path too has its own excesses. In its social passivity, it could lead to the extremes of personal isolation that can drive a man to suicide; as in its pursuit of inner perfection, it could encourage a narcissistic involvement with the self that could make a person not only socially ineffectual but positively destructive in his relationships with other people. In the world of Buñuel, this is undoubtedly part of the problem of both Viridiana and Nazarin.

Finally—to complete somewhat this abbreviated survey—the surrealist view of life never totally renounced its belief in the possibility of a better world which had characterized it since Dada. From the very beginning, in spite of its irrationalism, it had maintained a curious flirta-

tion with the rationalities of communism. After all, both the surrealists and the communists believed in revolution as a means of achieving this better world. In the thirties, when the Spanish Civil War actually split the surrealist movement, André Breton and his followers remained uninvolved, while men like Paul Eluard underwent a gradual change. By 1936, not only could Eluard talk in terms of his life being "deeply involved in the lives of other men," but his verse as well moved outwards from the exquisite intimacies of *La Capitale de la Douleur* (1926) to the more politically *engagé* verse of his later collections. And yet, as we'll have occasion to note again further on, the defeat of the Republicans at the end of the Spanish war, which was felt by many people to be the defeat of humanity, must have been seen by some of the surrealists as the final justification of their socially passive view of life. While for Buñuel, a Spaniard, it is impossible to calculate the extent to which this defeat has been one of the major sources of his own recurring pessimism. The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 could have offered small grounds for any renewal of hope.

Although polyglot in its origins and surrounded by violence, surrealism, by becoming French in both its literature and philosophy, tended to become more intellectual and more civilized. In fact, there is an inherent discrepancy between the issuing of manifestoes, as Breton was fond of doing, and the belief in the intuitive powers of the subconscious. Manifestoes are always cerebral and polemical, whereas the language of dreams that these manifestoes claimed to believe in is always more intuitive. There is thus at the heart of surrealism *as a movement* a kind of hypocrisy, or at least a superficiality that could easily degenerate into the futile pleasures of striving simply to shock the bourgeoisie. Whereas at the heart of surrealism *as a view of life,* there remains the recognition of the irreconcilable claims both of the individual and of society upon which our civilization has been insecurely based. It is thus perhaps appropriate that for most of us today, especially outside of France, the surrealists we are most conscious of have all, in fact, been painters—artists largely independent of the polemical force of words. Indeed, with the exception of Tanguy and later of Magritte, the names we most remember—Picabia, Dali, Miró, even Picasso for a time—have also all been Spaniards. It is possibly chiefly their Spanishness that unites them, that has kept them true to the most intuitive elements in the surrealist view of life. For in many ways, Spain is intrinsically a surrealist country, maintaining side by side the mediaeval extremes of elegance and cruelty; as in many ways Luis Buñuel is the most probing surrealist of them all.

A land of extremes both in climate and culture, a huge dustbowl surrounded by the sea, combining courtly dignity with animal brutality, Spain does seem to be a naturally surrealist country. Its national sport—the bull-fight—is emblematic: a ballet of elegance and blood. Like Sweden, culturally Spain is outside Europe, though more of the body than of the mind; for unlike Sweden, Spain's feeling of isolation from the history of Europe is not the result of a cunning neutrality. Spain has had its own war that has cut across the historically greater wars of Europe. Yet for the Spaniards, Europe's problems may well have seemed provincial. The people of Spain failed to win *their* war.

Luis Buñuel, born on February 22, 1900, in Calanda in the province of Saragosa, is first and foremost a Spaniard and after that a surrealist. His view of life has developed from this primary fact. His inheritance has been Spanish, as his response to life seems largely to have been intuitive. It is only in his more playful moods that he sometimes seems cerebral, and in this way partly French.

A crucial part of this Spanish inheritance was his Jesuit education.[8] Spanish Catholicism, perhaps more extremely than that of any other country, must have brought home to the young Buñuel the surrealist antagonism between the ideals of the spirit and the exigencies of the flesh, as it would undoubtedly have brought home to him the terrifying gap between the

Luis Buñuel directing Sylvia Pinal in Viridiana.

rich security of the church and the destitute, precarious state of whole sections of the Spanish people. Yet it is a mistake, I've always felt, to see this influence as negative in any simple way. Not only has Buñuel returned to religious considerations in his films with such regularity that they must be taken as one of the mainsprings of his art, but it seems to me that a large part of what is most positive in his films could have come from this early training as well.

For instance, at the center of Buñuel's vision is what the surrealists were to call the destructive forces of man, what Freud has categorized as the unmanageable "id," but what Buñuel would have known from way back as the problem of evil, or more probably Evil. Related to any form of pessimism, there is always a belief in evil as an abstraction, or at least as an unalterable characteristic of the nature of man. If one simply believes in social injustice (as so many fans seem to think Buñuel does), then one can combat this injustice by constructive social action; but if one believes that evil is inherent to the nature of man, then constructive action becomes that much more difficult and one's belief in improvement that much more tenuous. If evil is intrinsic, if the impulse towards destruction is deeply planted in man's nature—as Christianity has always taught and as the Parisian surrealists were excited to reaffirm, as if making a new discovery—then the problem for any civilization is to find some way of containing it. Here too, the church may have helped.

While rejecting the metaphysical consolations of Christianity, Buñuel nevertheless seemed to gain from Spanish Catholicism an urgent recognition of the importance of ritual in combatting our more unmanageable desires. Whether a violent ritual of expiation like the three-day drumming ceremony that still forms a part of the Easter celebrations at Calanda[9]—an interesting example, by the way, of the Catholic Church's quite remarkable ability to take over what I would imagine to be a pre-Christian ritual of exorcism and to make it a part of its own resurrection myth—or the more contemplative rituals of, for example, the celebration of High Mass, again and again in Buñuel, references to such ceremonies appear. Ofter they are presented in a bizarre, even a facetious light—like the foot-washing sequence that opens the strange and magnificent *El*—and they are invari-

ably tinged with the suggestion of a repressed sexuality; but sometimes, as in *Viridiana,* the sense of ceremony can lend to what might otherwise be a commonplace scene the feeling of intense personal involvement. Thus, hugely helped by the music, Don Jaime's premeditated seduction of his chaste and attractive niece achieves a kind of awe in the way it is presented to us, an awe intermixed with pathos at the realization that, finally, Don Jaime is too gentle and considerate to be able to express his most compulsive needs.

Intertwined with this feeling for ritual, there is also in Buñuel a concern with the peculiarly symbolic associations inherent to inanimate objects, a concern that also must have been encouraged by the iconography of the church. Whether as in *L'Age d'Or* it is Modot being distracted from his love-making by the foot of a statue or Francisco's valet in *El* who polishes his bicycle in his bed, in Buñuel these actions take on an additional force from the symbolic role the objects play in the characters' lives.

Finally, when speculating in this way about the relationship of his early environment to his mature view of life, we might be tempted to relate Buñuel's continual concern with human solitude to the fact of his own exile. Almost all his life, in order to work, he has had to live away from Spain; for large sections of it, in order to live, he has had to perform menial roles within the film industry. Although in his private life apparently the most gentle of men,[10] in his films Buñuel has insistently returned to the problems of violence and evil and to the recognition that these passions seem often the result of a man being isolated and made to feel alone. From Modot's fury in *L'Age d'Or* to Joseph's rapacious fascism in *Diary of a Chambermaid,* their destructive urges could be related to their solitary lives.

This feeling of isolation in Buñuel's own life has obviously increased with his growing deafness and, as I've suggested, it may well have been aggravated by his life away from Spain. But in his films, it would seem to be part of a recognition that, finally, the individual *is* an isolated phenomenon, with only a limited ability to react profitably with another person or to act constructively upon the outside world. Though there is always great gentleness in the films of Buñuel, there is also great destructiveness; and the destructiveness seems, socially, to be the greater force. Power is much more easily organized than gentleness; and in any case, even within any individual manifestation of gentleness, there is also a dammed-up force of destructiveness threatening to break free or to turn in upon itself. So Don Jaime who is so gentle he takes pains to save the life of a bee and who, with all his Bach and Mozart, is ultimately too civilized to enact his private ritual upon the body of his sleeping niece, in his frustration and despair hangs himself.

But if Buñuel is in essence both a Spaniard and a surrealist, he is interesting to us today not only for the pervasive power of this view of life but for the intricacy of its development in his individual films. He is interesting because, above all, he is an artist. The sharp contrasts and conflicting points of view of his troubled world are already present in all their force in his first three films, *Un Chien Andalou, L'Age d'Or,* and *Las Hurdes (Land Without Bread).*

★

I should like to make even the most ordinary spectator feel that he is not living in the best of all possible worlds.[11]

I have dwelt at some length both on the origins of surrealism and on what I have called the naturally surrealist aspects of Spanish culture because it seems to me that Buñuel is an artist who has frequently been most misunderstood by those who claim most to admire him. The genuinely surrealist elements in his work, the more troubled, more involved, more intuitive elements, have often been misinterpreted as simply the zany pseudosurrealist's love of the antibourgeois gag. The profundities of his work, as I understand them, have been much less elucidated than his pervasive sense of fun.[12] Now in my urge to set things right, I don't want to appear too solemn about the troubled master; for there certainly is in Buñuel a strong iconoclastic impulse and, as in all great artists,

a wry sense of the absurd. But as I hope I'll be able to illustrate in the argument that follows, even Buñuel's humor is edged in black despair: more frequently than not, it is the self-protective humor of a deeply pessimistic person, the humor of a man distressed by his own vision of the universe but who has also a keen eye for the multitude of self-deceptions that, for many of us, make life bearable.

Buñuel has, of course, his more facile side—the impulse to mock without self-involvement, the kind of comic spirit that is too much of our times, the feeble legacy of the slackest elements of surrealism. In Buñuel's early works, it would be convenient, of course, to attribute the easy levity to Dali while reserving the profundity for the more serious Buñuel! But this would be an oversimplification. Not only would it be a slight injustice to what is genuine (or *was* genuine) in Dali, but it would also ignore the fact that Buñuel is quite capable of simply playing with his material in a static and facile manner when the script he is working with and the production conditions encourage him to do so. (*The Exterminating Angel*, in my view, represents a late example of just such a situation.) But whatever the explanation and however the responsibility was shared between himself and Dali in Buñuel's first two films, both *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Age d'Or* seem to alternate between what we might call gags that encourage smugness and gags that disturb.

Un Chien Andalou (1928) is clearly the less satisfactory of the two. The crucial question to ask about such a film as about any kind of satire is whether we ourselves feel implicated or comfortably left outside? Do we feel imaginatively involved in a way that might lead us to some kind of cathartic release by the end, or do we simply feel amused at what we have seen, do we simply feel smug? What kind of experience can we take away from *Un Chien Andalou*? How can it arrest us?

Because of its wilful obscurity, it cannot help but appeal chiefly to our minds—the very reverse of the surrealists' intentions. John Russell Taylor is onto this when he complains that the film only works on the level of scandal;[13] but

L'Age d'Or

Frédéric Grange is the most perceptive in clarifying the gap between the film's intentions and its achievement.[14] Because of the inescapably real nature of the cinematic image, its sculptural physicality, the form of the film is less like a dream than like a *memory* of a dream, like a dream recalled. Similarly, the film is less concerned with insistent sexuality than with erotic gestures, self-consciously executed scenes, which while often funny in a superficial way (the angry woman beating off sex with a tennis racket, or the distressed man dragging the dead remnants of his culture behind him), they seem chiefly like an illustration to Freud. A cut from a man's face in apparent rapture to breasts and back to his face bleeding with self-inflicted martyrdom makes a primarily *mental* appeal. Direct emotional involvement is debarred by the editorial process. Similarly, the final image of the couple buried in the sand only works as an illustration to a preconceived thesis (again vaguely Freudian); and the asserted disruption of time in the titles that occur at various points in the film—Eight Years Later; Fourteen Years Before—these editorial devices, gags if you will, are very unlike the direct and inescapably physical way a dream works upon us, genuinely disrupting our sense of time, which then invites a tentative interpretation by the mind. The images in *Un Chien Andalou* have all been preselected for us according to an idea about the workings of the subconscious and they appeal chiefly, I should have thought, to that slightly superior sense in most of us that we are above being shocked or moved. Years after

the making of the film, Buñuel himself has referred to "those foolish people who have been able to find the film beautiful or poetic when at bottom it is really a desperate and passionate call to murder."[15] Yet it is doubtful if anyone has *ever* seen the film in this way.

Un Chien Andalou was a prototype for that kind of "experimental" film which really, by its very nature, fails in its best intentions. If we took the film scene by scene and with psychoanalytical ingenuity offered to explain it all,[16] the explanation would probably seem more meaningful than the experience of watching the film. This too is unlike the experience of a genuine dream, the complex feeling from which can never be recreated in the telling of it (which is why it is often so boring listening to descriptions of other people's dreams!).

L'Age d'Or (1930) exhibits some of the same problems but a greater physical power and complexity as well. As with all of Buñuel, it is less a complexity of effect than a potential complexity of response—an elusive, subjective matter. Images many of which are unavoidably real are thrust before our eyes in a way that may disturb or arrest us but which eludes easy interpretation. Speaking of Buñuel, John Russell Taylor has referred to a "sort of imagist poetry which comes from an intense heightening of individual sense impressions, so that certain selected objects take on the quality of a fetish, an instrument of ritual significance in the re-enactment of some private myth."[17] Even the opening images of the scorpions fighting is both compelling to watch in its unfamiliarity and ambiguous in intention. First of all, it declares a documentary veracity which has a relationship to the rest of the film which is not wholly ironic. This opening sequence contains an apparently objective statement of the theme of the film and of Buñuel's entire world: a recognition that life is founded upon aggression. Insects fight with one another and then are swallowed up by animals larger than themselves. Such, too, it would seem to be implied, is the nature of man.

From this opening follow all the discrepancies and ambiguities of Buñuel's personal world. On the one hand, we have the bandits (led by Max Ernst), in revolt amongst themselves and against the world, but disorganized, purposeless; on the other, there are the archbishops, organized and self-contained, chanting their litanies, but also self-petrifying, already ossified by the time they have become the basis of Western civilization. Hence the basic paradox of society: it is based on a system of order devised to repress the instinctual life, and so must rely upon a police state to hold in check the instincts that it sets out to deny. Hence too, the ceremony of the Majorcans—absurdly pictured as the dignitaries arrive in all their unsuitable regalia and scramble over the craggy earth—this ceremony of state is based upon self-deception. It denies the force of sexuality (and its excremental regressions) and the even greater force of anger that such denial brings. So Modot, torn from his woman, sees sex in everything he looks at but has to content himself with kicking a lap-dog, crushing a cockroach, or pushing a blind man into the path of an oncoming car. Even the class system springs from this deception and from the imagined necessity of maintaining it. The menials in their garbage cart can carry away the shit and submit to the destructiveness of their passions (the waitress and the flames; the gamekeeper and his son) while the nobs carry on with their cocktails and polite conversation.

Gaston Modot most persuasively plays the role of the angrily instinctive man. His life (he imagines, like Monteil in *Chambermaid*) is dedicated to the pursuit of *l'amour fou*. Everything he sees in life reminds him of his sexual insistences and hence provokes his rage; while Lya Lys, on the other hand, tries to deny to herself the essentially physical nature of her needs (she chases the cow from her bed) and tries to escape into imaginative revery which Buñuel presents as essentially narcissistic—the clouds in the mirror as she assiduously polishes her nails. Meanwhile, the cow's bell continues to ring.

For the critics who like to think of Buñuel as simply having fun at the expense of the bourgeoisie, interpretation of the film usually

stops at this point.[18] But the essential fact about Modot is that he is defeated by the conventions of the society he is in rebellion against. Like Don Jaime in *Viridiana,* he is trapped within the society that has both formed and denied him. While inside it and driven on by his desire, he rebels against it (the slap over the spilt wine); but once free from it and alone at last with his woman, the social forms inhibit him (the chairs), infantile memories confuse him (his mother's voice), the artifacts of culture and religion distract him (the Wagner, of course, but most insistently, the statue), and finally the business world with its own kind of violence interferes: "The Minister of the Interior wants you on the telephone." By the end of the sequence, he has lost his woman and is alone, impotent and self-martyred, tearing the feathers from his pillow as the drums beat furiously, striving to free himself from these devils that torment him and to rid himself of all the fetishes that have got in his way.

The orgy sequence that ends the film would seem to imply that these many discrepancies must lead to the perversion of even the finest elements within our civilization, where Christ himself plays the role of the Marquis de Sade. In some ways, it is not too satisfactory an ending for this basically probing work—tacked on as an *envoi* like the final image of *Un Chien Andalou,* as if to summarize the preconceived moral. Like the final jump-cuts in *Chambermaid,* the *pasa doble* as an accompaniment to the tufts of hair on the cross attempts to end the film with a laugh, as if finally our despair is essentially comic. Perhaps it is, but not really. Perhaps we have to pretend it is to carry on living with this dilemma without solution.

Land Without Bread (visuals 1932; sound 1937) could represent a continuation of the scorpions, a documentary glance at an essential aspect of man. It is an investigation of the total hopelessness to be found within an arid recess of the same stream of Western culture that is symbolically present throughout the film in the heroic strains of the Brahms. Like the music in *L'Age d'Or*—bits of Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Schubert, and Wagner, made further bizarre in this film by being rescored for chamber orchestra—the Brahms makes an ironic comment on the situation that we are exposed to. Like the spoken commentary, it reinforces the essential irrelevance of our civilized point of view, certainly of our pity, and of all the romantic aspirations of our culture.

For the basic fact about this community is that is *has* no culture, no real way of life. Even the trappings of the church have mostly faded away, leaving chiefly a few hermits in decaying surroundings. What the children are taught in school bears no relation to the realities of life around them; yet the images of sickness and unhappiness all come from the natural surroundings of these people as part of nature's gift to them, an aspect of God's goodness.

The commentary doesn't plead. It simply states: the situation, a possible source of improvement, then the inapplicability of this source for these people. This progression of three continues throughout; while visually, each sequence ends on an image of violence or misery so extreme that they are generally missing from most of the prints in circulation in Great Britain: a mountain goat plunging to its death, a donkey being devoured by bees, a sick man trembling with fever, an idiot's leer. Generally in Buñuel, it is the falseness of society that interferes with the fulfilment of man; in *Land Without Bread* it would appear to be nature itself: "On the surface, the film attacks the existence of misery; more deeply, it denounces the misery of existence . . ."[19] Yet finally, once we have got over the effect of the film and paid tribute to the power of its steady passion, a disquieting question might suggest itself to us? For what is our relation to all this? Indeed, what is Buñuel's? Is *Land Without Bread* the kind of film that invites social action or does it seem more like an expression of social despair? These questions are perhaps most easily answered by reference to some further films.

For eighteen years, from 1932 to 1950, Buñuel virtually disappeared from view. He worked in Hollywood for a bit, supposedly on the script of *The Beast with Five Fingers,* and at

the Museum of Modern Art in New York. After the war, he went to Mexico, where he was taken up by Oscar Dancigers for reputed potboilers like *Gran Casino* (1947) and *El Gran Calavera* (1949).[20] After these, Dancigers allowed him almost total freedom with *Los Olvidados,* which won him the director's prize at Cannes in 1950—"the only film I am responsible for since *Land Without Bread,*" as Buñuel said.[21]

There can be no finer account of this film than that offered by Alan Lovell in his little-known pamphlet, *Anarchist Cinema.*[22]

The one new moral factor in *Los Olvidados* that was not present in Buñuel's three first films in the same structural way is the factor of innocence. In fact, we could almost establish a hierarchy of innocence and vulnerability in the film, moving towards cruelty and violence, motivated by the urge to destroy. The quality that shifts along this spectrum is, of course, the quality of love—not quite the Christian *agape* but more like the simple physical tenderness, the habit of affection, that characterizes Bergman's early films and which provides such a strong element of affirmation in them. In Buñuel, however (and here I disagree somewhat with Alan Lovell's refutation of the pessimism of the film), things are not quite that simple, not so schematic.

Ochitos, Meche, Pedro, Pedro's mother, Jaibo, the Blind Man—these characters represent a crescendo of violence in the film, of the destructive forces of society. Yet, as with the Hurdanos, they are all seen as part of the same insistently physical world. It is a barren, shelterless place of poverty and hardship where the people in it are driven into violence by the insistent need to survive. The cocks and chickens, the gentler farmyard animals, the innumerable stray dogs that litter the film—these are all part of the same mendicant, animal world, a confirmation of its physicality. The characters are seen as wholesome in proportion to the degree that they share the gentleness of the more domesticated animals. Thus, we have the comparative haven of the stable, with whatever associations you will. All the characters find shelter there. It is Meche's natural home and the place in which Ochitos can drink spontaneously from the teat of a donkey. Yet, it is not just a place of shelter. Meche's grandfather gets angry there, and of course, her brother is as much of the place as she is. Finally, while seeking the expected shelter, Pedro is brutally killed there and then disposed of as rubbish. Even this gentler atmosphere is not inviolate.

In a casual way, without formal emphasis, the characters tend to be associated with different kinds of animals. While still young in violence and attempting to resist it, Pedro is associated with young chickens, unlike the Blind Man who is most frequently associated with the hostile and vindictive cock. Yet even here, there are no simple contrasts. The Blind Man is also the one who handles the curative dove. In this superstitious society, he is received as a healer, grotesquely ironic though this may seem. For in his admiration for the dictator Porfirio Díaz, in his home among the steel girders—"an exact symbol of the violence and anonymity of life in a large modern city"[23] —even in his blindness and hence his isolation from the physical appearance of things, the Blind Man represents all that is most reactionary in contemporary society. Looking forward to both the Captain and to Joseph in *Diary of a Chambermaid,* he believes in violence as a creed. "One less," he cries out in enraged delight as Jaibo is shot down. "They should all be killed at birth." This is followed by a desperate sequence that depicts the fruits of such a philosophy: the gentle Meche dumping the slaughtered Pedro onto the rubbish heap, shunning involvement.

In *Los Olvidados,* the characters are disturbingly interdependent, good and evil distributed in varying proportions throughout them all. Meche, although gentle, is also provocative (like Pedro's mother, with her legs) and she is prepared to sell her kisses. Even Ochitos is tempted to rise to violence, both with Jaibo and then with the Blind Man, and may well have to if he is to survive. All the clubbings in the film, whether of Julian, the chickens, or

Pedro, are shot in the same way. The violence is directly recorded without editorial insistence but with a documentary kind of matter-of-factness. Thus the title—*The Lost Ones*—refers to them all.

Structurally, however, there are some problems in the film, problems acutely analyzed by Alan Lovell. First of all, we have the breakdown of causality in the Pedro/Jaibo relationship, the intrusion of coincidence that gives this part of the film an Oliver Twist kind of sentimentality, an added charge of pathos which is the very feeling that Buñuel supposedly is most against. Secondly, there is the corrective-farm sequence with its moralizing quality and all that it implies.

It would be convenient to assume that this farm sequence was imposed upon the film, but I'm not too sure. The clearest point about it is its isolation and its irrelevance to the world outside. Once away from its protection (implausibly or not), Pedro is lost. Like Buñuel's islands in both *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Young One,* as Frédéric Grange has said, the farm "represents a utopia with regards to a reality that it is incapable of changing." Finally, as we scrutinize the film and admire the delicacy of its interwoven network of shared responsibilities —even the association of Ochitos (=Big Eyes) and the Blind Man is troubling in the extreme— finally, we might ask, as with *Land Without Bread,* what is our relation to all this? What are the qualities in life that might help us to endure? Still not an easy question to answer.

In spite of the artistic success of *Los Olvidados,* for the next eight years Buñuel's career was not easy. Whether in Mexico or in France, it appears he had little control over the projects he was offered. My own memory of all the films made during this period is one of seriously marred films of considerable interest. Whether they are marred by thundering implausibilities (*Susana, Ensayo de un Crimen*), crabbed plots (*El,* and nearly all of the French stuff) or less than indifferent acting (especially *The Young One*), they seem to be films that are less interesting in themselves, each one separately, than they are either as interesting facets of the complete Buñuel or for the inescapable power of individual moments—their *raison d'être,* I've always felt, and the real source of their strength.[24] Whatever we think of the entire films, after we've seen *El* we will remember Francisco alone on the stairs in his despair or preparing his needle and thread to enter his wife's room; and after *Ensayo de un Crimen,* we will remember Archibaldo's fascination with the mannikin's face melting and remember that when he first saw Lavinia, she was surrounded by flames. Nevertheless, I should say that each time I've re-seen (for example) *The Young One,* I've become less conscious of the stilted way that many of the lines are delivered and more aware of the essential delicacy of presentation of the film's view of life. Phenomenologically, it is really as if the "faults" become absorbed by the qualities, so intermingled they both seem to be. At this stage, therefore, anything said about these films must be both tentative and provisional. The films will have to be made more available before we'll be sure about the elusive question of their quality.

Thinking about them, however, the ones I most remember seem to go in pairs. Both *Susana* (1950) and *El Bruto* (1952) explore the disruptive effect that sexual passion can have upon a controlled community. In fact, in a way that carries on from *Los Olvidados, El Bruto* really dramatizes the conflict between gentle love and erotic passion, with the brutal defeat of the former. *El* and *Archibaldo* (=*Ensayo de un Crimen*) both deal with the inner plight of men locked within themselves.[25] Both Francisco and Archibaldo are imprisoned with-

LOS OLVIDADOS

in their own fantasies. They are both essentially impotent and so are reduced to their private rituals of a surrealist absurdity and concentration. By the end of the films, Francisco is confined to a kind of religious madness, zigzagging his life away in a monastery; while Archibaldo (however implausibly) has been set free from himself. Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe how Archibaldo, once he has destroyed the symbol of his mother's hold over him (and as the music box sinks into the river, the water bubbles up over it as if it were human!), he is pleased to let a preying mantis live that he finds on the trunk of a tree on his way to meet his girl. Unlike poor Modot in *L'Age d'Or*, he is now at peace with nature and with the world.

But most interesting of these films are the two in English, *The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1952) and *The Young One* (1960). Not only are they both set on islands—like the farm in *Los Olvidados*, isolated worlds away from the corruptions of organized society—but also, they really do appear to be Buñuel's most positive films. By the end of both of them, more plausibly than in *Archibaldo*, something has been achieved, some human qualities have prevailed. "I've never liked the novel but I love the character," Buñuel has said of *Robinson Crusoe;*[26] and by the end of his film, through Friday, Crusoe has succeeded in coming to a greater understanding of the physical realities of life. He has broken away from his inherited concepts of a master/servant relationship into an awareness of what human contact might entail. Similarly in *The Young One*, through his contact with little Evie, Miller has come to re-examine not only his own racial prejudices but his whole way of thinking about life, about the supposedly clear-cut categories of good and evil. If *The Young One* must still be considered a "bad" film by conventional standards, then it is one of the most subtle, most challenging, and most distinguished bad films ever made.[27]

In all the French films made at this time—*Cela S'Appelle l'aurore* (1955), *La Mort en ce jardin* (1950), and *La Fièvre monte à El Pao* (1959)—Frédéric Grange suggests that their greater social quality, their greater involvement with political corruption, is accompanied by an increasing degree of abstraction from physical reality that robs the films of their potentially most Buñuelian quality.[28] Certainly the sense of slight involvement even in *La Mort en ce jardin*—to go for what is in many ways the best of them—would seem to lend support to this general claim. It is as if Buñuel, on the political level, simply couldn't care or found he was unable to believe. The perfunctory quality of these films seems to suggest a kind of artistic fatigue.

THE YOUNG ONE *(1960)*

I love *Nazarin* because it is a film that allowed me to express certain things I care about. But I don't believe I denied or abjured anything. . . . I am still an atheist, thank God.[29]

I am very much attached to Nazarin. He is a priest. He could as well be a hairdresser or a waiter. What interests me about him is that he stands by his ideas, that these ideas are inacceptable to society at large, and that after his adventures with prostitutes, thieves, and so forth, they lead him to being irrevocably damned by the prevailing social order . . .[30]

Nazarin (1958) was an exception and, in artistic terms, marks yet a new beginning. Like the best of Buñuel, the film would repay a close analysis, a minute examination of its individual effects; but more briefly here, we could perhaps best define its moral structure by looking at the characterization of three different men.

First of all, there is Pinto, the *caballero*. With his spurs and whip, he is obviously a development of the Jesus figure in *Susana,* but he is related to other Buñuel characters as well. In this harsh Mexico of poverty and authority, the Mexico of Porfirio Díaz that was recalled with such enthusiasm by the Blind Man in *Los Olvidados,* Pinto is obviously strong. Like Bergman's Squire in *The Seventh Seal,* Pinto accepts the physicality of life for what it is and acts accordingly. He knows about horses and, as the scene by the fountain would imply, he knows how to subdue the devils that are tormenting Beatrix. He moves deliberately and noisily from place to place, the sound of his spurs always accompanying his movements. He is obviously a positive force in the film, an aspect of whatever social stability there might have been at such a time; but to what extent he actually endorses the values of that world, a rigid feudal world held in place by force, and thus looks forward to both Joseph and the Captain in *Diary of a Chambermaid,* is something that we'll have to decide.

On the other hand, we have Ujo, the dwarf. A physically grotesque and absurdly vulnerable creature, when we first see him strung up in a tree, we realize that he is dependent on the Pintos of this society to keep him alive. It is a *caballero* who sets him free. Yet, grotesquely, paradoxically, surrealistically, Ujo is the most affirmative figure in all of Buñuel, the most complete incarnation of *agape,* of Christian love. His acceptance of the world, of its physical reality, obviously forced upon him by the hapless shape of his own body, is total and untinged by self-deception. "You're ugly, you're a whore, but I love you," he says to Andara. "What a kick! Were you angry!" he later exclaims at her cell window quite spontaneously, as he comes to re-accept her. There is scarcely any question here of forgiveness in the formally Christian sense of the word, of turning the other cheek—which, finally, Nazarin finds it hard to do when he too is kicked about in his cell. Ujo simply *accepts* the event as he accepts the violence and physicality of existence.

Whenever we see Ujo, he is helping people—offering fruit to the female prisoners and the child, physical projections of his "love," of his intensely real human concern. So too his final offering of the peach to Andara, his arm fully extended in his effort to reach up to her, his look of extreme pleasure and then his embarrassed turning away. The language of criticism always falters with such a moment in the cinema, for the richness of possible feeling (both in Ujo and in ourselves) is impossible to describe. But it is a most affirmative gesture, made disturbingly pathetic as he then hobbles after her, unable to keep up.

Just as the surrealists at their most engaged set out to challenge the nature of matter and the meaning of art and life, so Ujo challenges our sentimental notions of virtue and charity, of moral goodness in an authoritarian world. Although with our conscious selves we claim to know better, we still tend to equate virtue with beauty of some kind. The Keatsian fallacy persists in its attractiveness. Through Ujo, Buñuel will not let us do this; and I have found it extraordinary how few critics have even *noticed* the presence of Ujo in the film, let alone paid tribute to the moral role he plays.[31]

Between the two extremes of Pinto and Ujo walks Nazarin—we could really say, looking

neither to the left nor right. For it is of the essence of Nazarin that, until the end of the film, he really notices nothing about the world he inhabits, certainly nothing of its violence and its physicality. If he is a man who stands by his ideas (as Buñuel has said that he is), these ideas have not been derived from an observation of the real world. In this sense, he is as much a prisoner of his own self-delusions as Francisco in *El* or the hero of *Archibaldo.* If he is a Christian striving to live a thoroughly good life of self-denial and of spiritual ideals, he is a textbook Christian about whom, constantly, we sense there is something wrong.

Obviously he is self-denying (we scarcely ever see him eat), and he does try to reject the accusations of sainthood that superstitious people keep thrusting upon him; yet nothing in his life works out as he might wish. Something seems odd. And is it really the society that will not accept him (again, as Buñuel has claimed), or is there something in himself that brings about rejection? For not only is he ineffectual in everything he tries to do—indeed, often destructive, unleashing passions in others—but there is the sense of some discrepancy in the man himself (like the window that serves as a door for his room—just a tinge of the old surrealist absurdity, of the cow in the bed).

Most simply, most conventionally, it could be seen as a matter of spiritual pride. He sees himself as above the petty trivialities of the rest of the world and is determined to stay there. He rejects the world of the flesh with such insistent thoroughness that he is unable to know what it is all about. So he is useless to everyone.

Andara and Ujo in NAZARIN

Like *Los Olvidados, Nazarin*'s world is an intensely physical one, punctuated throughout by animal sights and sounds. And this world remains unaffected by anything that Nazarin can do: the woman dying of the plague wants not heaven but Juan; Beatrix's devils are her sexual and emotional needs; and Andara remains unrepentant and without "charity" to the end. "May all your children be still-born and may you choke on your own pus!" These are the last words we hear from her, directed against the fat thief. It is an intensely physical curse.

It is the thin thief who, while contriving to rob Nazarin, begins to bring about his inner regeneration. "Your life is wholly good and mine is wholly bad but what has either of us accomplished?" When this question is put to him, Nazarin—here looking most deliberately like a classic Rembrandt Christ—is for the first time in the film directly affected by something outside himself. Up to this point in the film, he has always had an appropriate homily ready as an answer, but this question brings about his silence.

The final stage is achieved when he is alone on the road. It has always seemed to me that it is less the offer of the pineapple that moves him so deeply than the fact that the woman blesses him. It is the blessing, I feel, from a simple peasant woman that he really cannot accept and which he three times refuses. With the drums referring back to Modot's defeated rage in *L'Age d'Or* and beyond that to the Easter ceremonies at Calanda, the ending is affirmative in a way, as if Nazarin has at last come to accept his own frail humanity, his own need to be blessed. But he passes out of frame. Where will that road lead? Even if he has been brought to some point of self-awareness, what will now be his role in the world? Again we have the question, what does Buñuel believe?

If I have dwelt in some detail with the problems of *Nazarin,* it is because I feel that it is the film that most successfully holds in balance these problems of personal belief, not in any kind of metaphysical benevolent Patron but in

the relationship between good and evil in the world. What qualities in life does Buñuel believe will survive? This is again the question asked implicitly by *Viridiana*.[32]

When *Viridiana* first burst upon the world in 1961, if it had been seen in the light of the more reticent *Nazarin*, the response to its apparent extravagances might well have been more subdued. While stylistically in some ways very different—*Viridiana* is so much more exuberant, more exciting technically, and displays a denser observation of the variety of human life—thematically the films are very much the same. Whether it's Don Jaime in his stately home surrounded by the artifacts of a culture somewhat at odds with the urgency of his private needs, or Viridiana in her convent, *Viridiana* depicts the intrusion into these too private and self-deceiving worlds of the brute facts of reality. In some ways Viridiana is a more positive figure than Nazarin—certainly Buñuel constantly associates her with images of great beauty—yet finally, she is not much more successful. The ending of *Viridiana* is just as tentative and just as disturbing as the ending of *Nazarin*. Certainly, in an inward way, with her crown of thorns burnt and her hair now let loose, Viridiana has achieved some acceptance of the physicalities of her own life. Yet what is the world she is moving into? With this increase in self-knowledge, what role now will she be able to play?

Always the same question to which there can be no cheerful answer, although Buñuel takes pains to give us the feeling of something open at the end. Yet the more I contemplate his work, especially with the unambiguous defeat of all decent impulses represented by *Diary of a Chambermaid*, the more I feel that there is really no ambiguity about the end of these films. Buñuel simply shows us that there are certainly manifestations of individual tenderness and through these some measure of individual salvation still possible in the world; but outside the individual, the forces of darkness await us, for there is nothing we can do. His supposed ambiguity is more frequently his unwillingness to draw this bleak conclusion.

VIRIDIANA

Surrealist to the core of himself, he simply presents this situation and lets us make of it what we may, deceiving ourselves if we will.

For at the end of *Viridiana*, what in fact have we? She has moved on in the direction of reality, and there is something radiant and affirmative even about her timidity at the end. After her rape, like Nazarin, she is silent and unsure of herself and so, we might feel, more ready to receive life. And yet what kind of life is there for her to receive? A *ménage-à-trois* with Jorge and the long-suffering Ramona? What will she be able to achieve with that?

Jorge represents a positive spirit in the film. A bastard heir to this great estate, he feels no obligation to respect any of the past, unlike Ramona who keeps him from merely diddling with his father's cherished organ. Though no great philanthropist, he is nevertheless capable of isolated acts of kindness when a problem is brought to his attention. He sets one dog free that is tied to a cart, without much worrying about all the other dogs.

His attitude to love-making is probably much the same—casual and efficient; but before he pounces on her, he inspects Ramona's teeth in a way that makes us remember Pinto and his horse. He believes in the future and has big plans for the great estate; yet, while we see many scenes of energetic activity, intercut with Viridiana and her beggars serene beneath the almond trees, we see nothing that is built. Nor for all the talk about points and plugs, do we have any electricity by the end. The Bach and Mozart and the Hallelujah chorus have been

replaced by "Shake your cares away," an undistinguished pop song which may have, in comparison, "a certain humanity" as Alan Lovell has argued, but it is not very encouraging. As the camera pulls back from Viridiana playing cards with Jorge and Ramona, seeming more and more imprisoned in that little room, we do indeed see that order has been restored after the beggars' orgy but the clutter of the place is no different than in Don Jaime's day. Though no conclusions are drawn, the implication would seem to be very black indeed—and almost indistinguishable from the ending of *L'Age d'Or.*

At the center of the finest aspirations of our culture (this film would seem to be saying), with all our Bach and Mozart, there is a suicidal sexual repression that struggles to get free. If we free ourselves from this repression, then the culture seems to go as well and we're left with the feeble suggestion that we should shake our cares away. Meanwhile, outside these disturbingly personal matters, these insistent questions of personal salvation, there is the church in its solidity, organized and impenetrable, and its opposite pole, the poor beggars —like the bandits in *L'Age d'Or,* in revolt against the world and amongst themselves but without a purpose. It is not an encouraging view of the world.

After the comparative light relief of *The Exterminating Angel* (1962), a film in which he seems to be playing with merely an aspect of his total vision, a film of some wit, I suppose, but not much insight, Buñuel returned to France with all the resources of his late maturity to make what in many ways is the most astonishing film of his career. Also, as if to compensate for the indifference of his French films in the fifties, Buñuel has contrived to make *The Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964) his most accomplished film as well. Buñuel has never been that interested in the techniques of the cinema. Again true to his surrealist inheritance, he has been less concerned with the formal perfection of his presentation than with the interiority of what is being said. At his best in the early days, with both *Los Olvidados* and *Nazarin,* the films employ the simplest of technical means—a fact that can make them dull to watch for someone not attuned to Buñuel's view of life. But both *Viridiana* and *The Exterminating Angel* represent a change from this apparent carelessness; and perhaps owing to the French crew and the prosperous production conditions, *The Diary of a Chambermaid* is his most expertly executed film.

So much do I admire every detail of the film and so appropriate is each detail to the significance of the whole, it is difficult for me not to launch into a full-scale analysis which, for the sake of space, I must resist. So once again, perhaps too schematically, we can look at certain details, the most telling features of the form. When Célestine (Jeanne Moreau) first arrives at the railway station and asks the coachman Joseph if it is far to the priory, he replies: "You'll find out—*Vous le verrez bien.*" This is what she finds.[33]

First of all, within the wintry seclusion of the place, there is the Master, Monteil, who always goes out shooting. Denied by his wife (except for "certain caresses"!), he is reduced to seducing chambermaids and with his gun destroying things, inflicting upon the outside world his anger and frustrations. There is also Madame Monteil whose private life centers around a locked-up ritual of flasks and tubes of the most hygienic kind, an aspect (we assume) of her compulsive need to stay clean. Intercourse with her husband causes her too much pain, and the first question she asks Célestine is concerned with her cleanliness. Unlike her husband, Madame Monteil preserves things. She wants every detail in the house to remain exactly as it is. In collusion with her father, she demands that no shoes ever be worn in the salon except by her father, "For he is always spotless."

When we first see the father, Old Rabour, he is taking pains to blow clean little Claire's nose and complains about his son-in-law's unshaven state. His entire life is lived as one removed from reality. For the most part, we

see him locked up in his room with his postcards of young women and his cabinet of women's shoes. He is a gentleman of the old sort, as Marianne says; and so he is. He is urbane and civilized and extremely courteous to Célestine, though he calls her Marie since to him all chambermaids are the same. Célestine is his one contact with the physical world. She models his boots, lets her calf be gently fondled, and reads to him passages of his favorite author, Huysmans (from whom Buñuel has selected the most telling bits—*"il n'existe plus de substance saine . . ."*). In the old-world style, he maintains a real gentleness; for like Don Jaime his dissatisfactions are inflicted upon himself. And like Don Jaime, this inward-turning quality leads to a troubled death.

Next door there is Captain Mauger, Félicien Mauger, a professional man of force whose career as a soldier gives him status in the society no matter how he actually behaves. (We might remember Modot in *L'Age d'Or* who, once he has presented his credentials to the men who are restraining him, is allowed to attack a blind man with apparent impunity.) Mauger's life is filled with a petty war he is privately waging on his neighbor, with no apparent reason since it is made up by the end. He lives in a common-law alliance with his housekeeper, Rose; after twelve years he decides to send her packing so that he can be free to approach Célestine. With the exception of Célestine, who is obviously his match, he thinks of woman as creatures who serve him, as creatures to clean his boots. In the Buñuel galaxy, this unites him with Jorge and contrasts him with Rabour who takes a strange delight in reversing this man/servant relationship.

Close by, there is *"la petite Claire"*—a watery-eyed, full-lipped little creature who is so provocative that Joseph cannot look at her. To his sadistic mind, she must seem as moistly physical as the snails she is so fond of. And of course, most central in this household is Joseph, a man too complex for any cameo.

Into this world comes Célestine, creating desire in every man she meets but holding out for what she thinks will be the safest bet. As the film ends, we can see she has made a mistake. She sits on her bed, impatient with Mauger's unctuousness (even though he talks of money), biting her little finger as she recognizes her fate. It might seem like punishment of a kind, having made such a choice. But there is no sense of divine retribution. The dice have simply rolled the wrong way.[34]

Although a thoroughgoing opportunist of the most unscrupulous kind, Célestine has some redeeming features. In this world of moral sickness that Buñuel presents to us, she is comparatively well. In this way, like Joseph, her cynicism makes her strong. She accepts things that happen to her, even the kinky insistences of old Rabour. Which is to say she is respectful of kindness (for she is harsh with Monteil) and discreet in her verbal fidelity to her friends (she defends Rose to Mauger). Her most decent impulse springs from her response to little Claire, whose brutal murder she would have done anything to avenge. But even here, decency is flouted and Joseph is set free. *The Diary of a Chambermaid* is a film that celebrates the triumph of evil over the world of good intentions. It is Buñuel's most unambiguous film, and thus the answer to all the questions that have been raised before.

Because of the presence of Ochitos and to a lesser extent Meche, one could feel in *Los Olvidados* that gentleness and goodness might stand a chance.[35] But in the grim light of *Chambermaid*, even this faint glimmer of hope seems to be a self-deception. If Pedro's mother washes her legs in a way that recalls Meche, then we might from this parallel feel that Meche's course in life is not too promising. Similarly, though Ochitos in his considerateness is nicely contrasted with the fascist violence of the Blind Man, we have seen that twice in the film he has been ready to rise to violence himself—as he will probably have to do if he is to survive. Thus by this declension there is the feeling that Ochitos might have to be less wide-eyed in relation to existence if he is going to stay alive. For the Blind

Man has stumbled through.

In *Chambermaid,* the only ambiguity is the uncertainty of what Buñuel might feel for his two principal characters—especially for Joseph. The killing of Claire is immediately followed by a brief autumnal evening scene, with Joseph wheeling a wheelbarrow. Then a scene in the kitchen where the maids are asking Célestine why she has returned to the house, to which she gives the evasive answer—"because."[36] Then the scene by the bonfire at night with Joseph raking the leaves. "You are like me . . . way down deep," he says to her, and we know that this is true; just as we know that the *"salaud"* she scribbles on the table after she has turned Joseph over to the police applies both to herself and to him. It is the old story of the thief to catch the thief, of combatting evil with more evil; except that in this case it doesn't work and Joseph is set free.

The ambiguity of attitude springs from the scenes of sensual softness that surrounds Claire's murder and that give the whole film a troubling aesthetic lift. We are back to the Dali anecdote again, with its psychopathic sensibility. There is no moral judgment made in this film about the central characters because Buñuel must recognize that in such a world such characters are strong. If Célestine and Joseph genuinely admire one another, Buñuel would seem to a large degree also to admire them.

The film ends with a gag, as if like *L'Age d'Or* in the effort to set us free. Joseph has realized his desire and taken that café in Cherbourg with a woman to whore for him. He has allied himself with the most reactionary forces of the *Action Française;* and, of course, the film would seem to imply, the future is on his side. As the demonstrators march past the café with its Picon advertisement, the last syllable of which remains on the screen throughout the sequence, Joseph starts shouting "Vive Chiappe" which the others then take up.[37] With its absurd jump-cuts and the tilt upwards to the thunder and lightning, this sequence is totally out of style with the rest of the film; yet the very unrelatedness of this intensely personal joke makes the film's pervasive grimness seem that much more grim.

DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID

Perhaps it was the defeat of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War; perhaps it has been Buñuel's hard and (one assumes) lonely life;[38] perhaps it is just the way he sees things that makes his world so without a hope for the eventual triumph of the gentlest impulses in mankind. And even though we might strive to see things differently, Buñuel's vision is not an easy one to disagree with. Whatever *Simon of the Desert* or now *La Belle Epoque* might have in store for us, it is doubtful if they will offer a more positive view of the world.

Often in Buñuel we experience great tenderness; but almost constantly in his films it meets with defeat. As an emblem of his world, we might remember the deformed Ujo, as if even genuine goodness must be achieved at a terrible price; or we might remember Don Jaime as he writes out his will, the resigned smile on his face as he makes the final dadaist surrender to the powers of darkness, as if his attempt to achieve goodness has been the biggest joke of all.

NOTES

1. See *Dada: art & anti-art,* by Hans Richter and *Surrealism,* by Patrick Waldberg (both London: Thames & Hudson, 1965).

2. *Surrealism,* by Julien Levy. (New York: Black Sun Press, 1936), p. 9.
3. From the Introduction to the *Penguin Book of French Verse (4).*
4. *The Secret Life of Salvador Dali,* by Salvador Dali. (London: Vision Press Ltd., 1948), p. 11.
5. See Richter (op. cit.), p. 43.
6. See Waldberg (op. cit.), p. 16.
7. *Luis Buñuel: an Introduction,* by Ado Kyrou. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963), p. 114.
8. Ibid., p. 14.
9. Buñuel's son, Juan-Luis, has now made a 22-min. documentary on this drumming ceremony—*Calanda,* 1966.
10. In *Luis Buñuel,* ed. by Michel Estève (Études Cinématographiques, Nos. 20–21, 22–23, Hiver 1962–63), p. 11 ff., Francisco Rabal relates how once in Mexico, when Buñuel discovered that there were rats in his house, he would rather catch them in a cage in order to set them free in an open field than have to kill them. See also his sister Conchita's memoirs in *Positif,* No. 42, Nov. 1961.
11. From Estève (op. cit.), p. 193.
12. For example, see any of the pieces in *Sight & Sound,* especially David Robinson's "Thank God I'm still an atheist" (Summer '62, p. 116 ff.) and Tom Milne's "The Mexican Buñuel" (Winter 1965/66, p. 36 ff.).
13. *Cinema Eye, Cinema Ear* (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 85.
14. *Luis Buñuel,* supposedly by Carlos Rebolledo but all but the last section of which is by Frédéric Grange, the best all-round study of his work. (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1964). See p. 15 ff.
15. In *Luis Buñuel,* by Freddy Buache. (Premier Plan #33, 1964).
16. See Pierre Renaud's analysis in Estève (op. cit.) p. 147 ff.
17. Op. cit., p. 93.
18. For example, see Henry Miller's classic essay from *The Cosmological Eye* (New York: New Directions, 1939).
19. Jean Sémolué in Estève (op. cit.), p. 172.
20. For a description of these little-known films (if you can understand it, whether in French or English), see "The Angel & the Beast" by Jean-André Fieschi, in *Cahiers du Cinéma in English,* No. 4, 1966.
21. See the filmography compiled by Rufus Segar in *Anarchy 6,* pp. 183–84.
22. *Anarchist Cinema,* by Alan Lovell (Peace News, 5 Caledonian Rd., London, N.4. 1962) and through the BFI.
23. Ibid., p. 23.
24. *Pace,* Tom Milne (*Sight & Sound,* Winter 1965/66) who does a disservice, it seems to me, by dealing with these lesser-known films in isolation and finding most of them to be "masterpieces," a disservice both to Buñuel and to our critical intelligence.
25. For a comparison of these two films, see Grange (op. cit.), p. 64 ff.
26. Buache (op. cit.), p. 51.
27. For a full and persuasive analysis, see Alan Lovell (op. cit.), pp. 28–34.
28. P. 103 ff.
29. Kyrou (op. cit.), p. 120.
30. Ibid., p. 127.
31. First prize for gross insensitivity goes to Tom Milne for his *Monthly Film Bulletin* review, Oct. 1963, p. 141. He describes the film as "a pure, devastating masterpiece of atheism" and refers to Ujo as "the lewd and ugly dwarf who, simply because he wants her body, shows a charity to Andara which Nazario . . . can never match . . ."
32. Again, see Alan Lovell, pp. 34–38.
33. For a most thorough account of this film, see Grange again, p. 152 ff. See also, of course, the published script in *L'Avant-Scène,* No. 36, 15 avril 1964.
34. For a total miscomprehension, see again Tom Milne's "The Two Chambermaids" in *Sight & Sound,* Aut. 1964, p. 177: ". . . and when we last see Célestine comfortably breakfasting in bed . . ." This is all he has to say of this scene and he finds the film a failure.
35. As Alan Lovell has argued (op. cit.), p. 26.
36. By way of small digression, we could note the troubling efficacy of the evaded question that occurs at least twice in this film at crucial moments. "Pourquoi?" which is followed simply by "Parceque" in a way that cannot help but recall Godard but which here seems most effectively used to suggest the breakdown of causality in this world of moral nihilism.
37. Tom Milne is helpful about the facts (op. cit.), p. 171: It seems that Chiappe was one of the key men responsible for the banning of *L'Age d'Or.*
38. For an informative and generally helpful article about Buñuel's Spanish background, see J. F. Aranda's two-part piece in *Films & Filming,* Oct. 1961 and Nov. 1961.

GINETTE BILLARD

Interview with Georges de Beauregard

One of the chief reasons for the emergence of a wealth of new talent in the French cinema, during the New Wave and after, has been the existence of courageous producers willing to take chances on young directors. Georges de Beauregard is perhaps the most outstanding example—the producer of Godard's Breathless, Demy's Lola, Rozier's Adieu Philippine, Melville's Leon Morin Prêtre, Varda's Cleo de Cinq à Sept, Schoendorffer's La 317e Section, Rivette's La Religeuse, and many others. Recognition is also due to Pierre Braunberger, whose career goes back to the twenties and includes such classics as Entr'Acte, Le Chien Andalou, L'Age d'Or, and who has also made notable contemporary contributions as the producer for films by Resnais, Truffaut, Doniol-Valcroze, and Rouch. Anatole Dauman is another important figure, who has produced films by Resnais, Baratier, Varda, Marker, Astruc, and Ruspoli. But Beauregard's operations are characteristic of the extraordinary daring and flexibility whch has enabled these producers to bridge the often conflicting demands of commerce and art. Such men do not yet exist in the American cinema, and we need them badly if new directors are to have the freedom of action required to revivify the American film. Meanwhile, shortly after giving this interview, Beauregard decided to enter politics, running against the Gaullist minister who had banned his film La Religeuse. We have just learned at press time that he lost, and it is not known whether he will return to producing films.

Before 1959 and the making of *Breathless* with Jean-Luc Godard, I had worked in Spain, where I had made *Calle Mayor* and *Muerta di un Ciclista* with Bardem—and some other more traditional films, some of which nonetheless pleased me a good deal. I produced *La Passé du Diable* with Schoendorffer in Afghanistan, then I made *La 317e Section* with him also. It's normal in this *métier* that we make mistakes from time to time. But it has always struck me that I would rather make my own mistakes, take my own decisions, pick my own subjects, rather than listen much to other people who aren't ultimately very involved. Their opinion might be just as good or bad as mine, but I prefer to lose my money by taking my risks alone, without anybody else mixed up in it. The problem with *Breathless,* well that was a film that came about very naturally. I knew Godard, who was in the publicity department at Twentieth Century-Fox, I had met him and little by little things worked out—he brought me a subject; I'm a producer of films, and the job of a producer is to make films; you have to take a plunge from time to time, there are certain moments . . . at the mo-

ment of *Breathless*, we had our backs to the wall, and if we hadn't done that, we'd have been ruined.

The budget for Breathless *was unusually low?*

No, it was like a film of 60–70 million [old] francs today [$120–140,000].

Which is still quite exceptional, in the French industry.

That depends—there are films you can make for 50 million and others you can't make for 500 million. There are few films made for 50 million, because the problem for such films is to find subjects which can be handled in settings that are relatively easy to find, and also the psychology of the characters has to be more important than what happens around them.

So you knew Godard as a press agent, he spoke to you about a project and you were interested . . .

No, it wasn't like that. Godard had worked with me when he left Fox, he had written a part of the scenario for *Pêcheur d'Islande* (I had sent him to Concarneau) and when that didn't interest him any more, one day he brought me three or four scenarios, among them one by Truffaut (for the scenario of *Breathless* is by Truffaut) and that was the essential moment for the making of the film.

It was his first feature—he had made shorts before, which you had seen and liked . . .

Yes, yes.

You had seen in them a potential "genius of the twentieth century"?

We must never speak of genius, we should speak only of talent, never genius. The problem is that the cinema was getting hardening of the arteries, keeping always to a certain traditional way of making films; and I thought that perhaps, to some extent, we could create a new style—and, as a business matter, try to sell it. (You know that we sell the French intelligence abroad, that's what we really sell.) This was very interesting on the cinematic level, to destroy this traditional conception of the mise-en-scène, for one thing because the mise-en-scène of Godard is itself a show for anyone who sees it, and consequently that created its own interest.

And that was something you sensed before the shooting of Breathless?

Yes, because you know I never make a film without knowing the guy very well, and then too when you make a film you work together six or seven months, so inevitably when you get done you have come to know the film practically as if you had made it yourself.

Your relations with Godard personally, and your influence on the films you produce?

I don't concern myself at all with the shooting as such, that's a bit I don't get, it doesn't interest me—what interests me is the six months of preparation, the study of the script, the discussions: after that a film makes itself, mathematically. A director sometimes gives it something more or something less, but not really much, because he's so taken up during the shooting—it's terrible.

Even with Godard, who's known to arrive on the set with far less preparation than the older directors? Despite that, this period of preparation, of discussions, gives you a sound impression of what the film will be like, before anything is shot?

Sure. I've now made six films by Godard, I know his films without seeing them.

Yes, but more specifically in the case of Breathless, *did what you expected to see correspond with what you actually saw?*

Yes, because *Breathless* was very carefully prepared—the script was a book of 300 pages.

And in that case too you collaborated closely in the preparation stage?

Yes indeed! Nowadays I leave him alone, partly because the work pleases him, and it no longer pleases me. I've just been working very hard on *Lamiel*, and that's what really interests me now, while the films of Godard, I like them, but they interest me less than before.

And from the financial point of view, were you satisfied with Breathless? *The film was a huge success, you certainly haven't regretted making it, but at the beginning did you have difficulties in setting it up?*

Yes, inevitably, because we had no one who was known—Belmondo was nothing, Jean Seberg was nothing at all—and we were still in the star-cinema at that time, you had to have big names, but we managed to pull it off.

You received aid from the Centre du Cinéma?

No, nothing—at that time there were no advances against receipts. Nothing. It was a commercial film. I don't make films to keep in my pockets, I'm horrified at films that lie on the shelves (and there are plenty at present). After all our *métier* is also an industry, and our films ought to be seen by the largest number possible; every real *auteur* knows that. But today there are directors, and I've seen some of their films, who are *against* the public; that's a new form of cinema which is becoming very disagreeable. It's contrary to everything we've accomplished till now. Besides, they'll ruin themselves.

Aside from Godard, you've given a chance to other directors by producing their first films, and seen them go on to important careers—it was you who produced Jacques Demy's Lola, *Agnès Varda's* Cleo de Cinq à Sept, *Pierre Schoendorffer's* La 317e Section—*which wasn't a first film but first made him known . . .*

Yes, but *La Passé du Diable,* which only got a limited distribution, is a nice film, I like it very well—I run it from time to time and it's possible that now it would do better.

Why is it that you do all this—you're a pioneer by nature, you like to open things up?

Not at all, I just find it more amusing, more interesting to work with young people, and I figure that every director has something, which it's necessary to bring out of him—something which he'll lose later, for it's a *métier* in which one ages quickly, on every level. And then it's always a question of getting the public into the theaters, which has fascinated me because one must always create something new. If you bring into the cinema something which rejuvenates it, shakes it up, well then I think the public will come.

When one looks at the list of directors to whom you've given their first chance, they seem to be men of strong personalities, who perhaps aren't easy to work with. Have you had problems of this kind?

The proof that I haven't is that I've almost always made two or three films with each director, and if we hadn't gotten along I wouldn't have done that—I wouldn't have had any reason to bother myself and spend my money with people who weren't *sympathique.*

If you had the chance again today, would you still do as you did in 1959, in making Breathless, *not just for financial reasons, but . . .*

Yes, I think I'd do it, and if I didn't, somebody else would. It was necessary for the cinema in general. Someone had to give the example of a low-budget film. We lowered the net cost, we destroyed the myth of expensive lighting, we made many practical innovations besides. Today, if the cost of films hasn't grown proportionately to the cost of living, it's thanks to us, because we have occasionally made a low-budget film.

You still, today, make low-budget films?

Certainly, *La 317e Section* is one. It depends. I made *Le Mépris* with Brigitte Bardot and Godard which cost a lot of money, I'm making *Lamiel* which will be a medium-budget film. But I think that's not the problem, the problem is that you can't put a low budget on a film where you really need to spend money—that's ridiculous, it's better to not make it at all.

Are you still inclined to listen to beginners who come to see you, or do you nowadays have a stable of regulars?

No, but I am getting a little tired of it—now that I've made thirty films, I'm not so fascinated as I was when I began. In fact I think in a year or two I may abandon the cinema. Because when something doesn't interest me any more—I go on doing it, but it isn't exciting. I think that there are fellows around now, producers younger than I, and it's up to them, I've done my part.

You've arrived at a kind of ceiling?

A ceiling which I resent. Because first there are financial problems which are very important—the cinema is the last industry the government thinks of, it's a dying business. Last year we made 30 purely French-financed films, four years ago we made 80 or 90. We're in the middle of a frightful crisis. And the film is the last free means of expression, still free, precariously free—and the government wants to finish it off. It's no longer possible to make films that interest us about the elections, the army, things like that—subjects relatively important. We're prohibited from making what will please the public or what will please us, there's no money to do it. So it's a dying business.

You've brought up a problem—that of free expression—which has affected you very directly. You've had numerous run-ins with the government censors.

I had a lot even before *La Religeuse. Le Petit Soldat* was banned. But it's not even that so much, that's a strong case. It's that we're obliged to grovel in advance, when we think about the censors—to put ourselves in their framework. Such things ought not to happen.

You mentioned the case of Le Petit Soldat, *which was banned for some years, then ultimately you got authorization to release the film in France and to sell it abroad; did you ever recover your losses?*

No, we lost a lot on that—well, not a lot because it didn't cost much. But still we lost on it because when we finally could bring it out, it was too late. Films are made for a specific public; you have to think of that public, you try to think two years ahead. So the public for *Le Petit Soldat* was not the same one we had supposed it would have. That's also one of the difficulties of a producer, each film obliges him to imagine what the public

will be in two or three years. That is to say, the choice of *auteur* (a term which corresponds better to my conception than director), the working out of the scenario, the script, the choice of players—in a word the preparation of the film—must all be done thinking ahead to the future public. When we produce a film, the master copy is ready five to six months after the first day of shooting. Then you must allow two or three months for the releasing. Then the period of circulation may extend 18 to 24 months.

And for La Religeuse, *do you hope to recover your investment on that, some day? It must have been more expensive than* Le Petit Soldat . . .

Yes, yes. I hope so, if the government changes—I think lifting the ban on that is one of the first measures a new government ought to take.

Going back to the question of costs, supposing you were making Breathless *today, how much more would it cost?*

Well, it wouldn't cost that much more. Today it's a problem of the techniques of shooting, whether you can shoot a film in four weeks rather than ten. That depends on the director, the budget, whether it's black and white or color, what kind of lighting, and so on. There's no accepted science of photography these days—some people will find a style of photography lovely, others will consider it awful, it's all a matter of approximation and nuances.

So you think that with hardly more capital than you had for Breathless, *a producer with enough courage could still launch himself as you did?*

It's certain. For surely boys like Godard, Chabrol, Truffaut, and so on, will be followed by other new Truffauts, new Chabrols, new Godards. There has to be a constant pushing forward. Already there are assistant directors who have made one or two films, there's a certain tendency, then among the best ones . . .

You're now preparing Lamiel, *from Stendhal, with Jean Aurel as director—a big-budget film?*

It's a film that will cost a lot. I'd prefer it to be low-budget, but you can't make *Lamiel* without costumes, sets, exteriors—it's a bit in the same style as *Landru.*

And you'll use stars?

I think Anna Karina. I think I'll make three more films before stopping: *Lamiel, Le Mur de l'Atlantique,* and a Godard.

What is the rhythm in your productions?

To keep afloat, you have to produce a film every two years. And there are people who do that. I've wanted to do many more, and I haven't always succeeded. In reality what is important for a producer is to know how to sell. A film like those I've produced absolutely must be distributed by a big company, that's the only way you can be assured of getting into the big theater circuits.

But that must be very difficult, since the major distributors don't exactly have a reputation of plunging into experiments.

You always find a guy who wonders. What's important is to love the films you make, otherwise you won't be convincing. Myself, I've always loved what I've done; that said, it's also necessary to know how to do traditional films. The good films will go anyhow!

If you had to define the cinema of tomorrow as you foresee it, as you would wish it?

The new generation which is going and will go to the cinema expects completely different sensations from those expected by their parents. Two forms will dominate, in my opinion. First is the cinema I call futurist, whose *auteurs* will impose a world they have imagined by means of plastic techniques. Let me explain: certain films will be based on 3-D or similar techniques, and perhaps also a new form of *vérité* never achieved before. For my part, I expect the world of the future to be more mechanical, more speedy; life will be more uniform. In effect, television and the theater circuits will be international. We must thus think of a second kind of cinema where characters and emotions will be more definite, a cinema where the heart will have more importance than the intelligence, a cinema which will make analyses—for our spectators won't have much time in their daily lives for thinking. Because of these two forms of cinema, the theaters will be transformed. In the film palaces we will have the spectaculars; and in the more intimate theaters the public will be able to see—in that homogenized world—free men who live again on the screen. Television will invade everything, but because of its awkwardness and a certain necessary uniformity (which we see already in all its programs) it will only bring a larger public to the cinema. That's the cinema that I see coming in two or three years; and to those who accuse me of not being realistic, I ask: will planes not be flying 2,000 miles per hour in two years? will television be French, Italian, German, or Chinese? does the cosmos have a nationality? In the last analysis, does a producer not have the right to dream?

[Translated by Ernest Callenbach]

Film Reviews

BALTHAZAR

(Au Hasard, Balthasar) Written and directed by Robert Bresson. Music: Jean Wiéner (with Schubert's Piano Sonata in A Major). Photography: Ghislain Cloquet.

The film begins with the birth of Balthazar, the donkey, and ends with his death. In between, his life intertwines with those of the inhabitants of a small French town. Marie, a silent, withdrawn girl, first adopts Balthazar as a pet. They are parted when her father takes over the management of an estate belonging to a friend. The friend's son Jacques loves Marie, but she falls under the spell of Gérard, an amoral, sadistic youth. Balthazar meanwhile is bought by the village baker for making deliveries. Gérard becomes the baker's delivery boy and torments Balthazar. The donkey falls ill and the baker is about to kill him when a strange tramp named Arnold bursts in and takes Balthazar away. After a while Balthazar runs free, is taken in by a circus and taught a computing act. Meanwhile Marie's father has become estranged from his friend because he refuses, out of pride, to deny false rumors that he is embezzling from the estate.

And so the film goes on, until in the end Marie is raped by a gang of Gérard's friends and dies; her father dies; Arnold dies; and Balthazar, "borrowed" by Gérard and his gang for a smuggling expedition, is shot by a border guard.

In any verbal summary the plot is bound to seem like a morass of disconnected and sometimes far-fetched incidents. As in *Diary of a Country Priest,* Bresson builds up an unusual density of experience by pressing rapidly from episode to episode. But unlike *Diary*—or any of Bresson's other films, for that matter—*Balthazar* does not have a central character that binds this varied experience together. The principal characters, including Balthazar himself, alternate between foreground and background, or disappear from the scene to reappear much later. Bresson's laconic style, his unapologetic use of coincidence, and his insistence on deadpan acting (the donkey that plays Balthazar is more expressive than most of the cast) make the surface events of his film seem even more arbitrary and inscrutable.

It's tempting to look to symbolism for an answer. Marie ritually dedicates herself to Balthazar, as if he were a stand-in for God. Arnold, who might easily be a Christ figure on the lines of the bearded halfwit in Dreyer's *Ordet,* suggests that the donkey represents a passive observer of human frailties. But how does this jibe with Bresson's remark (quoted by Richard Roud in *Sight and Sound*) that the donkey is a symbol of virility?

All of these symbols—and others just as "obvious"—may have a brief validity at different times during the film, but clearly there is no one symbol that will reveal the meaning of the film as a whole. There's always the possibility, of course, that the film *doesn't* make sense as a whole, that Bresson himself was confused. Many of the elements in the film are unexpectedly modern, outside Bresson's usual ambit. Marie and Gérard, for example, might need only a touch of flip humor to be at home in a Godard film. Could Bresson be trying, and failing, to enter the world of alienated youth, like Carné in *The Cheaters* and Antonioni in *The Blow-Up*? But in these films one can easily peel away the style—the romantic melancholy that Carné imposes on his young Parisians, the brilliant surface that overlays Antonioni's near-Victorian moralizing about young Londoners—and reveal the banal content just below the surface. *Balthazar* has no such weak seams between style and content. If one strips away the trappings of contemporary youth—Gérard's transistor radio, his rock-and-roll, his gun, his destructiveness—the film remains as richly textured as before.

Though *Balthazar* represents something of a new departure for Bresson, it does not depart so far from his previous films as to be influenced by film-making fashions. Right from the start Bresson has gone his own way. All his films are religious in the deepest sense of the word, which sets him far apart from direc-

tors like George Stevens and John Huston who observe only the conventional pieties. But he also differs fundamentally from the few other serious religious directors, and this difference has emerged more and more clearly with each of the seven films that he has made in the past 24 years.

Bresson's first two films, *Les Anges du Péché* (1943) and *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1944) had a fairly conventional dramatic form which partly obscured the distinctiveness of their themes. The transformation of pride into humility through the fire of humiliation recurs in most of Bresson's films. An even more important theme is launched: the idea that one attains freedom not by trying to smash one's way out of one's circumstances but by struggling patiently within them. Thus the over-confident nun in *Les Anges du Péché* finally comes to grips with a crisis for which she is at first totally unprepared; and the man trapped into marrying a *danseuse* in *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* accepts her gladly.

Beginning with *Diary of a Country Priest* (1949) Bresson's style becomes as idiosyncratic as his content. *Diary* does still have a dark, brooding intensity about it which might call to mind the atmosphere of Ingmar Bergman's films; but the resemblance is only superficial, and it disappears entirely from Bresson's subsequent films. For Bergman, God and the afterlife are matters of doubt and mystery. For Bresson—as for his country priest—they are matters of certainty: it's only in this world that doubts and mysteries arise.

Holding this view, Bresson has no need for the symbolism that Bergman wields, ax-like, against the wall of mystery between this world and whatever lies beyond. Bresson is concerned with clarifying the situation of man here and now, dipped in flesh for a brief moment in eternity; and to do this he uses not symbolism but synecdoche—choosing the particular section of a particular character's life that best reveals the human condition. The method may overlap symbolism; the country priest's hereditary disease may perhaps be taken as a symbol for original sin. But nothing is lost if one rejects this symbol: the disease in itself is a powerful enough handicap to establish the intensity of the priest's struggle.

BALTHAZAR

In Bresson's next three films—*A Man Escaped* (1956), *Pickpocket* (1959) and *The Trial of Joan of Arc* (1962)—he strives to drill closer and closer to the heart of the human condition as he sees it. Emotionalism is out; so is any suggestion of divine intervention. All that counts is the individual soul struggling against the difficulties of this world. The condemned man in *A Man Escaped* struggles against imprisonment, scraping away at his cell day after day with a spoon. Just when he is ready to escape, a cellmate is thrust on him, and he must take the risk of trusting the newcomer—the struggle must be crowned with charity. The young hero of *Pickpocket* lacks this charity; he knows he must struggle but he does not know what he should struggle for, and he directs his energies into acquiring the skill and grace of an expert pickpocket.

Here Bresson's central character has become little more than a single driving force. And this spareness is carried even further for *The Trial of Joan of Arc.* It's easy to compare this Joan to Dreyer's, the *Trial* with the *Passion,* to Bresson's disadvantage. But even though I do not like the *Trial,* I can see why Bresson wanted to make it the way he did. Dreyer's film can be appreciated entirely as a humanitarian drama in which a defenseless woman stands up to a tyrannical establishment. As in all his films, Dreyer lingers lovingly on objects, faces, textures, light in its myriad qualities; frequently

he pans or dollies from one point of interest to another as if he cannot bear the brutal parting of a cut. In Dreyer's view, since the world is God's creation, it is marvelous in itself. One result is that his *Passion* makes not merely the circumstances of Joan's death but the fact of death itself seem terrible.

To Bresson this is all wrong. Life in itself is not wonderful, and death in itself not terrible. Since Joan was a soldier, Bresson sees her as tough and level-headed, with a matter-of-fact assurance of life after death. In his film she is temperamentally a match for her accusers and judges, and—during the trial at least—she arouses little pity. Only when it comes to the manner of Joan's execution does Bresson seek to engage our emotions, beginning with the close-up of her bare feet treading the cobblestones on her way to the stake.

That close-up is crucial. Although Bresson does not linger as Dreyer does on objects and faces, there is nothing abstract about his use of the camera. He does not rely on noble postures, reverent tableaux or grandiose compositions in the style of *The Bible* or *The Greatest Story Ever Told.* Many of his shots arouse strong physical sensations, like the close-up of Joan's feet or the similar shot in *Balthazar* where the donkey's hooves are seen stepping hesitantly over rocky ground; or indeed like the opening scene of *Balthazar,* where young Marie's smooth white arm stretches into the frame to caress the dark and fluffy baby donkey, making one almost literally feel the simultaneous closeness and separateness of the two creatures. Bresson may take a detached view of the world, but he sees it sharply. Just as his most saintly characters are not passive souls but activists working through the flesh, he himself works through the cinematic flesh of familiar sights and sounds.

This is what makes Bresson's films so fascinating to a nonbeliever like myself. He does not reject or distort the world as we know it but places it as is in the light of eternity. The transformation is done without flourishes; yet it is fully as startling as the altered modes of reality in *Marienbad* or in science fiction films like *La Jetée* or *The Damned.*

The comparison is not far-fetched. Like the woman in *Marienbad* and the man in *La Jetée,* all of Bresson's central characters from *Diary of a Country Priest* onward have been cast adrift in a disconcerting continuum of time and space. What science fiction presents as allegory Bresson presents as fact: his priest, his pickpocket, and even his Joan are space travelers trying to preserve their identity in an alien world.

The pickpocket is the first of Bresson's central characters to come close to failure. He is in much the same predicament as Losey's mutant children: his defense mechanisms against the threats of the modern world has hypertrophied, blocking him from normal contact with other people. *Pickpocket,* of course, has none of the rhetoric of *The Damned;* it errs in the opposite direction, in excessive terseness and understatement.

This is a pivotal film, combining as it does an unprecedented rigor of style with the unprecedented (for Bresson) theme of alienation. With *The Trial of Joan of Arc* Bresson carries the rigor still further; and although Joan is not alienated in the modern sense of the word, she deliberately blanks herself out in dealing with her judges and advisers for fear of being tempted to recant. The country priest and the condemned man, single-minded and self-contained though they are, allow certain countercurrents of feeling to reach the surface. The priest shows an unexpected delight in being taken for a ride on a motorbike; the condemned man, after his escape, is suddenly jaunty. The pickpocket and Joan lack this richness of character. With the *Trial,* indeed, the lines along which Bresson was developing seemed to lead directly to a vanishing point.

But then came *Balthazar.*

Seen in the light of Bresson's other films, *Balthazar* ceases to be an enigma. Not that the film becomes simple to explain; but one can decide with confidence what questions need *not* be asked about it, what subtle meanings are *not* hidden away in its intricate plot.

The novelty of *Balthazar* rests in the fact that Bresson has fused the rigor of *Pickpocket* and the *Trial* with the richness of his earlier films. He has done this quite simply, by presenting several protagonists instead of one. Each of his four previous films revolves around the protagonist named in the title: even when the other characters are as memorable as Chantal and the Curé de Tourcy in *Diary,* they and their problems remain tributary to the central figure. In *Balthazar,* five characters present different facets of a condition which, in *Pickpocket,* is revealed through the central character alone. Marie, Gérard, Arnold, Marie's father and the miserly corn merchant all lack grace; or in less theological terms, are blocked from finding satisfaction in life. In Marie's father and the merchant the block is a simple obsession: pride in the former, avarice in the latter. Arnold is impelled by gluttony and sloth. Gérard and Marie, like the pickpocket, are more creative, each trying to impose a pattern on what seems to them to be the meaninglessness of life. Gérard's method is sadism: since life is absurd, he will beat it to the punch by himself creating accidents (spilling oil on the road for cars to slither on), himself inflicting pain (tying a burning newspaper to Balthazar's tail) and himself forcing other people to act against their will (gaining sexual ascendancy over Marie). As for Marie, yearning for God in what seems to be a God-forsaken universe, she makes a divinity out of Balthazar.

But the donkey's importance in the film, and his place of honor in the title, do not depend on symbolism. Bresson is still as direct as ever. It is Marie, dreaming of an omnipotent love, who deifies Balthazar and at the same time sees him as an erotic symbol; it is Arnold who projects on Balthazar his own role as a wandering observer. Balthazar's real importance is the fact that he is an animal, and as such denied both salvation and damnation; all he need struggle for is survival. He serves as a touchstone for the human beings he encounters, whose characters are revealed both in the way they treat him and in the way their lives compare in dignity with his. But there can be no real contact between animal and humans. Smooth skin may touch rough hide, and Marie may crown Balthazar with flowers, but any signs of humanity or divinity in the donkey are as illusory as the arithmetical ability he displays at the circus. When Marie throws herself at the mercy of the corn merchant, whose lust is tempered only by greed, Balthazar is standing nearby; but of course he does not spring to the rescue like an asinine Lassie. If Balthazar were able to attack the merchant he would have done so long before to save his own skin; and in any case it is not her body that Marie wants rescued but her mind.

Balthazar is the pivotal though passive character in all the important relationships in the film. Just as Bresson conveys the separateness of Marie and Balthazar through the close-up of fur and skin, he translates the spiritual gulf between Marie and the merchant into sharp physical terms, contrasting the squat body, mean gestures, and crabbed voice of the merchant with the slim, smooth body and direct speech and gestures of Marie. This contrast is reminiscent of the curious scene where Balthazar confronts the caged animals at the circus, impassively staring at and being stared at by a tiger, a polar bear, and a chimpanzee. There is nothing metaphorical about the resemblance between these two scenes—it is not an ornamental way of saying that men are like wild animals. On the contrary, Bresson is once again making a statement of what is for him simple fact: that just as there can be no real contact or understanding between animals and humans, so there can be none between humans who lack grace.

Balthazar may sound like a gloomy film, but it is not, thanks largely to the diversity of its human and animal protagonists. Taken individually they may be drab or unpleasant: Marie, the most important of the humans, is almost as monotonous as Bresson's Joan. But interlinked as they are, with all their desires and sufferings, they form a glowing tapestry of life that exhilarates rather than depresses.

That isn't the only paradox about *Balthazar.* Bresson, as usual, admits no easy appeals to

the emotions—and certainly none of the sentimentality that most films about animals smuggle in. And yet, largely because of his rigorous treatment, the film is moving. Within a brief period of time (the film runs little longer than 90 minutes) Bresson condenses the diverse struggles for life of his five humans and a donkey. The complex experience is honed to a sharpness that touches one deeply and haunts one's memory for a long time.—WILLIAM JOHNSON

THE BLOW-UP

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni. Script: Antonioni, Tonino Guerra, and Edward Bond. Photography: Carlo Di Palma. Music: The Animals. MGM.

The Blow-Up is not only a film which deals mysteriously with photographic enlargements; it also emerges as a magnification of Antonioni's whole repertoire of themes, now incised with a feverishness that borders on hallucination. Without doubt, most of his earlier perceptions are present: of the insufficiency and transcience of human affection, of chilled eroticism, of the muteness of objects, of intermittent hysteria, and a sundered social fabric. Into this always pessimistic but understated matrix of themes, he introduces such sharp awareness of the nominally bright-eyed mod London locale, that its various strata burst more freshly into recognition than in many a film by a native director.

But none of this is as central to the work as its concern for blending degrees of anxious dream into an almost documentary reality. The fact that the protagonist here, an artist figure like such earlier Antonioni "heroes" as the architect and the writer, is a photographer, involved with a stylish *recording* of his own scene, only heightens Antonioni's enigma. This photographer has a devilish flair for capturing the decorative hanky-panky, the high or mean extravagance of gleaming English camp—he is, after all, one of its creatures. But when it comes to catching real life on the wing—and, as he (and we) suspect, a particularly dire instance of it—his lens unaccountably fails. More than this, there is an equation made between the hectic gropings of the photographer in his search after truth, and the equivocations of the movie camera itself. So that, in a whirl of subliminal hints and peripheral vignettes (never in themselves parenthetical: the camera may skip ahead, but never jumps to the side of the action), one is made to doubt whether certain events occur in the character's imagination or one's own. Not only does a paucity of narrative evidence contrast with a richness of behavioral provocation, but cinematic means oscillate subtly in their truth values. *Blow-Up,* in the end, is a psyche-out.

That Antonioni has always been more interested in probing the psychological tropisms of people than explaining their actual situations or narrating the events which make up their lives, is evident from all his earlier work. Here he seems to be telling us, not only that the "events"—fragments of social or sexual interchanges—are all that we can know about human psychology, but that they themselves are subject to canceling interpretations. Yet the disbelief which they incite is as hesitant as his whole view of human impingements is tentative. There would be, perhaps, nothing new in this Pirandellesque situation, were it not for Antonioni's emphatic reliance on the visual. What is being said, what is being exchanged, between characters, is less revealing than is how they might be *observed.* The famous "inability to communicate" which has supposedly marked his personages, far from being an indigenous trait, is nothing more than a reflex of Antonioni's skepticism about narrative as a cinematic vehicle of expression. Hence, the real tension that symptomizes this, as well as his preceding films, is the abortiveness of an obsession with states of mind that can be materialized only through a revelation of surfaces and silences. There is a built-in acknowledgement of the inadequacy of photography to trap these states; but for that very reason, a correspondingly more studied amplification of the formal means to surmount that inadequacy. In the largest sense, then, Antonioni is a director of yearning.

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Doubtless, *Blow-Up* is his most personal film to date because it mirrors, or better, almost allegorizes, his own desire and predicament as an artist. It would have been hard to foresee his path after *Red Desert,* which was the most excruciating rendering of his spiritual disorientation—and of a certain languid mannerism —that he has yet given us. Now, in retrospect, a hint can be seen in his development of color. *Red Desert* had a sulky cosmetic quality: chocolates and cinnamon greys, relieved by peaches, bleached blues, and blondes. All this was redolent of the chronic disturbance that the director perceived in his special vision of the female world. More than that, when it did not recall Pontormo or Rosso, it registered an affinity with the muted tones of *Pittura Metafisica,* not di Chirico so much (except, of course, in his spatial sensitivity) but Carrà and Morandi. (That Antonioni was born five years earlier, but at the same place, Ferrara, as *Pittura Metafisica,* is perhaps more than a coincidence. Of these painters, the art historian Werner Haftmann says that their "resurgent sense of their *italianità* conjured up the ghosts of Giotto, Masaccio, Uccello, and their archaic idea of the solidity of things. With their universality, the works of these masters seemed to embody the *principio italiano,* its serene magic forms, its vision of a sublime 'second reality.' " *Blow-Up* too, is in color, but its palette, with significant exceptions, is in black and white.

Not for one minute would this have been anticipated as a chromatic response to London. And it has in common with *Red Desert* only its sense of a retreat from full-blown or heavily saturated coloration—with the difference that one now views sensuality in a modal rather than a minor key. Practically at the opening, we see Negro nuns dressed in white, one of the first of many reversals of expected hue. The thematic crucible of the film, the photographer's studio, a marvelous, split-level, rambling warren of catwalks, settings, and darkrooms, reaches the apogee of colorlessness in its white phones, statues, chairs, and paintings (of which, one, a luminous globe on a dark ground, is reminiscent of the end of *Eclipse*). The streets of the city, too, tinted by silvery half light, seem more than usually bled of intermediate varieties of color, which makes the few reds that punctuate the differing sequences, and, of course, the green park, exceptionally vivid. All this is delivered in a quite fine-grained, almost velvety surface that accentuates contrasts as crisp as those in *Red Desert* were chalky. Expectedly, then, the color symbolism of the two films is radically opposed.

Where such an element as the painted white vegetables in the Ravenna street symptomized a kind of social dessication, the whites in *Blow-Up,* together with their black opposites, are like alter egos, or possibly "negatives," of reality. Nowhere is this more evident than in the critical episode in which the photographer (David Hemmings), piqued by his unwitting subject, the girl who has pursued him from the park, (Vanessa Redgrave), sets about developing and magnifying the voyeuristic shots that he has kept for himself. Born in the strange gorgeousness of the darkroom glow, these blow-ups, still glistening with their reifying chemicals, are pinned up and scrutinized. Each time Hemmings increases the scale of enlargement, he gains dimension but loses definition. It is a panic search for something hidden—a face, a gun barrel, a body—which the increasingly coarsened, black-and-white microstructure is *forced* to yield. A neighbor to whom he shows his results sees in them only a resemblance to her lover's spatter paintings. Earlier, this very painter had complained that he could not "hold on" to his images, and that the one form that did emerge was "like a clue in a detective story." Antonioni, we know, had painted foliage, and God knows what else, in *Blow-Up*—surreptious enactment of the mutability of art and nature. But more than that, it is a camouflage of realities which are less accessible than the vicarious. The true anxiety—and fascination —for the viewer is to recall, in time, a park tableau that exists for him only in fragmented, color-drained, stilled form, impossible to piece together. For an age haunted by the pink and black blurs in the Zapruder film, this quest is not without a certain horror. When the scene

in Antonioni's movie again mutely appears, this time viewed close up, the secret it may have contained is irretrievably lost, but the natural *presence* is, by contrast, so overwhelming and uncanny that it is impossible to speak of mere sensory confirmation. In a sense, it had become more "real" for us in its earlier shadowy form; now, it is simply more tangible. The one comparably radiant inset in *Red Desert* was that of a girl swimming in the bluest of Mediterraneans, a fantasy more corporeal than any of the earthly doings of the action proper. With inspired perversity, Antonioni shows that, either broken down or "complete," in black and white or color, perception homes in the substratum of photography, which is never so mechanistic as to assure one of what one is seeing. Or better, how one is to interpret it.

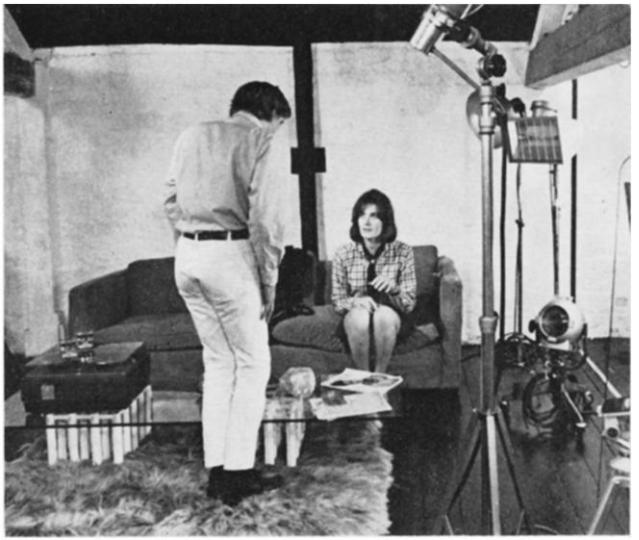
This optional kind of visibility dominates *Blow-Up* so much (without the director claiming to be responsible for it, however) that the condition of the social encounters it reveals is altogether colored by it. These encounters fall roughly under three categories: frustration, duplicity, and indifference. The camera as an instrument for making an almost obscene kind of love, at once exhibitionistic and thwarted, is witnessed in Hemming's photo seduction of a model. Photography as a means of picturing a lyrical tryst turns out to be an eavesdropping on a possible murder. The studio, normally an environment of glossy style and high fashion, emerges as a setting for abortive, teasing sex, and nymphet hysteria. Significantly, none of these actions is *shown* as completable, or in its entirety.

As for duplicity, the young photographer himself is a paragon of it. For example, he is first seen acting as a bum in an institution for derelicts(!). In rapid succession, he becomes a voyeur (which is his, and for the time being, our métier, too), pretends (?) that he has a wife, and cheats Redgrave out of the film she had come for. Less consciously, he may be a creature of uncertain sexuality: stifled by beautiful women, and passive or evasive when they offer themselves to him. As played remarkably by Hemmings, he is febrile, autocratic, capricious, and, outside the illusory professional world of which he is a master, completely at a loss. The largest equivocation, though, may be Antonioni's, who conceives his own stand-in to be simultaneously aggressive and timid, faltering toward a morality for which his job does not equip him. More purposefully attuned to his work than Antonioni's earlier male characters, the photographer is also more lost, more abandoned. Not only is he just as incapable of giving, as he is of inspiring love, but he is a victim imprisoned within the glass walls of his strategies of deceit. How illustrative of the man's pathos is Tom Rakewell's lament from Auden and Kallman's libretto to Stravinsky's "The Rake's Progress":

> Always the quarry that I stalk
> Fades or evades me, and I walk
> An endless hall of chandeliers
> In light that blinds, in light that sears,
> Reflected from a million smiles
> All empty as the country miles
> Of silly wood and senseless park;
> And only in my heart—the dark.

It is necessary to say that indifference is also a curious leitmotif within *Blow-Up*, and one of its most pungent social comments, as well. Among the crisscrossing overlooks into the London milieu—peace marches, dope parties, and discotheques—energy itself seems drugged into cyclical and meaningless repetition. It is as if Dante had been hanging around the world of rock and roll, and found it to have been damned by the emptiness of its enthusiasm, and its pointless extravagance: surrogates rather than sources of feeling. As a result, this is a world that cannot negotiate or sustain social interaction, and a scene whose members cannot help themselves. Above all, in this ambiance of deteriorated affect, no one possesses enough credibility to generate concern over the possible loss of a fellow human being. Unable to convince any friend that there had been a murder, the photographer comes to doubt his own perceptions, and begins to lose touch in the envelope of mime which ends the film. Yet it is only his nostalgia for freedom, or rather, impulse to-

wards the authentic, and Redgrave's desperation, which fleetingly break the general ennui. As for the latter, Moravia has described it quite well: "We spend most of our lives pulling bits of plaster off walls—in other words, contemplating reality without either entering into or understanding it. This is a perfectly normal condition, which leads many people to passivity, to resignation, to something like complacent hedonism. But sometimes, as with Antonioni's characters, the refusal to accept this condition, with its absence of communication and its automatism, leads to anguish." (1961) In its pithy glimpses of this anguish, *Blow-Up* certainly achieves *dramatic* tension; but this tension, now leaving the earlier work behind, transcends the rather familiar ideas above, through its *cinematic* formulation of enigma.



THE BLOW-UP

Some last words about the formal construction, the working out of the enigma. As leisurely (though many-incidented) in its approach to climax as, say, Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (whose story it resembles), *Blow-Up*'s central event submerges mysteriously within a welter of unforeseen "data," and larger themes. Uniformly brisk throughout, the film is punctuated by repetitions, or rather, analogies. The whole piece is a network of proposals of action and dissipations of "evidence." For every addition, there is a cancellation, in almost a noncumulative, entropic format. Moreover, the focus is on, not so much what will, but what *has* happened—so that the progression of episodes is always being dragged back towards unnoticed clues—and an eventual stillpoint. If this is the greatest "reversal" of the work, its conflict of action and recall, initiating differing time senses, it nevertheless presents itself as one homogeneous weave of consciousness, in which observation is always of something nominally "out there." On a particular level, examples of "reversal" are the presence of the blow-ups, and their theft (?), the sight of the body and its later absence, the attraction of the artist's mistress to the photographer and her subsequent turning away from him, and the fight for the broken guitar followed by its abandonment on the street. And all these divergent happenings are integrated or spread, some near, some further from each other, with such intelligence that while they stop us to beg questions, they do not halt the flow of general inquiry or draw inordinate attention to themselves. Even sound, always exquisitely articulated, possesses the same rhyme, as when one notices the similarity between the breathing of lovers in intercourse, and the hissing of wind in the trees. Few can vie with Antonioni in his epigrammatic isolation of "throwaway" detail, which nevertheless lingers in the memory. But the most startling coup along these lines is the overture and finale of *Blow-Up*, both dominated by the presence of some rather un-English mimes (whose make-up is reminiscent of that of the fashion mannikins.) That they play imaginary tennis at the end has already been prepared for us by the sight of a real tennis match earlier in the film. But when Hemmings enters their game by returning their illusory ball, he hears (who knows what he sees?) its distant thuds on rackets. The last shot, the longest in the entire picture, shows him wandering far beneath the camera's gaze, pitiably reduced in such a way as to suggest that just possibly the whole film up to then had been a species of blow-up. It is a terrifying implication. But no question can be more pertinent than to decide whether it is a liberating one.—MAX KOZLOFF

CRAZY QUILT

Director: John Korty. Script: Korty, based on "The Illusionless Man and the Visionary Maid," by Allen Wheelis. Photography: Korty. Score: Peter Schickele.

John Korty's *Crazy Quilt* is a fragrant, beautifully photographed film that conceals a mood of quiet desperation. It is based on a story by Alan Wheelis called "The Illusionless Man and the Visionary Maid," whose title tells almost everything that must be known about the plot. Henry (Tom Rosqui), a termite exterminator who believes in nothing, meets Lorabelle (Ina Mela), who believes in everything. They get married, but when, after several months, he still has not told her that he loves her, she decides to leave him. She has several affairs, all of which flop. Finally she returns to Henry, who goes through a short crisis, from which he recovers to begin building them a home. It is destroyed, as are several others that he builds. One day, for no clear reason, he tells Lorabelle that he loves her. Eventually they settle in an old, ordinary house and have a child. She grows up and leaves them for a motorcycle bum. They endure.

Korty has called the film a fable, but a fable of what? *Time* had an answer, persuasive enough if you haven't seen the film, that revealed the way in which that magazine can subtly appropriate any movie in its own advertising campaign for the wholesome American Way: "What Henry seeks is a hole in the ground; what he finds in Lorabelle is a way to the light. What Lorabelle seeks is a castle in the air; what she finds in Henry is a way back to earth. . . . Korty demonstrates day by day, crisis by crisis, how fear and lust and ignorance transform at last into the sacred mystery of marriage."

No. Henry's cynicism has its comic extravagance, to be sure, but the film proves him right and Lorabelle wrong. Korty does not chirp with *Time* along the middle of the road; there are no sacred mysteries in his film. Like his hero, Korty is illusionless, and although he regards Lorabelle with affection, nothing that she does in the film makes any sense. It is the affection you feel for one of the world's great fools—there is nothing therapeutic about her gauzy romanticism, but it's so thoroughly out of place that it can have charm. Whenever Henry assumes, for a time, any of her hopefulness, as in his attempts to build a dream house or raise a dream child, he is defeated.

One of the most revealing and affecting sequences is that dealing with the child. For a while Henry is enchanted by her; in graceful, painfully clipped lyric scenes of the girl riding and playing with her father, Korty dazzles us with the "dream of a perfect, permanent child" that Henry shares with Lorabelle. The letdown is brusque. She begins to see more and more of a motorcycle hippy, and one night she runs off with him to be married. We are told, in an aside, that she rarely sees her parents after that. Henry does not weep or rant or go through a transformation, he simply goes on living. For he understands that life's promises are broken quickly, effortlessly, completely, without dramatic conflicts; that one day we are old and the vanished hopes and dreams are only whispers from a world we barely remember. The film's undramatic rhythm—supple editing of short scenes that never build to climaxes, an ordinary, forgettable moment swiftly following a crisis—creates its bleak vision of life as a sum of trifles and frustrations and quickly disappearing years. There is no way of changing the pace, as Lorabelle would like to do with her fantasies of love and beauty and adventure. There is no alternative but to submit to life's relentless, almost cheerful sweeping away of all that we try to make extraordinary.

Crazy Quilt should not be confused with a treatise on the decay of values in the modern world. There are no contemporary coordinates, no references to the Bomb or industrialism or American affluence, no sense of the Pop milieu that we see in films like *Blow-Up* and *Masculine Feminine*. Korty's point is the rhythm of unfulfilment that is the essence of living, no matter the year, no matter the city.

Why, in spite of this skepticism—and I think *Crazy Quilt* is a very dark film, darker than Antonioni, say, because Korty would laugh at

anyone so *concerned* about the decay of love—does the film leave a definitely charming aftertaste? To some extent this is a flaw, a result of a nagging, imperfectly disguised cuteness in the writing and speaking (by Burgess Meredith) of the narration. But more important, in spite of Korty's nihilism, beyond anything he might choose to *say* about life's frustrations, is a sneaking wonder at unpredictable human quirks. He may have no hopes and no illusions, but something in him is exhilarated, not exhausted, by the transience that he sees. And if this sounds like another *Time* attempt to manufacture a gleam of hopefulness, I think anyone who sees the film and enjoys the magical fluency of its cinematic language intuitively recognizes Korty's alertness. It is simply not a tired film.

A friend of mine believes that the casual moment when Henry tells Lorabelle that he loves her is a sellout. But I don't think Korty intends us to make much of it. It is unexpected, motiveless, presumably unrepeatable, and it tells us only that Henry has gotten used to Lorabelle, would rather have her around than not, even cares about what happens to her. But he probably knew that before; his decision to use the word "love" cannot be explained, nor can it be made to mean anything more profound than that even Henry is capable of astonishing us. In the same way, Korty's chilly assumptions about life never keep him from describing its spoiled dreams with energy and style.—STEPHEN FARBER

PHARAOH

Director: Jerzy Kawalerowicz. Screenplay: Tadeusz Konwicki and Kawalerowicz. Photography: Jerzy Wojcik. Music: Adam Walacinski. Producer: KADR Film Unit, Film Polski.

In this age of cynicism, the achievement in film-making that this masterpiece represents should cause every producer and director to reevaluate the purpose and traditions of the spectacle genre. After the five decades since Griffith's *Intolerance*, after the grandiose curiosities invented by J. Gordon Edwards, DeMille, Mankiewicz, and most recently, Huston, the beleaguered spectator may now remove tongue from cheek; *Pharaoh* is the best spectacle dealing with ancient times to have been made in the entire history of motion pictures until now. It should not be too surprising, either, that the Polish cinema is responsible for *Pharaoh* (Has's *The Saragossa Manuscript* should have prepared one). The amazingly versatile Kawalerowicz has turned away from the world of deranged nuns (*Mother Joan of the Angels*) to the troubled dynasty of Rameses III, giving every ounce of his creative imagination and talents to this film; and, with Konwicki's equally dedicated literary powers, the result is something entirely new: an *intellectual* spectacle, presented with a firm sense of dramatic imagery and historical exactitude. *Pharaoh* is the high point of Kawalerowicz's career so far and it is hoped that national distributors of the film will respect its artistry (the color photography will demand special lab preparation, it seems, for the director was displeased with the print shown at Cannes) and its length (almost three hours).

Since it is almost a certainty that the majority of American filmgoers will not be prepared for the novelty of watching a historical spectacle that says something, and because those who may be familiar with Kawalerowicz's previous films will also be a bit overwhelmed at a first viewing, it is necessary to explicate the over-all structure and philosophical content of *Pharaoh*. The film was shot chiefly on locations in Egypt and the deserts of Uzbekistan, with some interior work on Polish sound stages. The story concerns a bitter struggle between the new young Pharaoh, Rameses III, and the powerful high priests of Amun, led by Herhor. The initial image of the film symbolizes this conflict as we are shown a cracked expanse of sand, with what sounds like tremendous hoofbeats approaching offscreen. However, it is merely the sound of two scarabs, fighting over a piece of desert-dung. Kawalerowicz moves from this minute image to ever more impressive moments of grandeur. For instance, a long tracking shot

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PHARAOH

Herhor appeals to the people in the name of Osiris.

of a single terrified soldier expands to reveal thousands of men in battle dress, engulfed by the limitless yellow of the desert landscape. Once human beings appear, the screen authoritatively drops the spectator into the past; the screen becomes the mirror of 1232 BC and this is never questioned. The difference of temperaments between the youthful Rameses and Herhor is immediately established: the fighting scarabs are interpreted by the latter as an omen of danger and the army must diverge from the proposed route. A strategic canal must be filled in with sand in order for the army to continue its journey. The young Pharaoh-to-be opposes such superstitions, but is overruled by the High Priest. This incident and all that follows until the death of the old Pharaoh (Setinekht) serves as a detailed prologue, and should be considered Part One of the film.

In Part One of *Pharaoh*, the spectator's admiration of the visuals of the film is enhanced by the extraordinarily convincing portrayals. The cruelty and oppression of the period is exemplified by a pitiful old man whose entire life has been spent in constructing the doomed canal. As he screams his exhortations to the army (they ignore him, of course), only the young prince notices him. But his temporary reactions of sympathy are dispelled by Sarah (Krystyna Mikolajewska), a mysterious young Jewess who is wandering nearby, a refugee from a nearby Hittite camp. Her appearance and immediate enslavement by the young man seems a bit odd and abrupt because it is not until later in the film that we understand that outsiders (a combination of Libyans and Mediterranean seafarers) are determined to invade the Nile Valley, or that Palestine and Phoenicia had served as supply and trading bases in the Egyptian civilization for hundreds of years before. However, the young actor, George Zelnik, in the role of the prince, is altogether persuasive. Throughout the film, Zelnik seems completely aware of the character's insolent self-confidence, adolescent barbarism, and almost fanatic desire to achieve the power and fame of his ancestor, Rameses II. Zelnik's appearance is fortunately strengthened by a sensitive, meditative gentleness (actually, he *does* resemble the Karnak statue of Rameses II), and he manages to *create* a character while being called upon to somehow maintain a sense of the past. It is a perfect visual quality that Kawalerowicz has caught in this performer, and it is probable that in seeking such an artist

to play this key role, both director and scriptwriter cast with examples of ancient art in mind.

Since the tragedy of *Pharaoh* is involved with the demise of the great Egyptian dynasty, the longing for past glories is inherent in the characterization of the youthful hero, and the spectator of today, conscious of the film's symbolic structure, is constantly watching for signs of decay. It is as if Kawalerowicz and Konwicki are cognizant of the evolutionary trends of human endeavor and seek answers to the problems of contemporary civilization by evoking the ancient Egyptian world. The "golden age" established and cultivated by Rameses II was gradually undermined by the struggle for power, personal ambition, jealousy, quarrels over possessions, and greed that grew to maximum proportions during the reign of Rameses III. Therefore, the world before us on the screen is filled with the architectural splendors of Abu Simbel, Medinet Habu, and the fabulous Ramesseum at Thebes. History and imagination are merged in every shot: in the Assyrian camp, a prancing warhorse is riddled with spears as part of a war council with the visiting Egyptians; when the young prince speaks to his army and raises his arms, one is suddenly impressed by memories of attitudinized figures on ancient bas-reliefs; the colonnaded courts, pylon gates, the succession of halls, and antechambers of black, green and gold, the inevitable sense of *mystery* in Egyptian ritual and religion—all these are enrichments of the film.

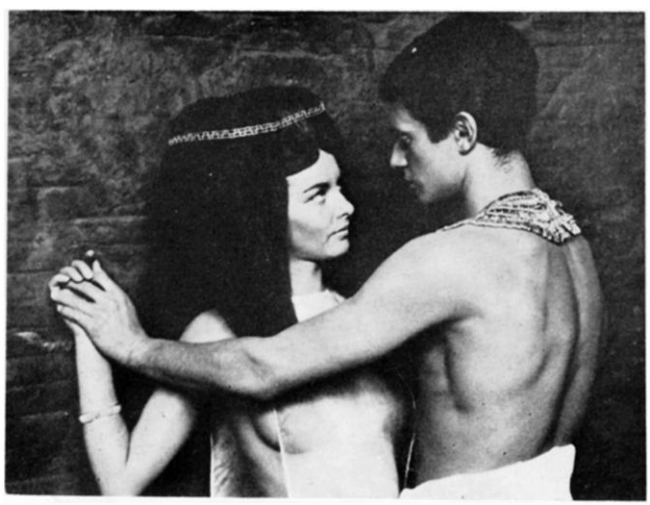
As Herhor, Piotr Pawloski is a calm, impassive figure of doom whose deep fanaticism has become wisdom, at least wisdom enough to uphold superstition and the secrecy of the priesthood's enormous wealth, hidden in the temple. The corruption and abuse of privilege within the body politic is shown in rather complex terms: Pawloski's rigid attitudes are complemented by those of a wizened sage, Benoes, who has come to the palace from Babylon. It is necessary that one listen very carefully to Benoes's plots, all aimed toward maintenance of power and prevention of war, because through his discourses, the dangerous fanaticism and greed which disturbs the kingdom are emphasized. The sequences involving a crafty Phoenician are equally important, as garrulous and effusive as they are (with some mild attempt at comedy relief), because here we understand that the Libyans and sea peoples, forced to migrate because of famine, have become powerful enough to threaten the Egyptian empire. To those accustomed to the swiftly moving innocuousness of Hollywood spectacles, these sequences may seem unimportant; but here, for the first time in a spectacle film, history is presented and explained as a part of the action.

Undoubtedly, a major weakness in the various subplots lies, ironically, in the strange treatment of the young prince's love life—precisely that aspect of the plot which usually takes precedence over all else in the historical film-spectacle. First of all, Kawalerowicz does not explain the character of Sarah, and one is simply aware of her position as the prince's "wife." She is shown to us, either performing a lament, facing the wall as she sings, or expressing loneliness to her master as their baby son frolicks on a rug. Although Sarah has been given the rank of chief royal wife, one gets the impression that her position is temporary. She is not the Queen (whom we have seen briefly praying to Isis, beautifully regal and disquieted by her son's troubled future), and when the priests decide to gain control over the young prince's emotional life, it is not long before the unavoidable *femme fatale* enters the film. She is Kama (Barbara Bryl), a temple dancer with many physical charms and a disinclination to conversation. Kama's first appearance is like an illusion confronting the prince in the semidarkness of a temple chamber; she is a creature of irresistible sensuality, and it is understandable why the priests have chosen her for their plot.

However, the spectator is soon baffled by the introduction of a young Greek, Lycon, who is a student of the priests' and an exact double of the young prince. Both roles are played by Zelnik, except that Lycon does not speak a line of dialogue. Like Kama, Lycon seems to be almost a hallucination of beauteous evil, and,

as a further complication, these two are *also* lovers. This is one of the film's most confusing points, but Kawalerowicz is fond of showing the duality of a man's nature, embodied in living counterparts. He did this in *Mother Joan of the Angels* with a priest and a rabbi, and in *Pharaoh*, Lycon and Rameses III are also brought into a symbolic encounter—ultimately destroying what they hate in one another, at the expense of life itself. Zelnik does not use any make-up tricks, but with a slight lowering of the head, a bemused smile and slump of the shoulders, he creates a personage completely different in mood and effect than his regal likeness.

After seeing the film, one realizes that everything pertaining to the world of the priests is embellished with mystery, and documents from the era of Rameses III strengthen the script's dramatization of implied witchcraft and subornation. It is known, for instance, that the ancient Egyptians experimented with life-size figures made of wax, real enough to convince the guards of the harem, although it is not known *how* these figures were used. Assuming that one of these creations may have been like Rameses III, somehow animated by means of some magical device, and therefore a puppet in the hands of conspirators, the cinematic propensities of such an occurrence could not have escaped the researches of the scriptwriters. They have chosen not only to present Lycon as a real person, but also to manipulate him as a deadly puppet, inhuman and dangerous, a creature that skulks in the subterranean world of ancient Egyptian necrology, threatening the living without reason.



Barbara Bryl and George Zelnik in PHARAOH

The traditional demands of the spectacle (an orgy, court sequences, and a big battle) are splendidly met in *Pharaoh*. The battle's epic qualities are given additional excitement by making the spectator an active participant in the struggle, very much like Welles's stylistic chaos in *Chimes At Midnight*, but Kawalerowicz's idea is to make the carnage an immediate, violent experience. Thus, with handheld camera images, he enables the spectator to dodge the adversary's blows until he himself is struck and killed, the battle ending abruptly in a flash of blood. The camera catches a panoramic view of the battle survivors, rubring sand into their wounds as columns of prisoners pass by the triumphant but exhausted prince, seated at the foot of a pyramid, his helmet on his knees. At this moment of conquest, he learns that Lycon and Kama have murdered Sarah and fled the country. The vastness of the film subsides into an emotional quietude: as the prince's anguish rises, the silence of the desert remains undisturbed. Men rush past, carrying baskets filled with severed hands of the vanquished. The prince is aware of his own loss, the timelessness of monuments and the mortality of men's dreams; then, like an additional coda, a calming irony—news arrives that the old Pharaoh has died and the prince is now Rameses III.

This explication of plot and approach has attempted to pay homage to Kawalerowicz's imaginative treatment of epic, historical material. When one responds to the authentic look of the old Pharaoh's embalming and lamentation rituals, it is part of his wonder at the cinematic life given to the bas-reliefs seen in museums or texts on ancient Egypt. By the time that the second part of *Pharaoh* commences, the complications of plot have been unraveled, and its two major events (the eclipse of the sun which Herhor uses to sway the masses, and the chilling search through the labyrinth for the priests' chamber of gold) are brilliantly presented, leaving one numbed by the sense of futility and tragedy in the film's

conclusion. The two sequences in the labyrinth are cleverly done: the first time, we follow the priests through the tortuously winding corridors and behold the treasure; the second time, we are with a lone conspirator (Mieczyslaw Voit, the leading actor in *Mother Joan*) who marvelously delineates the emotional progress from complacent self-confidence to uncontrollable terror as he finds himself fatally lost in the underground tunnels. Finally, the spectator embraces the past with all his consciousness, and the collapse of Rameses' reign, with its naive optimism and youthful urgencies, is imaged as a return to the darkness of Time. There have been few responses from the silence of these ancient tombs, yet the creator of *Pharaoh* has convinced the world that an artisan of the cinema, encouraged by an imagination that conjures and listens, will hear a distant signal, reawakening the past.—ALBERT JOHNSON

UN UOMO A META

Produced and directed by Vittorio De Seta. Script: De Seta, Vera Gherarducci, and Fabio Carpi. Photography: Dario Di Palma. Score: Ennio Morricone.

Madness, mental illness, psychosis—whatever the currently fashionable definition may be—film-makers have rarely succeeded in making it interesting. There are exceptions of course; *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *The Red Desert* are two that come to mind. And in *Un Uomo A Meta* Vittorio De Seta has made a new and absorbing film about the interior landscape of the psychotic imagination.

If De Seta succeeds where some other film-makers have failed it is because, like Wiene and Antonioni, he has built up a formal structure of arbitrary, almost abstract imagery. Where Wiene used forced perspective and Antonioni chose antirealistic color to define a subjectively distorted landscape, De Seta uses extremely shallow-depth-of-field lenses to isolate patterns within the frame. This use of selective focus succeeds in creating highly charged areas of positive and negative space. The meaning of this use of space soon becomes apparent—the film becomes a stylized visual code, a code of resonances and images that we are gradually allowed to unscramble. White space in the frame has rarely been so expressive. De Seta uses a white archway filled with light, or a sheet of blank white paper as a kind of visual *tabula rasa* to back up the images that follow. This is not done through superimposition or dissolves, but by De Seta's idiomatic use of the phenomenon of persistence of vision. For instance, when you see the brooding face of the writer-hero half-hidden by white paper, and in the next shot, black birds hurtling to earth, the eye juxtaposes the dark birds against the white paper. The intensity that De Seta brings to this rhythmic alternation of pattern and blur, and the fine frantic performance of Jacques Perrin as the writer with a Münch nightmare scream lurking just below the surface, give the film its power. With stylized imagery (augmented by eloquent cutting rhythms), and skillful acting, De Seta seems to have solved an age-old cinema problem: how to make a movie about alienation without alienating the audience.

Because the film works so well visually, the dialogue seems weak and unnecessary. There are several instances where words are especially intrusive: one is the scene between Michael and his mother, where De Seta has set up a beautiful rapport between his actors. They glance, they gesture—Michael's mother fingers the knives and scissors on her desk while Michael stands beside a fresco painting of St. Sebastian. The mother, played with horrifying expertise by Lea Padovani, glowers at Michael and caresses the favored brother. These intricate little family hang-ups are so beautifully visualized that the subsequent dialogue spelling them out is really irritating. So also is Michael's self-acceptance speech at the end. De Seta is so much more skilled at showing alienation than he is at telling about it that I wish the film had been nonverbal, in the manner of Peter Weiss's *Mirage* or Polanski's *When Angels Fall*. A film "about" nonverbal communication needs few words (or an ava-

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Madness, mental illness, psychosis—whatever the currently fashionable definition may be—film-makers have rarely succeeded in making it interesting. There are exceptions of course; *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *The Red Desert* are two that come to mind. And in *Un Uomo A Meta* Vittorio De Seta has made a new and absorbing film about the interior landscape of the psychotic imagination.

If De Seta succeeds where some other film-makers have failed it is because, like Wiene and Antonioni, he has built up a formal structure of arbitrary, almost abstract imagery. Where Wiene used forced perspective and Antonioni chose antirealistic color to define a subjectively distorted landscape, De Seta uses extremely shallow-depth-of-field lenses to isolate patterns within the frame. This use of selective focus succeeds in creating highly charged areas of positive and negative space. The meaning of this use of space soon becomes apparent—the film becomes a stylized visual code, a code of resonances and images that we are gradually allowed to unscramble. White space in the frame has rarely been so expressive. De Seta uses a white archway filled with light, or a sheet of blank white paper as a kind of visual *tabula rasa* to back up the images that follow. This is not done through superimposition or dissolves, but by De Seta's idiomatic use of the phenomenon of persistence of vision. For instance, when you see the brooding face of the writer-hero half-hidden by white paper, and in the next shot, black birds hurtling to earth, the eye juxtaposes the dark birds against the white paper. The intensity that De Seta brings to this rhythmic alternation of pattern and blur, and the fine frantic performance of Jacques Perrin as the writer with a Münch nightmare scream lurking just below the surface, give the film its power. With stylized imagery (augmented by eloquent cutting rhythms), and skillful acting, De Seta seems to have solved an age-old cinema problem: how to make a movie about alienation without alienating the audience.

Because the film works so well visually, the dialogue seems weak and unnecessary. There are several instances where words are especially intrusive: one is the scene between Michael and his mother, where De Seta has set up a beautiful rapport between his actors. They glance, they gesture—Michael's mother fingers the knives and scissors on her desk while Michael stands beside a fresco painting of St. Sebastian. The mother, played with horrifying expertise by Lea Padovani, glowers at Michael and caresses the favored brother. These intricate little family hang-ups are so beautifully visualized that the subsequent dialogue spelling them out is really irritating. So also is Michael's self-acceptance speech at the end. De Seta is so much more skilled at showing alienation than he is at telling about it that I wish the film had been nonverbal, in the manner of Peter Weiss's *Mirage* or Polanski's *When Angels Fall*. A film "about" nonverbal communication needs few words (or an ava-

lanche of them). It would have been interesting if De Seta had left Michael's inner world mute, and used only natural sound, some isolated vocative speech patterns, and brief, sparing musical passages.

Taking notes on this film at the London Festival I found myself sketching individual shots rather than writing about them, for *Un Uomo A Meta* (or *Almost A Man* as it was rather lamely translated) is like a diagram of the mechanics of alienation. We are shown bits of what seem at first to be isolated segments of visual data. More and more linkages between the data are established—more and more blank spaces are filled in. De Seta's editing keeps bringing us back, in ever tighter circles, to the puzzle at the core.

The circle in its many variations (wheel, shell, spiral, net, web, crescent, arc) is the image which dominates the film. For instance, a shot of Michael at work at his desk, taken at floor level, shows us his face behind the keys of his typewriter. The round black shapes of the keys make a weird little cage for the face behind them. The small rows of circles break up the face into areas of isolated visual data. The shot is so composed that we get the sense of a face that is both trapped and controlled by push buttons. Take away the black circles and you feel that the face would disintegrate.

The two scenes in the park show another variation of this circle-trap image. In the first park scene, the men who apprehend Michael spying form a web-like pattern as they move in on him. When the shot angle changes to a crane shot from overhead, the men surround Michael like the spokes of a wheel. In the second park scene, when Michael climbs a tree to escape his imagined pursuers, the overhead shot is composed so that Michael's figure in the tree is in the lower left-hand corner of the frame. The people around the tree form an off-center circle pattern, like a wheel that has been wrenched violently out of shape, and the white ambulance drives in between them to break the circle.

Besides a fascination with patterns of circular motion that complement the circle image, De Seta's cutting also reflects a preoccupation with extreme contrasts of black and white. One instance where both circular motion and extreme contrast work together is the flashback sequences of the falling birds. The cross-cutting of the flying birds sequence is flawless—the black birds arc out over the white sky in great swooping parabolas, first from one side of the frame, then from the other, like the diving sequence in *Olympia*. This beautifully elegiac death image is always closely connected in time to the shot of the burning wheel, which is the root image of Michael's illness.

More subtle, perhaps, than using high contrast in the same shot, is the way De Seta alternates shots of extreme brightness and darkness in his editing. A scene in a dark room, with Michael's figure barely distinguishable against a dark wall, is followed by one shot in brilliant blinding light. As well as balancing black and white contrast in the frame, De Seta sometimes uses only the extremes of the bright end of the grey scale, or just dark greys and blacks.

The increasing disequilibrium between the psychotic and his environment becomes more graphic as De Seta intensifies the figure/ground distortions within the frame. By closely controlling the depth of field, he brings a selected detail into focus and leaves the rest bafflingly obscure. This particular device is used to great effect in the mental hospital sequence. There is a teasing incompleteness in many of these images. As with the test patterns of Gestalt psychology, you're not sure which is more meaningful, the isolated detail or the negative space that surrounds it. Often the camera picks out the seemingly insignificant and shows it in brilliant clarity. Michael's face in the hospital throws a shadow on the wall—and the dark shadow is in wire-sharp focus but the actual face is a blur. In another shot, a black shadow on the hospital pillow is distorted by the lighting into a horrible parody face, more expressive of madness than the actual human face beside it.

In the final section of the film, where Michael returns to his childhood home to relive his adolescent trauma, De Seta defines Michael's

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relationships with his mother, his brother, and the girl Marina in a marvelous series of eerie close-ups in profile and full-face. Faces are layered in the frame, they overlap in and out of focus. There is a ritual patterning of the images here, a peeling away of masks and identities. In one shot, the frame is filled with a close-up of the blurred profiles of Marina and the brother; out of focus, the two faces merge into one. They draw apart and the blurred image splits in half like a torn photograph, to reveal Michael's face in painfully sharp focus. Like a Siskind photograph of a peeling billboard, parts of faces emerge from behind other parts of faces. In another scene, Michael, his face backlit so that it is very dark but still in focus, watches Marina and his brother dancing. The couple is brilliantly lit, but photographed out of focus, so that the dancers resemble the *pointilliste* figures in the paintings of Seurat, figures built out of glittering points of light.

With images stylized almost to the point of abstraction, augmented with beautifully rhythmic editing and sharply drawn performances, De Seta has constructed a film that keeps forcing us to put the pieces together, to integrate the light and the dark. It is this continually changing interplay of patterns that makes De Seta's film rewarding to watch, and that brings elegance and originality to this film study of a well-traveled interior landscape.—MARGOT S. KERNAN

INTIMATE LIGHTING

Director: Ivan Passer. Script: Jaroslav Papousek, Vaclav Sasek, and Ivan Passer. Camera: Josef Strecha, Miroslav Ondricek. Music: Oldrich Korte. With: Vera Cesadlova, Jan Vostrcil, Karel Blazek, Zdenek Bezusek, Jaroslava Stedra, Vlastimila Vlkova, Karel Uhlik.

So far Ivan Passer has been generally known as Milos Forman's assistant, friend, collaborator, and co-scriptwriter on *Peter and Pavla, A Blond in Love,* and Forman's last and not yet released film, *Careful, Baby!* This led me to wonder to what extent Formanian realism and "objective observation" pervade *Intimate Lighting,* Passer's first long feature (1965). But in this film, which looks on first viewing like "scenes illustrating the visit of an urban musician to the peasant home of his former fellow-student," or "the city-rat at the country-rat's," there suddenly spring forth flashes of fantasy or even lunacy which go far beyond Milos Forman's down-to-earth vision.

At first the scenery is very familiar and even looks like the set-up for a good bourgeois Western comedy: the pretext of the trip to the country brings together the two old mates, Bambas and Petr, plus Bambas' wife, Petr's mistress, and also Bambas' old parents. And it actually starts like a comedy, with its easy contrast between the well-dressed, well-made-up citizens of the dangerous and corrupted capital and the simple-looking, inarticulate family of peasants—notably Bambas' wife with her neglected appearance and wide hips. The comic tone is accentuated further by the presence of Jan Vostrcil in the part of Bambas' old father—the marvelous actor who played the father in both *Peter and Pavla* and *A Blond in Love.* He improvises in his joyous and exuberant manner and almost steals the limelight when explaining how he is reduced to playing the trumpet in the village band on the occasion of pilgrimages or funerals.

In the first third of the film, however, limited entirely to the description of Bambas and his family, as Petr and his mistress discover them, Passer's humor is systematically aimed at the divergences in the evolution of the two men

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(city elegance and awareness against village clumsiness and ignorance) and of the two women (the coquettish and childless one against the plain and "functional" country cow). Here Passer's humor is no longer Formanian, nor objective-descriptive; it wants to prove something. The comedy turns into a moralizing fable and a message of the kind "you can find mediocrity everywhere" is delivered. The two men's ambitions or rather lack of ambitions make them equals; there is no difference in normative value between their present professional and conjugal situation. The failure of a student-composer turned into a peasant who thinks only in terms of feeding his family is equal to that of an instrumentalist turned into an employed member of a city orchestra who is able to keep up a lady. The fact that Bambas owns a car and Petr a mistress would make them even more equal, were it not for the fact that Vera Cesadlova's emptiness and boredom prove something else: that if the men are equal, the women are not. The insistent contrast between the two feminine representatives finds its worst climax (by "worst," I mean oversimplified) in the sequence of Vera Cesadlova, the idle bourgeois woman, sitting in a car while a group of working peasant women with their rakes on their shoulders pass by silently and stare reproachfully at her.

These comments on the first part of the film do not do justice though to the style of *Intimate Lighting* which is not verbal but visual. The humor, the contrast, the "systematic" aspects I underlined take place at the level of the image, not of the dialogue. (Most of the latter is improvised by nonprofessional actors—I believe only Jan Vostrcil and Vera Cesadlova, Milos Forman's wife, are professionals.) Cinematographically, it expresses itself for instance in the lovely tricky dissolves which are a little too lovely and tricky to be taken seriously: the dissolve from the dead chicken in the garage to the funeral procession, or the one from the fat peasant-woman in shorts mowing the fields to the old lady dancing in the tavern after the funeral.

But Ivan Passer does not let *Intimate Lighting* fly low for very long in its moralizing world of "intimacy." Suddenly he propels it into a new dimension by introducing at unexpected moments something slightly unusual, a little too prolonged or too insistent, just enough to disturb us and make us aware of a palpable crack in the solid wall of ordinary reality. Three episodes illustrate this passage to another level. The first one takes place during a beautifully described family meal where nobody can get enough food and a piece of chicken is shoved from plate to plate until the two "civilized" visitors from the city burst into giggles. And what started perhaps as embarrassed laughter turns, with Vera Cesadlova, the mistress, into hilarity, then into near-hysterics. She cannot stop laughing during the scene as well as when she remembers it, a long time after the others have quieted down.

The second touch of the inhabitual occurs when the grandmother, while helping the young mistress make the bed, starts unexpectedly to tell her the story of her past in a circus. She demonstrates on the table a few of the acrobatics she used to perform but does so, of course, with the clumsiness caused by her weight and age. . . .

Another instance is in the tradition of the black Czech lunacy to be found in the cinema of Jan Nemec, Jiri Menzel, or Evald Schorm, as well as in the literature of Bohumil Hrabal. In a brief scene of boredom, Vera Cesadlova is shown wandering around the backyard of the house, eating an apple which she shares with the village half-wit who passes by. Far from being scared by his idiotic, toothless face, she accepts his compliments and carries on an almost flirtatious conversation. The half-wit, right out of Luis Buñuel's *Viridiana,* approaches her (and us by close-ups) and is kept away only by a thin wire-fence: an intrusion of the monstrous into our familiar everyday life.

In between these episodes, the film goes back gently to the humorous description of the house and its inhabitants, to the point of picturesqueness, as in the bravura piece of the

rehearsal of a Mozart quartet, which is massacred by Bambas, his father, Petr and a friend from the village. Cacophonously, they try to follow each other while improvising (and superimposing over the music) a hilarious dialogue. We then forget the cracks in reality indicated almost inadvertently by Passer, and we surely would forget them if the film were to finish on this realistic note. But beyond the finesse of *Intimate Lighting*, its ironical sense of observation made up of nuances, lies a big question mark which casts doubt on the whole film and makes of it an unanswered interrogation. Abruptly, the last shot, which shows the six characters standing up to drink a solidified porto-flip, freezes and remains frozen until the word "end." We are left with this stop-frame and shall never know what comes next. Stiffened for eternity into the gesture of the drinker, their heads bent back and elbows raised, the humble protagonists of *Intimate Lighting* become the inhabitants of some modern Pompei, as if the only possible refuge from mediocrity and failure were to be found in the immobility of fossilization.

In spite of the visual poetry of this last image, the lighting used here by Ivan Passer seems to me apocalyptic rather than "intimate" and it retrospectively enhances the whole picture, by giving it a new and more disturbing dimension.—CLAIRE CLOUZOT

A MAN AND A WOMAN

Written, directed, and photographed by Claude Lelouch. With Jean-Louis Trintignant and Anouk Aimée.

"More matter, with less art," says Gertrude to Polonius. And one could say the same to Claude Lelouch, director of *A Man and a Woman*, though unlike Polonius, he wouldn't answer, "Madam, I swear I use no art at all." The point is that the film is *all* "art" and little if any "matter," and if one likes films about pretty colors and pretty people, fine. But some of us want more.

The first thing one notices in *A Man and a Woman* is the switching from color to black and white or sepia and other tinted stocks. At first it seems that this switching is going to have some significance: the present is black and white (or brown and white, or blue and white), while the past, more "real" to the Man and the Woman, will consistently be in color (and then at the end, when both manage to put the past aside, the present will become colored and everything will be Okay, right?). Only it doesn't work out that way, and the switching soon becomes confusing and meaningless. Granted, the color is very beautiful, as is the photography generally; but then *all* photography seems to be beautiful these days, so what of it? It's also very fast: the camera is constantly swinging, turning, jiggling, and bouncing around, and one soon suspects that all this camera movement serves to disguise the fact that there is no *real* movement, exterior or interior, on the part of the characters. If two people are walking along the beach, why does the camera have to move differently than they do? It makes sense for the Beatles, but then the Beatles can sing.

As for the characters themselves, they are about as interesting as the windshield wipers that we see so much of. They are fashionable, that's certain. The script girl (with the wardrobe and the apartment of an heiress) and the racing driver are "in" types; but the occupations aren't made convincingly relevant to the people's lives or thoughts. Both dead spouses are equally lacking in conviction. All that we really find out about the Woman's dead husband is that he looked young and boyish and loved the samba (which is really a bossa nova,

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incidentally); and all we find out about the Man's dead wife is that she looked young and girlish, worried about his driving (who wouldn't?), and had an instant "nervous breakdown." What then *do* we know about our Man and our Woman? The Man looks like everybody's favorite faggot and has nothing at all to say for himself, except the "profound" remark about Giacometti and the cat—which, in case you missed its symbolic import, is spelled out for you. (Giacommetti said that if he were in a burning building with a Rembrandt and a cat and could save only one, he would save the cat: i.e., Live!) Miss Aimée, usually a fine actress, is characterized in this film only by a twitch of the mouth and by all that hair that keeps falling into her face—I kept wanting to tell her about hair bands or bobby pins. Both people converse exclusively in banalities. (And then there are those cute kids.) Attempting a *cinéma vérité* approach, Lelouch doesn't give his actors much to do, leaving the action and words to their improvising. The results are not too successful, however "real"—i.e., boring—they may be.

There are the obligatory scenes: the walk on the beach, the handsome people huddled into their even more handsome coats, and, of course, the bed (a pretty unimaginative bedroom scene too, as bedroom scenes go). The film has other scenes taken directly, it would seem, from television or magazine advertising: there's Marlboro country, and a lot of Mustang ads, and Lady Clairol may be there too, though only her hairdresser knows for sure.

Then why did *A Man and a Woman* win first prize at Cannes, and why do so many people think it's a great film? I think the answer is that it is a good old Hollywood-style fantasy, and lots of people like Hollywood-style fantasies, especially when they are disguised as Art. The photography and editing styles are "modern" *à la* Fellini and Lester: it's all so pretty it *must* be art. And the people are so *contemporary*, so *sensitive*—just the way we'd like to think of ourselves, except we don't have such exciting jobs. But the old fantasy is there; boy meets girl, boy almost loses girl, but at the last minute boy gets girl in a railroad-station clinch, and despite their seemingly insoluble problem (her frigidity, caused by the torch she is still carrying for her husband), we know that Everything will be All Right. The fact that the parts are taken by Anouk Aimée and Jean-Louis Trintignant instead of, say, Doris Day and Rock Hudson, fails to change the fact that this is just another slice off the old corn-fed hokum. Too bad, too, as Lelouch's first film, *Avec des si . . .* showed some real verve and originality.

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ALFIE

Produced and directed by Lewis Gilbert. Screenplay: Bill Naughton, based on his play (and novel). Photography: Otto Heller. Music: Sonny Rollins.

Alfie reminds us of the importance good writing can have in films, at a time when everyone is insisting on purely visual matters. Bill Naughton's dialogue in *Alfie* is even flavorful enough to be enjoyed for its own sake. *Virginia Woolf* is the only recent film with dialogue to match it; both films came from the stage, and if *Alfie* is a less substantial play, that may explain why the film transcription has been accomplished with a trifle less strain. *Alfie* is cinematically quite fluent, even skillful. Still, its major appeal is the freshness of its language.

The language is what brings Alfie to life, for generically he is nothing new—the cockney rake who lives off women, singlemindedly, rather ruthlessly seeking his pleasure: "You got to look after yourself in this life." And the film follows him in a series of amorous adventures that tend to substantiate his cynical expectations. "If they ain't got you one way, they got you another."

Alfie's main problem, which gives the film its pungency and coherence, is revealed to us early: "It don't do to get attached to nothin' in this life, cause sooner or later that's gonna bring you some pain." But in spite of his belief in the primacy of self-regard, his feelings remain alive and capable of surprising him.

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Alfie's main problem, which gives the film its pungency and coherence, is revealed to us early: "It don't do to get attached to nothin' in this life, cause sooner or later that's gonna bring you some pain." But in spite of his belief in the primacy of self-regard, his feelings remain alive and capable of surprising him.

When Gilda, the steady "bird" he has never married, decides to have his child and then to raise it herself, he first resists but finally yields to his growing attachment to the boy. A lovely slow-motion sequence of his playing with the child effectively suggests to us the potential mellowing of his shy affections. As he suspects, little Malcolm is eventually taken from him; he doesn't fight, because his pride objects, and because he has resigned himself to deprivation as a fact of life. But it bothers him more than he would like.

In the same way, he is touched when Harry, a friend in the sanitorium where he is recuperating from a lung ailment, admits being hurt by Alfie's casual skepticism regarding his wife. The skepticism happens to be warranted, for Alfie later seduces her. Since, as Alfie ruefully reminds us, you don't get any pleasure free in this life, he later arranges an abortion for her; he says, apologizing for his squeamishness, "when it comes to the pain in love, I'm like any other bloke—I don't want to know," but in fact when he sees the dead foetus in his shabby kitchen, he cries uncontrollably for the sense of wasted, murdered life that it represents to him. So his callous pose is imperfectly sustained; Alfie's failure to achieve even the kind of detachment that he pretends to master is what gives this comedy its persistently poignant edge.

Alfie is not easy to evaluate, because selfishness and tenderness are mixed in him in intricate ways. He is affected by Gilda's plea that he stay with her and her baby, but as she leans against him to cry, he instinctively recoils: "Mind my shirt, girl." His love of little Malcolm is inseparable from his strutting delight in the child as a mirror of his own intelligence. When he is so cruel to Annie, a girl he has picked up on the road and turned into his housekeeper and cook, that she walks out on him, he has regrets and runs to recall her, but only after he smells the egg custard that she has left for him in the oven. And even in his remorse over the abortion that he had regarded so impassively, he doesn't exactly put himself out. His feelings of guilt and self-pity are easily relieved by slipping a little borrowed money into the woman's purse and, in an awkward but touching effort at commiseration, by giving her, for her own child, the teddy bear that he had long ago bought for little Malcolm.

The local pub in ALFIE

For evidence of the film's sharpness, Alfie can be compared with another Mod-dressing hedonist, the character played by Alan Bates in *Georgy Girl.* Bates's Jos is a sloppily written part, which first encourages our sympathy for a cuddly, spontaneous child-hero who dances around playgrounds and chases his girlfriend through the London subways, threatening to strip naked if she doesn't accept his love. Although his idea of being unconventional involves no more than ripping off his pants when the impulse hits him, the early part of the film presents him as a terribly cute fellow; later, when he tells an irrelevant story about how he watched a man drown without trying to save him, the script cuts us up short, screeches to a new gear, and insists that we condemn him or pity him for his childish irresponsibility. This moralizing late in the game is very offensive, but it is necessary because a clumsy scriptwriter wants to apologize for his sentimentality.

I liked *Morgan* much better than *Georgy Girl,* but I could understand the objections of those who felt that Morgan too was an uncontrolled creation—heroically free-spirited in his early moments, then jarringly neurotic, irredeemably "sick" at the conclusion. I think the movie was

more intelligent than many critics allowed, but I do wish that several of the fuzzy moments had been clarified.

Both Jos and Morgan are to some extent abandoned rather than created, and they can be too easily made to fit any self-indulgent interpretation. Alfie is a tougher nut to crack, who can never be absorbed by the sentimental or moralistic preconceptions about libertinism that we may bring with us to the film. When he says, "I don't want a bird's respect, I wouldn't know what to do with it," our response is quite complex. We assent in his hard-headed reduction of vague value terms to the most palpable, functional level, and yet we may not like his implication that every quality of mind must be worked over in his itchy little fingers. When he tells Annie not to work herself so hard, "Your hands may not matter to you, girl, but they do to me. Nothing puts me off so much as a bird gettin' 'old of me with 'ard, 'orny mitts"; when he demonstrates his contention that men are more sensitive than women by telling about the bird who, after they had made love, insisted on showing him a hideous operation scar—"I'd rather have seen a bleedin' 'orror film"; or when he recounts the dream in which he unwittingly infects his son with some hydrogen-bomb ash that has landed on his shoulder, "I killed him, but what could I do? I had to look after myself. But why can't I do somethin' good in my dreams? It wouldn't cost me nothink, and it would give me a great deal of satisfaction. It only goes to show if they ain't got you when you're awake, they got you when you're asleep"—at any of these moments we can do nothing but *wonder* at Alfie, suspending judgment for an arrestingly mixed response of approbation and uneasiness. In other words, like any interesting character, Alfie forces us to take him on his own terms. He is always his ugly-charming self, and we must see him without our own colored glasses.

Because of the tart control in Naughton's writing, *Alfie* is the best British film in quite a while. At the same time, I can't remember seeing a filmed version of a stage play that seems less fettered to the theater. The secret, I think, is that the play itself was evidently written after the novel, and like the novel is built around monologue, not dialogue. Alfie does most of the talking, to himself and to the audience, and since monologues needn't be confined in the way that dialogues must be, it was probably easy for Naughton, in adapting his play, and for Lewis Gilbert, the director, to change some of this monologue into off-screen narration that can accompany Alfie all over London. The narration blends very skillfully with Alfie's verbalized thoughts and direct asides to the camera, and allows a great deal of freedom of movement.

I was skeptical when I heard that *Alfie* depends on asides to the camera, for I have never seen that device work as anything more than a distracting, crushingly cute gimmick (*Tom Jones,* most notoriously). But it really is impossible to generalize about movies; the addresses to the audience work beautifully here. They tell us something piercing about Alfie that no other technique could suggest as effectively.

Although many of the asides can be called Alfie's thoughts, the effect is not of listening in on his consciousness, as we do in films like *Shoot the Piano Player* and *The Haunting.* Alfie is very deliberately, most of the time, *talking* to us, turning away from a conversation or an embrace to give us a little philosophical commentary on what we are seeing, even at one point apologizing for seducing his friend's wife. He cannot bear to be alone, even in his thoughts, and he is constantly making us his confidantes and conspirers by punctuating his remarks with a "Know what I mean?" Of course there are no real people to share his confidences, as there were in the theater, but I think this gives his asides an additional pathos; in the very effort to make a friend of the camera we see Alfie's desperate fight against impersonality and loneliness more clearly than stage asides could ever have suggested. Alfie sweeps everything, absolutely everything aside in his insatiable search for a sympathetic audience.

It is a mistake, though, for him to admit the filmic conventions at the very beginning: "Are you all settled in? Good, we can begin. . . .

Well, if you think you're going to see the bleedin' titles, you're wrong." This really *is* too cute; a Brechtian character might want to jolt us by recalling the illusion of the theater, but Alfie just isn't that sophisticated. The point is that he knows *no* conventions that can interfere with his chatter. He is perfectly irrepressible, inexhaustibly charmed by his own voice, fanatically hungry for attention, and at the same time frightened to death of silence, of contemplation.

Here's the rub. His attempt to show that he is on top of it all, our cockney philosopher-guide to the juicy nuances of love-making, has its underside of vanity and blindness. And it is here that the camera asides take on their fullest significance; they gradually acquire an ironic resonance, for we see something that Alfie cannot see—all of this compulsive talk is a mask, a way of protecting himself from silence, because in silence he is nagged by unanswerable questions. He talks to forget that "I ain't got my peace of mind." And he doesn't have his peace of mind, because for all of his ostensibly cynical wisdom, he cannot help getting involved with life and with people. Or perhaps he is not strong enough to go it alone. But he is doomed to frustration in spite of his success, for he is unable to follow his own good advice about the wages of affection. He talks like a smooth operator, but he is a victim of life as well as a manipulator. And this is no easy morality play in which a bad man suffers for his sins. Alfie, in a very real sense, suffers for his virtues, and he doesn't seem to know it.

The film *is*, of course, highly moral in the way in which it builds its sympathy for Alfie around this inconsistency—that is, around the generosity that he wants to suppress. Although Naughton is too shrewd an observer to pretend that this generosity is ever pure, ever free of Alfie's small, craven vanities, he does implicitly condemn sensual pleasure completely unrestrained by compassion. On these lines Alfie can be interestingly contrasted to the pleasure-loving hero of Varda's *Le Bonheur* (a film whose stunningly detailed surface is the absolute epitome of Susan Sontag's Style—art that defies interpretation). *Le Bonheur* is without moral bearings at all, which isn't to deny that moral questions may be important to a viewer who sees the film. The film itself, though, presents its hero with cool objectivity and gives us no help in deciding if he is to be cheered for mastering the rhythms of sensual life or criticized for ignoring the life of the heart. For Varda's hero, as for Alfie, one woman is easily replaceable by another, but in regarding Alfie's indifference (which is less than he admits) we must finally resort to the old moral-humanistic terms that *Le Bonheur* refuses to provide. This isn't to say that one film is better than the other, though one could base a fascinating consideration of the English *vs.* the French imagination on a comparison of these movies. But anyway, I don't object to the way in which *Alfie* is morally loaded, as long as moral principles are tested against Alfie's vigorously eccentric voice. I do, though, object to the ending, in which principles overpower poor Alfie —he is vaguely punished by, apparently, losing all of his women, and as he walks off, the title song croons smugly, "What's it all about, Alfie? Is it right to take more than you give?"

I have talked almost exclusively about Alfie himself, but the film's peripheral triumphs require a few words. Michael Caine is much more than peripheral, but I don't know what more to say than that he is smashingly good, and especially responsible, I think, for unobtrusively calling attention to Alfie's more tender inclinations, often with a mere twist of his smile or shrug of his shoulder. Naughton's attention centers mostly on Alfie, but the sharpness of the minor female portraits is evidence of the breadth of his imagination. He subtly, trenchantly distinguishes a parade of women; few writers could tell us as much about any of them during a prolonged character study. Of the actresses, I think Julia Foster and Vivien Merchant deserve special mention for their telling evocation of almost unbearably sordid pathos. Gilbert's direction is not overwhelming, but there are many nice, delicate filmic touches—like the sequence that begins by freez-

ing a shot of little Malcolm, which leads into several black-and-white photographs of the boy getting older, until the last, almost imperceptibly, turns to color again and is set to slow motion. *Alfie* is not a movie that will be studied years from now for any startling cinematic effects. But its wit and its stubborn humanity make it seem a giant of a film today, when most films are infected by death and fashioned by a tyrannical Form that tries to strip art of life.—STEPHEN FARBER

Short Films

THE FILMS OF ED EMSHWILLER

On first coming to America I was, for some time, in New York. During those weeks it was constantly being drummed home that America wasn't simply New York, in much the same way as England isn't simply London. The longer I live here the more I find this truism to be true. And if America isn't simply New York neither is the American cinema simply Hollywood, it is equally the explosion of film-makers on college campuses and in the underground groupings. These days, in fact, the freshness and vitality which used to be in the Hollywood movie, and which is to be found there less and less frequently, is now to be found in the underground movies and the student films. The film-makers of Hollywood today are like survivors from an atomic war, trying to patch the remnants of their civilization together into a remembered pattern that has lost its meaning. Of the established forms only the western seems to survive triumphant (*The Sons of Katie Elder* was the best Hollywood film of 1965, *The Professionals* of 1966).

Many of the people in Hollywood are only too well aware that something has gone wrong, but they seem powerless to do anything about it. Now Hollywood finally seems to have gone down in defeat to TV. Jack Valenti's first act on being appointed president of the Motion Picture Association of America was to ask that Hollywood's top priority should be given to "refurbishing and illuminating the most precious commodity of this industry, its creative genius." Translated into English that means "A blood transfusion, quick!" But where's the bloodbank? Television? Don Medford and Richard Donner and one or two others out of TV seem to have some talent. But having said that, what's been said? Only that Medford and Donner are slicker at handling prefabricated stories than most of the young directors around. Is that going to be sufficient to "refurbish and illuminate" the next few years of Hollywood?

The best young film-makers in America will be so little aware of Valenti's siren-song they won't even have to stop their ears against it. While in Europe all the young film-makers are desperately trying to get into the commercial mainstream, in America few of them are. It isn't just that the anti-youth bias of the Hollywood unions keeps them out. The Hollywood movie, they feel, for all its technical excellence, is internally bankrupt, at the lag-end of a literary tradition inherited from the theater, and one which has shackled movies for far too long. Certainly this late in the century there seems to be small reason for fooling around with the umpteenth remake of *Beau Geste* and *Madame X*—even were they better done than they have recently been.

These adaptations from other media, the "pre-sold properties" will, I suspect, be with us into the foreseeable future. Even the underground cinema hasn't firmly rejected such other-source material (*The Brig*, *The Connection*, etc.) Yet the traditional Hollywood movie which is being reacted against has always been much less tied to literary tradition than the

ing a shot of little Malcolm, which leads into several black-and-white photographs of the boy getting older, until the last, almost imperceptibly, turns to color again and is set to slow motion. *Alfie* is not a movie that will be studied years from now for any startling cinematic effects. But its wit and its stubborn humanity make it seem a giant of a film today, when most films are infected by death and fashioned by a tyrannical Form that tries to strip art of life.—STEPHEN FARBER

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European. The genres in which Hollywood has always been preeminent—the western, the gangster melodrama, the musical—are precisely those without a weight of inherited literary tradition behind them. If they are to be classified at all most educated people would relegate them to sub-literature. Yet the tie with literature is still there, even if only on a sub-literary level. The non-Hollywood film-makers are trying to snap even this last tenuous thread. Some of them have gone so far an audience isn't yet prepared to follow them. But America is where the action is. This is where the real revolution is taking place.

Much as one may admire their movies most of the non-conforming Europeans have merely loosened rather than broken free of literary conventions. The most dazzlingly inventive and contemporary of them, Godard, always several years ahead of his time, is the chief exception. There is the *feel* of the sixties in his films (*Masculine Feminine* is the greatest film about modern youth simply because it is the most truthful film about modern youth; there is more *vérité* in Godard than in most *cinéma vérité*) whereas the John Schlesingers and the Richard Lesters merely have the *style* of the sixties, a rather different thing. That old form-versus-content battle bloodied up the film critics in the early sixties. I've no desire to refight it now. Yet it is relevant to point out that Godard's truth and meaning are inseparable from the way he presents that truth and meaning. His style isn't plastered on like stuccoed overlay. In contrast Lester's style for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* is an irritant, obscuring rather than illuminating, continually getting between subject and audience.

Renoir in *Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe,* taking one of his father's most famous paintings as a starting point, has come even closer than Godard to the free forms of the new American cinema. Some of his movies have been polemical and didactic in an over-literary manner (*La Grande Illusion, La Marseillaise*) yet in his best work and in his most recent work—which has not always been his best but has certainly been amongst his most beguiling—there is a joyous sense of liberation from literary confines. When *Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe,* that ravishing hymn to nature and psalm of love to all humanity, was first shown in England, a number of critics complained stuffily that it was a marvelously silly film to *listen* to. Anyone who wants to listen to a movie should avoid late Renoir and the new American cinema.

While, in Europe, it is mainly the young poets and writers (and film critics—we mustn't forget them) who are turning to the cinema, scratch a young American film-maker and you're likely to scratch a painter. Thus the major schism between the young European and his American counterpart lies precisely in that the former, however much he may flaunt his emancipation, is still searching out and judging movies by a set of literary responses, while the latter has gone beyond this and, to him, the image is paramount. The films of Robert Breer, one of the most interesting of the underground directors, don't relate to other movies at all but to what is happening in modern art as Op and Pop gives way to Psychedelic. This again is not, I think, an accidental development. The art world in America has become little more than a gimmicky extension of show business. Artists are skillfully blown up into vogue figures as idolized as pop-singers, and like pop-singers their bubble-popularity is brief. To create a body of meaningful work an artist may well be forced away from paint and canvas, collage and sculpture.

This same artist-enthusiast, often approaching the cinema obliquely as merely one element in the "mixed media" of film, painting, light, music, movement, which will be the combination art gallery-cinema of the future, is the strongest influence on the underground American movie. His free-form movie-making is of a form so free few young European movie enthusiasts—and I'm thinking of those who're now trying to crash barriers, not of those of the movie generation of the *Cahiers* ex-critics on to Bertolucci who're already over—have yet acclimatized to break out with traditional attitudes and dispense with their scenarios. Even

Godard often seems strangely wrapped up in Brechtian dramatic devices. Peter Kubelka [see *FQ*, Winter 1966–1967], although I don't much care for his movies, is the only European I know who is operating on the same wavelength as the young Americans.

Even those Europeans who ought to be most sympathetic towards the American underground cinema often are not. Jonas Mekas (in *The Village Voice*, October 6, 1966) seemed surprised that European film-makers visiting the New York Festival should have watched the movies of Vanderbeek and Breer and Ron Rice with such hostility and incomprehension. Carlos Saura, director of *The Hunt* (and a more solid bit of literary-symbolic carpentering than that it would be hard to imagine) is quoted as saying that "painters should remain painters and avoid making films." Agnes Varda, whose *Opéra-Mouffé* could pass as an underground film, was equally damning ("They are useless"). And, of course, it's not only the Europeans. Robert Nelson's *Oh Dem Watermelons*, hardly a difficult film, grated the sensibilities of the *Variety* staffer who caught it at Lincoln Center (". . . a tediously vulgar, sometimes repulsive exercise in fast-cuts and ear-assaulting Stephen Foster refrain which intended to be 'a black comedy about race relations' ").

If Renoir is a bridge between the old and the new there is, within the underground cinema movement, a director whose work is a perfect link between the new and the old. Under the signature "Emsh," the noted science-fiction illustrator Ed Emshwiller has made "gut movies" which still manage to absorb the best of past traditions. Formidably well made, his films are superbly photographed (he was director of photography on *Hallelujah the Hills*, providing that movie with its most distinguished element), beautifully edited, with sound tracks carefully and imaginatively composed. Except for the impassive voice reeling off statistics ("One second in a man's life span is as a man's life span to the age of life on earth" . . . "There have been 360 generations since the Egyptians invented writing" . . .) over one sequence of *Relativity* these are mainly non-realistic. The longest of his films runs thirty-eight minutes, the shortest five. He is one of the most accomplished film-makers presently working in America.

Emshwiller's style, one of the most distinctive of all screen signatures, has matured rapidly in the few years since the unambitious but attractive *Transformation* (1959, 5 mins.), the earliest Emshwiller I know, a cheerful and colorful kaleidoscope of animated Rorschach blots. This filmic doodling soon gave way to his more notable experiments with the human figure, beginning in *Dance Chromatic* (1959, 7 mins.). A preoccupation with man's harmony with the universe runs through his work. The consciousness of this has grown from film to film until, in *George Dumpson's Place* and *Relativity* it comes to full maturity. *Relativity* (1966, 38 mins.), his most recent work, is an exploration of life, sex, and death which places man in the pattern of creation, seeing him not as something superior and separate but as part of an interlocking design. His films, unlike most underground movies, not only have a sensuousness but are a celebration and affirmation of life similar to those of Renoir.

In most of Emshwiller's movies there is a sense of man not as a self-enclosed unit but as part of a larger design. The one exception is *Scrambles* (1964, 15 mins.) a straight reportage on motor-cycle scrambling, and his least interesting film. The note on the movie by E.E. in the catalogue of the Film-Makers Co-Operative reads in part: "A lusty picture of motorcycles in action. Modern Lancelots and their ladies-in-waiting go wide open for a day at the races. Mix cycles and sex, stir well, and you have *Scrambles*." The movie never halfway lives up to this—the sex element, for instance, is pretty perfunctory—and it's merely a casual, quite well-made documentary: the type of actuality the British were putting on film for the Free Cinema movement of the early fifties. It's as dull as that. Yet if *Scrambles* is a disappointment Emshwiller has more than made up for it with his two subsequent, and most recent, films.

Earlier he had begun to detach the human

figure from its immediate surroundings in order to make more formal and more significant relationships. *Dance Chromatic* uses the movements of a dancer, Nancy Fenster, as a counterpoint to abstract paintings. *Lifelines* (1960, 7 mins.) is a wholly successful counterpoint of photographs of a nude model and abstract line drawings on the theme of the title. The study of anxiety and internal anguish *Thanatopsis* (1962, 5 mins.) is a duet for two figures, one of whom (the male) is always sharply in focus while the other (the female) moves around him diffused into dreamlike images, and the soundtrack is scored for magnified heartbeat and power saw—a combination, muffled and mysterious, as disturbing as the rhythmic throb of machinery in that memorable opening sequence to Fritz Lang's *The Testament of Doctor Mabuse.*

Technically *Totem* (1963, 16 mins.) is Emshwiller's most dazzling work, a bravura piece making use of all the innovations of the dance film, the split screen, multiple imposition, the chiaroscuro of color, image, movement, in which the camera becomes principal danseur. This is dance ritual, a cine-dance interpretation of a modern ballet by Alwin Nikolais using the Alwin Nikolais Dance Company, which can best be described as Emshwiller's re-choreography for the camera and the human body. The influence here is of the Hollywood musical, particularly the MGM musical under Arthur Freed (who headed one of the most genuinely experimental units ever to work together in Hollywood). Obviously no one man, shooting in 16 mm, using a few dancers against a neutral background, is going to compete with the unlimited resources at the disposal of Hollywood's most accomplished craftsmen; yet, in sheer exhilaration and technical bravura, *Totem* sweeps across the screen with greater freedom than any recent dance sequence from Hollywood.

Superficially *George Dumpson's Place* (1965, 8 mins.) is, like *Scrambles,* another straight bit of reportage, this time on the collection of junk a man has accumulated over the years. But, from this unpromising material, Emshwiller has made a larger statement on the compulsive inner poetry of a man's life. George Dumpson, gentle-eyed, white haired, patriarchal as Rex Ingram's De Lawd in *The Green Pastures,* is the creator of a private world. This genuinely gifted primitive landscape architect (we are shown nothing of him but his work, there is no commentary to tell us why Dumpson should have made this into what seems to be a lifetime's dedication) whose compulsions seem similar to those which drove Simon Rodia to the creation of his Watts Towers in Los Angeles, has also fashioned something rich and strange and beautiful from the debris of society, transforming his shanty and his yard with a collage of discarded objects. Emshwiller has filmed this prodigal richness in long, swift tracking shots across this enclosed world. George Dumpson is seen only at the very end—in some magnificently textured close-ups—serene in the center of his own universe. The links with *Relativity* are unmistakable.

To call *Relativity* a cosmic travelogue gives an idea of its scope but not its flavor. Baffled for a definition I turned up the word in Webster's New World Dictionary: "The theory of the relative, rather than absolute, character of motion, velocity, mass, etc. and the interdependence of matter, time, and space." That's the movie. At the opening what seems to be our planet, suspended in time and space, turns out to be a golf ball about to be driven off; later the shapes of nude bodies become lunar landscapes over which the camera tracks. Beginning on the flashing lights of a computer and an infinity of galaxies the movie ends with a zoom-in on a human figure on a mountain top and a cry of defiance—or could it be despair?—on the soundtrack.

Space, time, motion, continually overlap in a film which roughly divides itself into five movements: Genesis—Man—Machine—Song—Space and Time. Mahler's "Song of the Earth" translated to the spheres? The fluidity of its form and the free association of its pictorial ideas draw the eye and the imagination deeper and deeper into its integrated universe. This is most apparent in the fourth section, in which

a man, humming to himself and doing a desultory little jig oblivious of his surroundings, is shown in a continuous series of movements against an ever-changing background. This combination of movement and cutting, already used by film-makers as disparate as Maya Deren and Gene Kelly-Stanley Donen, is both funny and charming, reminiscent of the mating dances of certain species of birds. In the earlier sequences too, with their long flowing tracking shots, the tempo of movement remains unchanged while the images transform from landscapes to human bodies to slaughtered animal carcasses.

These devices, coldly set down in print, sound both obvious and clumsy but, in practice, they congeal into a flowing enchainment of movements across the screen. *Relativity* and *George Dumpson's Place* are dance films as surely as *Dance Chromatic* or *Totem*, built on movement and rhythmic tempos. This almost choreographic feeling for movement is, I suppose, common to all good directors but it's an element often most definable in the work of directors with a background in painting (Renoir or Kurosawa immediately spring to mind). Within the underground cinema it is noticeable, although to a lesser extent, in the films of Robert Breer and Ron Rice. The precision and elegance of movement in *Relativity* is very similar to that in *Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe*. Emshwiller is, of all American directors, the one who comes closest to the warmth and spontaneity of Renoir.—RICHARD WHITEHALL

THE FILMS OF ROBERT NELSON

"Highly literate people cannot cope with the nonverbal art of the pictorial, so they dance impatiently up and down to express a pointless disapproval that renders them futile and gives new power and authority to the ads. The unconscious depth-messages of ads are never attacked by the literate, because of their incapacity to notice or discuss nonverbal forms of arrangement and meaning. They have not the art to argue with pictures."

—Marshall McLuhan, UNDERSTANDING MEDIA

Fortunately, there is a film-maker in San Francisco who does have "the art to argue with pictures." And this is exactly what Robert Nelson does in what I consider his strongest film to date, *Confessions of a Black Mother Succuba.*

Another of Nelson's films, *O Dem Watermelons*, has been more successful commercially and has received much more critical comment. I don't believe I can add anything constructive to what has already been said about this film. I will say, however, that I believe *Watermelons* has received critical acclaim more for its social than its filmic qualities.

Nelson can be termed a satirist in a fairly traditional sense of the word. Alvin Kernan, in *Modern Satire* says, "Constant movement without change" through the scene of satire, which "is always crowded, disorderly, grotesque, forms the basis of satire." This surely applies to Nelson's films.

The films all deal, in an Olympian way, with social and cultural anomalies of our time: commercialized, subliminal sex in advertising (*Confessions*), the unamusing quality of most public amusements (*Thick Pucker*), man's relationship with the machine and the ambiguities of identity (*Oiley Peloso, The Pumph Man*), the identification of the watermelon with the Negro (*Watermelons*).

None of the themes or targets of his satires are startlingly new, but they are nonetheless distressing. Perhaps they are distressing because they are not new. We must look to the material itself and its treatment for the qualities that make Nelson's work outstanding.

CONFESSIONS OF A BLACK MOTHER SUCCUBA

a man, humming to himself and doing a desultory little jig oblivious of his surroundings, is shown in a continuous series of movements against an ever-changing background. This combination of movement and cutting, already used by film-makers as disparate as Maya Deren and Gene Kelly-Stanley Donen, is both funny and charming, reminiscent of the mating dances of certain species of birds. In the earlier sequences too, with their long flowing tracking shots, the tempo of movement remains unchanged while the images transform from landscapes to human bodies to slaughtered animal carcasses.

These devices, coldly set down in print, sound both obvious and clumsy but, in practice, they congeal into a flowing enchainment of movements across the screen. *Relativity* and *George Dumpson's Place* are dance films as surely as *Dance Chromatic* or *Totem*, built on movement and rhythmic tempos. This almost choreographic feeling for movement is, I suppose, common to all good directors but it's an element often most definable in the work of directors with a background in painting (Renoir or Kurosawa immediately spring to mind). Within the underground cinema it is noticeable, although to a lesser extent, in the films of Robert Breer and Ron Rice. The precision and elegance of movement in *Relativity* is very similar to that in *Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe*. Emshwiller is, of all American directors, the one who comes closest to the warmth and spontaneity of Renoir.—RICHARD WHITEHALL

THE FILMS OF ROBERT NELSON

"Highly literate people cannot cope with the nonverbal art of the pictorial, so they dance impatiently up and down to express a pointless disapproval that renders them futile and gives new power and authority to the ads. The unconscious depth-messages of ads are never attacked by the literate, because of their incapacity to notice or discuss nonverbal forms of arrangement and meaning. They have not the art to argue with pictures."

—Marshall McLuhan, UNDERSTANDING MEDIA

Fortunately, there is a film-maker in San Francisco who does have "the art to argue with pictures." And this is exactly what Robert Nelson does in what I consider his strongest film to date, *Confessions of a Black Mother Succuba.*

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CONFESSIONS OF A BLACK MOTHER SUCCUBA

Since Nelson is a satirist working in the film medium, and since there is such a profusion of self-parodying material, and since "any ad put into a new setting is funny," (McLuhan) it is only natural that Nelson, along with Bruce Conner and Stan Vanderbeek, should use pieces of the public media like stock footage from TV and Hollywood and magazine collage. All three artists are in the satiric vein of the pop art movement. They all employ rapid cutting as a natural device for satire; "Constant movement . . ."

Another possible reason why this particular device is common to these three film-makers and many of their contemporaries may be elucidated by yet another quote from McLuhan: "Ads work on the very advanced principle that a small pellet or pattern in a noisy, redundant barrage of repetition will gradually assert itself." Fine for ads, so why not for films. (This is also, by the way, McLuhan's own style.) One of the basic lessons of pop art is the not very advanced principle, if it works, use it.

Nelson has been influenced by both Conner and Vanderbeek, but his films are not in any way derivative. He sees a visual idea that he likes and he uses it in his strongly individual way. There is a small segment in Stan Vanderbeek's *Breathdeath* that I feel may be the seed from which *Confessions* grew: the girl in bed with the clothed TV set, masturbating a patriotic cigar.

So, anyway, Nelson calls *Confessions of a Black Mother Succuba* a "girlie film." It stands in relation to girlie films as *Don Quixote* stands in relation to chivalric romances. It involves three nude, or nearly nude, women rolling, jumping, writhing, dancing, and fondling objects, themselves, and each other.

Why? Well, if McLuhan is right and TV does involve us as deeply as he thinks it does, and if all our senses are indeed brought into that synesthetic state that he calls "tactility," then it is obvious that one of the results would be that viewers would be sexually aroused by the advertising tactics of the Madison Avenue Freudians. Women especially, because most of the commercials are aimed at them, and especially if they are home in front of the tube all day and Charley is at the office. That "small pellet in a noisy, redundant barrage" would appear to be aphrodisiac.

So Nelson observed this phenomenon and reported his findings in *Confessions*. Not as a doctoral thesis, but as a powerful image. Three women caught in a roomful of cloth and gigantic genitals end up masturbating themselves and each other. Let's face it, there's *no one* around who could satisfy all the desires the ad men can arouse.

But the women are only one element of the film. Intercut with this original footage is much stock footage. Nelson says, "I used to know a guy who worked at a TV station who gave me a lot of film. He's been fired though." Miss America, the birth defects girl on crutches, a man's distorted face at about Mach 6, letters, numbers, the Third Man, dollar signs and cent signs by the thousand, and many wonderful things to rub on, roll on, cream in, smooth in, soothe in, stick in, shove in, ram in.

And sound: grade-B monster movie tension music to introduce the Black Mother Succuba from whom the damsels are not rescued in this anti-romance, "A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody," "I Wanna Be Loved by You." An endless profusion and intermixing of sound and visuals, but not diffuse, rather all revolving around those three women masturbating in their environment of tremendous testicles and over-blown eroticism that, above all, pays in cash, at your corner drugstore or neighborhood supermarket.

I may be giving the impression that I admire Nelson's work for its qualities of cultural criticism. This is not my intention. I realize that satire is the accepted method of killing the sacred cow, albeit without shedding blood, and that many satirists maintain that their primary urges are corrective. Correction through ridicule is an ancient and primitive device.

But to accept Nelson's work (or satire in general) at its didactic value is a mistake. It is also moving, exciting, inventive; it evolves new forms through making unheard-of combinations and connections. It exists for the pleasure of

its audience, not for the improvement of its targets. Nelson's films certainly "make fun of," but just as often they simply "make fun" or create joy.

There are beautifully funny little bits in all Nelson's films: the unmasking of the motorcyclist at the end of *Oiley Peloso;* Nelson's burlesque, à la Groucho Marx, of the burlesque comic's suggestive patter in the beginning of *Confessions; Thick Pucker* starts with about a dozen mouths, one at a time, carefully enunciating "thick pucker" (try it ten times fast); the image of the women on the swing in the beginning of *Oiley Peloso* that has just enough of that clichéd idyllic quality to become a superb parody of the very same "sun through the trees" quality. All the films seem to start spectacularly.

There is a purely cinematic beauty in Nelson's films that comes through in the provocative undulating of the superimpositions and in the comic gimmickry achieved in the printer. In *Confessions,* in the "I Wanna Be Loved by You" sections, he sets up an editing rhythm that coincides with the beat in the song. This is a very basic editing device of the traditional cinema. Nelson adopts it and re-forms it; he builds this simple rhythm and soon he can cut to anything for surprise comic effect, because the viewer expects a cut on the beat of the song.

In 1963 Nelson made a film called *Plastic Haircut* that at this time seems not to be one of his films at all. His style changed considerably from this first film to the next four, which were all made pretty much at one time (1965). The over-all pacing of the work speeded up tremendously and he started using stock footage and animated collage.

Nelson was originally a painter and *Plastic Haircut* shows this influence. The surface quality is like a hard-edge painting; large areas of black and white and gray space, geometric forms, a well-defined spatial orientation, and a strangely ambiguous atmosphere created by people within the space. Thematically, this first film might be termed an ironic castration comedy. The specter of misdirected sexual impulses is one of Nelson's recurring themes. Many images and ideas that occur in the later films make their first appearance here; for instance, the gigantic pseudo-genitals of *Confessions.*

Plastic Haircut is a film in three parts: the purely visual and highly ambiguous first part, and the purely aural montage of Steve Reich's radio-recorded material, mostly boxing and baseball, with much crowd noise, forms part two. Part three is a repetition of part one with sound; the "producer" (Robert Nelson) of the film is interviewed by a "critic" (Ron G. Davis). The result is that the whole context of the visuals changes and the film assumes an entirely new and hilarious dimension.

Sound montage, again by Steve Reich, recurs in *Thick Pucker.* Little bits and pieces of talk, half-statement, much repetition (another theme), at one point accompanying a repetitious image of a man crossing a street. The ironic or contradictory sound-image combination of part three of *Plastic Haircut* is used well in *Oiley Peloso.* A Hollywood sound track of Sterling Hayden guiding a plane in distress safely to the airfield accompanies the image of two uniformed Negroes driving a car.

In all the films he works with actors. He has long worked closely with the San Francisco Mime Troupe and *O Dem Watermelons* was made as one part of a larger work, *A Minstrel Show, or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel,* staged by the Mime Troupe.

Friends for actors, a camera, a recorder, a printer, and a projector; these are Nelson's tools. Whatever footage he can shoot or get from any one of a hundred sources; these are his basic materials. From these elements he forms films of great impact, humor, vitality, and beauty.

Since *Confessions of a Black Mother Succuba* was excluded from a couple of film festivals because of the nude women in it, I might do well to end with a quote from Northrop Frye for the benefit of festival pre-selection committees and jurors everywhere: "Genius seems to have led practically every great satirist to become what the world calls obscene."

—Earl Bodien

THE BOSTON MARATHON

Directed by Robert Gardner. Camera by Robert Gardner, Don Pennebaker, and others. 30 min., Harvard Film Study Center.

An engaging film on what must surely be the world's most pointless athletic event: a twenty-six mile run through the suburbs and traffic of downtown Boston. Part civic holiday, part charitable flummery, this peculiar footrace attracts not only local talent (sponsored by oyster-houses and youth clubs) but also a sprinkling of international Olympic names, whose presence is never clearly explained.

Nevertheless, much professional conditioning, course inspecting, scheming and calculating by the serious competitors; momentary confusion around the starting line due to ice, snow, and 40-degree temperatures; no matter; they're off, with the traditional gunshot, brass band, and damply cheering enthusiasts.

Then follows a meticulous, multicamera chronicle of this madness. Leaders force the pace and jockey for position over streetcar tracks; spectators quarrel; trainers jog alongside with water bottles; as the pack strings out, race officials following in a bus keep times and make hard-eyed predictions—"it looks like maybe two-thirty-two under 1959, Charlie . . ." This illusion of order is sustained by a quiet, spare narration which identifies contestants as we dolly along with them, and reveals knowing lore of past performances. But some three hours later, when the first finishers break the tape at a downtown intersection, things are obviously collapsing all down the line: some of the slower contestants are wandering in the city parks, lost; others pick their way through traffic jams, the police having all gone home; the sun goes down, and runners are still staggering in, to the taut admiration of the narrator—" . . . old John Surry, five hours, 20 minutes, 52 seconds, the fastest time ever recorded by a 50-year old . . ."

The whole thing peters out with pleasurable inanity, but the charm of everybody's commitment to irrelevant endeavor remains as *Marathon's* finest achievement; that, and the typage of funny human beings, rare enough these days in documents of the American scene.

—MARK MCCARTY

THE ROAD TO SAINT TROPEZ

Writer-Director: Michael Sarne. Editor: David Naden. Photography: Peter Suschitzky. Narration: Fenella Fielding. Cast: Melissa Stribling, Udo Kier, Gabriella Licudi. 31 min. Color.

By the time these words are printed, it is hoped that Michael Sarne's first film, a witty, satirical look at the Riviera, has found a distributor. It was a huge success at the San Francisco Film Festival, and is the best "anti-travelogue" to have been made in English. (Such other works as the French *A Propos de Nice, Cocotte D'Azur* and the Scandinavian films, *A Day in Town* and *A City Called Copenhagen* also belong in the genre, as outstanding spoofs on the old MGM Fitzpatrick jaunts.) As Fenella Fielding's acidulous tones present raucously irreverent facts about the Riviera, past and present, we observe a lady-tourist getting involved with a young gigolo and his girlfriend. The film is visually attractive, and the story's buoyant jibes at human amorality are subtle and not without a certain soupçon of bitterness.

It is all played in French, without subtitles, but Miss Fielding makes everything extremely clear with her narration, so that the points being made are really indictments of the whole idea of innocent tourism on the Riviera (one goes there either for retirement or sex); the prevalence of the inescapable gigolos, and the hypocrisies that women can create in order to rationalize concupiscent behavior when traveling abroad. Each one of the actors is perfect. Sarne's casting is rather double-edged because Miss Stribling is the wife of England's foremost director of serious "problem" films (Basil Dearden), and Udo Kier (despite his protestations to the contrary, according to Sarne) is one of the young men who apparently upset every dowager's equilibrium during the Riviera season last year.

Sarne, a cabaret singer, photographer, actor, and film critic (*Films & Filming*) has immediately stamped himself as one of the British school of free-wheeling "hip cinema." He intends to make a feature soon, and it will deal with the younger generation of swingers within the London scene. One

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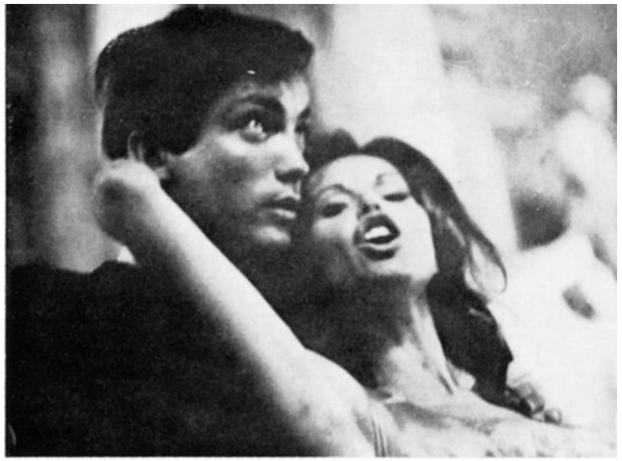

ROAD TO ST. TROPEZ

Books

A WORLD ON FILM

By Stanley Kauffmann. (New York: Harper & Row, 1966. $7.95)

The face that looks out at you from the back of the jacket of *A World on Film* is a Bachrach face: the kind you would stereotype as "distinguished" if it belonged to a university trustee or a banker from Boston. It is a satisfied face. Luckily, I can testify by personal observation that it is not identical with the face of Stanley Kauffmann the person; and I do not think it expresses the virtues of the Stanley Kauffmann who seemed, over the years 1958–1965, to be writing the best film reviews in this country. The photograph, it turns out, expresses more what can now be seen as the chief fault of the reviews—a certain stuffiness which was hardly apparent week-by-week.

It grieves me to use an unkind term here, as it always grieves me to find on second viewing that a film I liked the first time does not quite stand up. And I do not know exactly what significance we should attach to the phenomenon. I agree with Kauffmann more often than I do with most other critics, though of course I think he commits whoppers from time to time—any critic worth reading does. I can even forgive his denseness about Godard. He is skillful in presenting background and context without being dull, and he lays out the issues a film raises in an intelligent way. What I am irritated by, I suppose, is the accumulated *persona.* If Pauline Kael's implicit stance is something like "You poor misguided liberal ass, let me straighten you out on a few things," and Dwight Macdonald's is something like "Watch while I, who really understand popular culture, separate the gold from the swill," Kauffmann's must be something like "We men of good will surely agree that . . ."

But of course that's fatuous; in fact our reactions to movies are wildly various and personal. Everything remains to be proved. Kauffmann too often seems to take for granted that tastes are reasonable, and that readers will naturally share his opinions; hence, perhaps, a bland, difficulty-minimizing, faintly schoolmarmy tone. "Two facts should have been faced from the outset. (1) Even more than with most fine novels, *Lolita's* effect depends on its prose texture. (2) To 'normalize' Humbert's sexual penchant and to remove indications of sexual activity from his story is not censorship but metamorphosis; it results in a different, lesser work." I agree (in fact I would go farther on both counts). But what is this "prose texture?" And how can one call Humbert's passion a "penchant"?

What is best about *A World on Film* is its organized intelligence. More often than any critic of recent years, Kauffmann has known how to see the artistic problems that a film poses, and to deal with them in a coherent way. He is sometimes not as acute as other critics; he will not astound you with brilliant revelations. But he will give you a solid understanding of what has been going on. His series of reviews of the British Midlands films, for

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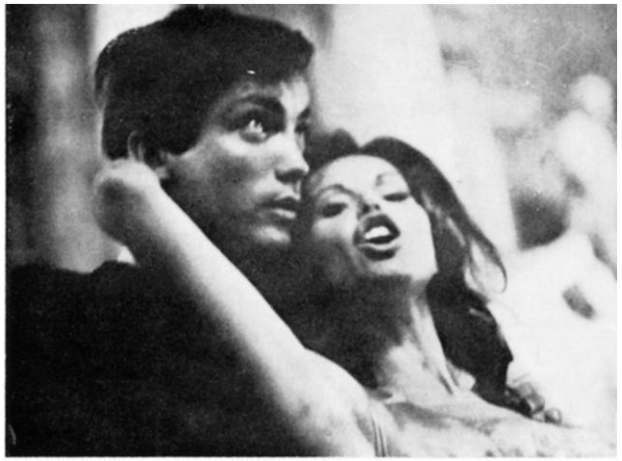

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Kauffmann is also, I think, the only American critic who has a thorough appreciation of the performance side of film, and who regularly dealt with it in print. This kind of coverage is unfashionable in the age of the *auteur*—except among *auteurs,* whose nerves and artistic fates are deeply entangled with actors. (I'm thinking, for example, of Truffaut's embittered record of his relations with Oskar Werner in shooting *Fahrenheit 451.*)

The problems which *A World on Film* will face in the long run are superficially small matters; but I suspect they will tell against it. Style is most of a critic's business; he is supposed to exemplify for us a sensitive and thoughtful reaction to films; in such work every tiniest nuance may be crucial. Thus when Kauffmann writes, in a postscript in his British section, that the Beatles' songs "seem derived from American 'country music,'" it is not just that he is wrong (or at the most a quarter right) but that he writes it pseudo-authoritatively, and without real seriousness about a topic he thinks doesn't matter. It's like so many of those articles now being written about LSD; it sounds all right to anybody who doesn't know. A writer takes such chances only at grave peril; and Kauffmann takes them too often.

Nonetheless, *A World on Film* is the nearest thing we have to a critical history of the years 1958–1965: years during which the European film-makers' postwar achievements really registered with American audiences, and set a challenge in personal film-making which has yet to be taken up in Hollywood. They were, we can see now, more revolutionary years than they seemed—they changed our conception of what was possible in the film art; or rather, they reminded us that personal film-making had a present and future as well as a past. One of the great advantages of the weekly critic is that he covers nearly everything. Kauffmann's book hence represents a comprehensive record of what was seen in New York theaters; he has arranged the reviews partly by topic and partly by country, setting related pictures near each other. Sometimes he has added postscripts where his views have changed—or not changed, as in his famous defense of *West Side Story.* And re-reading his responses to the films of those years will give any reader plenty to think about.—ERNEST CALLENBACH

THE FILMS OF JOSEF VON STERNBERG

By Andrew Sarris. (New York: Doubleday, 1966. $4.95)

JOSEF VON STERNBERG

Par Herman G. Weinberg. (Paris: Editions Seghers, Collection "Cinéma d'aujourd'hui," 1966.) Traduction: Jean-Pierre Déporte et Nicole Brunet.

Since the reevaluation of the past is one of the perennially unfinished tasks of film criticism, it is good to know that Sarris and Weinberg rate Sternberg rather more highly than his accustomed notch in film history. They introduce, in fact, no great surprises (both regard *Underworld* and *The Blue Angel* as Sternberg's finest achievements) yet much of what they say is illuminating. What is strange about these two devoted studies, however, is that neither author makes any explicit attempt to defend Sternberg as a *metteur-en-scéne.* They both spend most of their energy proving that his stories are more ironic and less silly than they seem on first glance, and Sarris especially is very skillful at salvaging serious characterizations where contemporary audiences have an easy tendency to find nothing but Camp. Both make general references to Sternberg's luscious visual effects (his "éblouissante composition plastique"). And surely, of all directors save perhaps the Eisenstein of *Ivan,* Sternberg demands treatment on the level of how his films *look:* what they are as visual works. But neither Sarris nor Weinberg essays—in the manner we have come to expect through the work of Richie

instance, is informed and stimulating in what it says about the films' makers and the social context of the films; it accurately points to the chief stylistic pitfalls; and Kauffmann correctly sensed the importance of the three key pictures, *Room at the Top, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning,* and *This Sporting Life.*

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The problems which *A World on Film* will face in the long run are superficially small matters; but I suspect they will tell against it. Style is most of a critic's business; he is supposed to exemplify for us a sensitive and thoughtful reaction to films; in such work every tiniest nuance may be crucial. Thus when Kauffmann writes, in a postscript in his British section, that the Beatles' songs "seem derived from American 'country music,'" it is not just that he is wrong (or at the most a quarter right) but that he writes it pseudo-authoritatively, and without real seriousness about a topic he thinks doesn't matter. It's like so many of those articles now being written about LSD; it sounds all right to anybody who doesn't know. A writer takes such chances only at grave peril; and Kauffmann takes them too often.

Nonetheless, *A World on Film* is the nearest thing we have to a critical history of the years 1958–1965: years during which the European film-makers' postwar achievements really registered with American audiences, and set a challenge in personal film-making which has yet to be taken up in Hollywood. They were, we can see now, more revolutionary years than they seemed—they changed our conception of what was possible in the film art; or rather, they reminded us that personal film-making had a present and future as well as a past. One of the great advantages of the weekly critic is that he covers nearly everything. Kauffmann's book hence represents a comprehensive record of what was seen in New York theaters; he has arranged the reviews partly by topic and partly by country, setting related pictures near each other. Sometimes he has added postscripts where his views have changed—or not changed, as in his famous defense of *West Side Story.* And re-reading his responses to the films of those years will give any reader plenty to think about.—ERNEST CALLENBACH

THE FILMS OF JOSEF VON STERNBERG

By Andrew Sarris. (New York: Doubleday, 1966. $4.95)

JOSEF VON STERNBERG

Par Herman G. Weinberg. (Paris: Editions Seghers, Collection "Cinéma d'aujourd'hui," 1966.) Traduction: Jean-Pierre Déporte et Nicole Brunet.

Since the reevaluation of the past is one of the perennially unfinished tasks of film criticism, it is good to know that Sarris and Weinberg rate Sternberg rather more highly than his accustomed notch in film history. They introduce, in fact, no great surprises (both regard *Underworld* and *The Blue Angel* as Sternberg's finest achievements) yet much of what they say is illuminating. What is strange about these two devoted studies, however, is that neither author makes any explicit attempt to defend Sternberg as a *metteur-en-scéne.* They both spend most of their energy proving that his stories are more ironic and less silly than they seem on first glance, and Sarris especially is very skillful at salvaging serious characterizations where contemporary audiences have an easy tendency to find nothing but Camp. Both make general references to Sternberg's luscious visual effects (his "éblouissante composition plastique"). And surely, of all directors save perhaps the Eisenstein of *Ivan,* Sternberg demands treatment on the level of how his films *look:* what they are as visual works. But neither Sarris nor Weinberg essays—in the manner we have come to expect through the work of Richie

on Kurosawa, or Truffaut's conversations with Hitchcock, or the best of *Movie* and *Cahiers* criticism—to show why Sternberg, on the evidence of his *mise-en-scéne,* should be considered an important artist. Instead we get such maddening generalities as Sarris's: "Sternberg, in particular, creates conviction by motivating his milieu with light and shadow."

This is curious. You would think that anybody seriously interested in Sternberg would be able to tell us something of how he handled space and time, how he managed lighting and camera movement to obtain such a preeminent luster in his images, how he worked out visually his conceptions of character and action —in short, the nature of his style, and what we are to make of it. But apparently both are so subdued by the Sternberg *mystique* that they forbear to make the effort. We shall evidently have to await further enlightenment from the master himself.

What we have here are two engaging and sympathetic surveys of his films, almost exclusively from the point of view of plot and character and the attitudes embodied therein. Both contain usefully compact information. Sarris's study seems to me the best thing he has yet written: the most sustained and the most thoughtful. Whether he will convince anyone is of course another question; but he is, within the limits I've noted, an able advocate. Sarris *likes* Sternberg pictures: their dreamy sexuality, their sinuous camera movement. In the Dietrich pictures up until *The Devil Is a Woman* he finds her genuinely fascinating, and Sternberg's "dilemmas of desire which torment men and women eternally" seem to him convincingly portrayed. He gives much weight to Sternberg's too-little-noticed irony. And in a general way he describes the richness of Sternberg's visuals: surely nobody has ever jammed so much into his shots, such a profusion of lights, costumes, fish-nets, hats, baskets, feathers, and so on. To Grierson's dictum that "when a director dies, he becomes a photographer," we can only reply that—though there is a certain persistent iciness in Sternberg—photography may also be an art. Sternberg's variety of it now tends to seem arch, his glamor phoney; our romantic heroes nowadays are chummy types, "ordinary men" with a vengeance. But once we get past the *idée fixe* that his films are triumphs of "failed seriousness" (the essence of Camp) and become open to his sense of drama and irony, we will have to admit him to the company of personal film-makers, men who have somehow managed to convey an individual vision to the screen.—E.C.

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This staunchly sensible explication of Fellini takes as one of its keynotes a remark of Fellini's on critics: "But I always feel that they lack respect, consideration." Miss Budgen lacks neither; she is not a hagiographer, but is concerned to give an account of what Fellini's work is, on the assumption that in his own way he is doing what he intends—the problem is not so much for us to declare whether we approve or not, as to understand what he is about. In film criticism (as in most other kinds) this sort of enterprise is too rare, perhaps because it is thought too humble. The reverse, I suspect, is true: the truly ambitious critic—and Miss Budgen is one, despite her self-effacing manner —will write for readers who now or twenty years hence will not particularly care about the critic's yeas or nays. What really matters is the sincerity and intelligence and perceptiveness of the critic's reactions, and whether these are set forth in an honest way. On these counts Miss Budgen scores higher in this slim book

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HORROR!

By Drake Douglas. (New York: Macmillan, 1966)

Douglas' book is a work of vulgarization, an attempt to sniff, bite, chew, swallow, and digest the horror genre for those who are presumably too busy to do it for themselves. That in itself is rather an odd ambition, since most horror nuts who have been horror nuts for any time at all will already know the material Douglas covers as well if not better than he does, and it is hard to imagine a non-horror buff bothering to pick up a book on the subject.

The subject itself—as Douglas delineates it—is a further curiosity. The book deals almost exclusively with English-language sound horror pictures and concludes with a cursory appreciation of three great English-speaking writers: Poe, Lovecraft, and Arthur Machen. Douglas does not venture to say why he avoids foreign films and writers, or Gothic writers before Mrs. Shelley, or why Lovecraft and Machen (whose books haven't yet been filmed) belong in a study that is obviously centered around horror films. The best reason he gives for not discussing silent films is that he hadn't yet been born when they were made.

As vulgarization, Douglas' book is reasonably acceptable. It mentions all the right names, provides lots of summaries, makes one critical remark per subject—rephrasing it in several different ways so it will go farther—sets forth one handy central psychological thesis (that horror is based in an hereditary fear of the dark) and an aesthetic one (that horror films are better in black and white than in color).

As with all proper vulgarization, there is nothing wrong with what Douglas says. He properly admires the old Universals and the new Hammers, recognizes Karloff for the greatest of the horror actors, distinguishes among originality and copying, and among good and bad films. I don't mean to suggest, however, that Douglas doesn't make any mistakes—it's just that most of them are not very important, e.g., "The role was admirably played by Dwight Fry, who also appeared as Jonathan Harker in the Lugosi *Dracula* (p. 120)." Actually, Dwight *Frye* played Renfield in *Dracula*, but misspellings and miscastings of minor—even if excellent—actors are hardly bound to lead the uninitiated reader of this book astray, and the initiated will know better anyway. But while we are on mistakes, there *is* one very big and surprising one: Douglas confuses the chronology of the very beginning of the Universal sound horror splurge. *Dracula* was not made after *Frankenstein*, but before; and by confusing chronology, Douglas misses out on one of the horror addict's favorite ironic stories: when James Whale asked Lugosi if the studio could capitalize on his *Dracula* fame by casting him as the Monster, he flatly refused, saying that his fans would never be able to recognize him under the make-up. Karloff, an acquaintance of Whale's who had been working in bit parts for some years, was cast, and the combination was as effective as had been that of Browning and Lugosi earlier that year in *Dracula*. There are several further ironies: first, that Lugosi eventually did play the Monster with catastrophic results; his was surely the most plodding of all of the four Universal interpretations of the role. Second, the film came even closer to being a second-rater than the above incident suggests, since it was Robert Florey, the second-rate director of *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, who originally collaborated with Universal's reader, Richard Schayer, and began work on the picture. Florey shot two test reels for *Frankenstein* in the *Dracula* set, which had not yet been torn down. They were presented to the front office and approved. But Whale saw the rushes and beat Florey out of the directorship, thereby beginning his career in horror films by adding his own brilliance to that of Karloff.

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The writing is for the most part lively, and always intelligent, tasteful, and informative. Nor are the authors afraid of personal evaluations and comments. For example, they see a relationship between the comedy in the films of Billy Wilder, of Harold Lloyd, and in Donald Duck cartoons, since the humor in all of these derives from their presentation of "the helpless individual caught in the net of the ruling order." While such ideas—or the attribution of existential motifs to such films as *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Asphalt Jungle*, *Moulin Rouge*, and *Beat the Devil*—may not always coincide with one's own views, still it's refreshing to see views put forward at all. Gregor and Patalas also give credit to Orson Welles—at last—for his innovations, and present a very good analysis of *Citizen Kane*. It is ironic and unfortunate that one of the few undeniable *auteurs* that America has produced should have more credit among European critics than among American ones.

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A failing of the book is its lack of a bibliography, as well as the rather scant footnotes. Any student of the film will want to follow up certain ideas or leads, and Gregor and Patalas must have the resources to make a full bibliography possible. Perhaps they will be able to include one in later editions of this otherwise highly interesting and useful volume.—HARRIET R. POLT

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At the war's end, the German film industry was in chaos, most of the studios bombed to rubble, the directors, actors and technicians scattered in all directions. Reconstruction was a difficult problem, and resulted in the creation of film colonies both in the East and West of the divided country. And in spite of the political situation, films of true artistic quality were produced at DEFA and in the West. This brief renaissance lasted but two years, at which time the German film industry began to sink to the low point which it now occupies.

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Anthologie du Cinéma (Tome I). (Paris: L'Avant-Scène C.I.B., 1966. 38F) Compact biographical studies of directors whose careers are over (Dovjenko, Flaherty, Griffith, Ince, Laurel & Hardy, Sjöström, and others.) Illustrated.

Entertainments

After the Fox has several funny moments, but it is ruined by a clash of talents. Neil Simon, as his plays reveal, has a modest but genuine talent for inventing wacky farce situations and writing unpredictable, half-related jokes. Here he takes off on Italy, perfect crimes, art movies, aging stars, and several other subjects, with some success. The Vittorio de Sica who directed *Marriage Italian Style* is a master of lusty Italian comic realism. But Simon's jokes depend on artifice, on the assurance of unreality, and they don't work well in this richly detailed film. For the jokes to be effective the locations must look as little like Italy, as much like a quickly manufactured stage set, as possible.

And the right actors for the parts would have clear New York Jewish accents, their inflections adding just the right touch of absurdity to the pizza pie jokes. De Sica's Italian village is too authentic, and his colorful character actors don't look comfortable reciting college revue-style American gags about Italy. Peter Sellers works hard and well, but even he can't bring the Bronx and Napoli together.—STEVEN FARBER

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The Quiller Memorandum is a straight spy movie so dull that it makes you yearn for another spoof. The plot, about the neo-Nazi movement in Berlin, is without complications or surprises, and Harold Pinter's oblique screenplay cannot conceal this crucial lack. In fact, Pinter's characteristic dialogues of indirection, repetition, frustration only destroy what simple-minded suspense the thing might have had. The one taut sequence in the film is a completely wordless chase through Berlin back streets, ending with a car bombing that our hero barely escapes. Otherwise, one might specu-

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The Professionals is about as serious, in the end, as Louis Malle's gorgeously photographed romp with Bardot and Moreau, *Viva Maria!* But it is suspenseful enough, and the twist of plot at the end, designed to make you Stop & Think in the manner of a television script, is gratifying: revolution, sex, and desperado professionalism are all duly honored, at the expense of a nasty rich man who slaps ladies. The film is, in the increasingly perverse sense we nowadays attach to the term, professional itself: it gets a job done (keeping you on the edge of your seat for two hours) without embarrassing emotion or any sense of personal responsibility. Its many gunfights, garrotings, train-seizures, explosions, and other mayhem are managed with a truly satisfying smoothness (I notice the audience tends to cheer the loudest bangs) and the picture also has a pleasantly cynical sense of humor. Moreover it has Claudia Cardinale sweating in the sun and crawling up over a lot of rocks in a delightful way. Altogether it is Richard Brooks's best film by far (he also wrote the script): an action picture with a fair amount of intelligence; visually very brisk and active, with the aid of Conrad Hall's photography, as the characters are constantly on the move through grim desert scenery; ironic in an easygoing American vein; and, although Brooks's characteristically dogged devotion to ideas gives a somewhat schematic quality to the last sequence, even there he retains our credulity. Lee Marvin, Burt Lancaster, Robert Ryan, and Woody Strode are all excellent, as is Jack Palance as the beleaguered revolutionary. With its echoes of Huston, this film has an unusual amount of cinematic energy for a Hollywood picture.—E.C.

The Quiller Memorandum is a straight spy movie so dull that it makes you yearn for another spoof. The plot, about the neo-Nazi movement in Berlin, is without complications or surprises, and Harold Pinter's oblique screenplay cannot conceal this crucial lack. In fact, Pinter's characteristic dialogues of indirection, repetition, frustration only destroy what simple-minded suspense the thing might have had. The one taut sequence in the film is a completely wordless chase through Berlin back streets, ending with a car bombing that our hero barely escapes. Otherwise, one might specu-

(Edith Scob), but it is the recapturing of a period and the maintenance of bizarre baroque that astonishes the spectator. The grey summer haze of the pre-World War I period, exemplified by Scob's mousseline-de-soie frocks and Gish fragility; those imposing architectural facades of French country estates with stone lions and griffons at every turn; the sudden disguises assumed by Judex and Marie (his entrance into the film is marvelous: at a masked ball, he enters wearing a giant eagle-head, carrying a dead white dove on a gloved palm). There is a great deal of humor, too. Marie (Francine Berge) and her lover-accomplice (Theo Sarapo) calmly dance the Apache while plotting their deeds, and later, disguised as a nun, she attacks the heroine with a hypodermic needle. Franju uses many of the locales originally filmed by Feuillade which one recognizes with joy, and he pays further homage to his mentor in camera techniques and the final romantic fade-out by the seashore. We are vastly rewarded by Franju's labor of love, which he calls "a souvenir of an unhappy time—1914." For us, it is a tribute to a happy occasion in memory of Feuillade, who could combine naiveté with ingenuity, documentary with fiction and link his Paris with our present fantasies.

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The Shameless Old Lady sounds wonderful on paper, but doesn't look very good on film. Everybody has been captivated by the *idea* of a movie about a 70-year-old widow who decides to abandon family and respectability for a last fling at life via motorcycles and beach parties and some madcap young companions. But little that we see in the film is engaging; it takes so much time getting started, pays so many talky visits to the widow's children that it rarely gets around to showing us the old woman gone hip. When she dies suddenly at the end, and the narrator tells us that she relished both of her lives—as wife and mother, and then as an eccentric individual alone—we may even wish that we'd seen the movie he's describing. This one is inoffensive enough, but it's all promises.—STEVEN FARBER

Time Lost and Time Remembered has been certainly one of the most unappreciated films of the year. The critical reaction has been scandalously unsympathetic, wrong-headedly assuming that the spectator is supposed to sympathize with the leading character. In the most lyrically styled sort of film, Desmond Davis presents us with Cassandra Healy, a pretty Irish girl, full of dreamy illusions about life and love, who returns to her native village after a long absence and unhappy marriage in London. She wants to take up life again with her long-ago lover, and to recapture, as much as possible, the atmosphere of her youth. Of course, Cass is a ninny, self-centered and totally damaged by her provinciality and by having seen too many bad films. Davis tells us a great deal about Cass, if only one would bother to pay attention. She is a pure Joycean figure, a creature trapped by simplicities and the accepted sameness of a happy atmosphere; just about *any* other world would be too foreign for her. Once the spectator accepts this fact (and Davis does not bludgeon you with the obvious—he shows you everything), then the tragic qualities of the film override its faults, which are mainly in the writing. Such a film as this is strongest when the camerawork of Manny Wynn creates episodes that haunt the memory: a long swingaround of music (John Addison—a great score) and imagery describing the routines of Cass's youthful days during the summers past. As Cass stands in front of a television store, some portentous lines from *Antigone* illuminate her city isolation and despair; or the sequence in which she suddenly sees a bicycle against a London wall and impulsively steals a ride on it, seeming to ride into the past again. These are moments of great cinema, and perhaps actress Sarah Miles has already become so expert that it is difficult *not* to sympathize with her. Perhaps, too, we have grown too accustomed to being impatient with films that have the slow rhythms of life within them; in this era of hipness, high camp and nudie flicks, a tragic parable about a little nobody musing on the Irish seacoast is easily shoved aside. But there is much richness in this film, a quiet, sad, immutable quality, and it deserves another chance. Its day of rediscovery will come.—ALBERT JOHNSON

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK, cont'd.

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The remedy is obvious: film-makers thinking of entering, and persons who are asked to serve as jurors, should make it a condition of participation that *all* films submitted remain in competition and will be shown to the jurors—although not all necessarily in the public showings, nor in full if the jurors do not desire it. The 16mm festivals are designed to further the cause of the independent, unusual, sometimes unprepossessing or difficult film; they must take pains to ensure that their procedures do not come to constrict this essential function. If there are to be juries, the jurors must do the judging; the responsibility cannot be diffused without causing embarrassment to jurors and resentment among entrants.

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