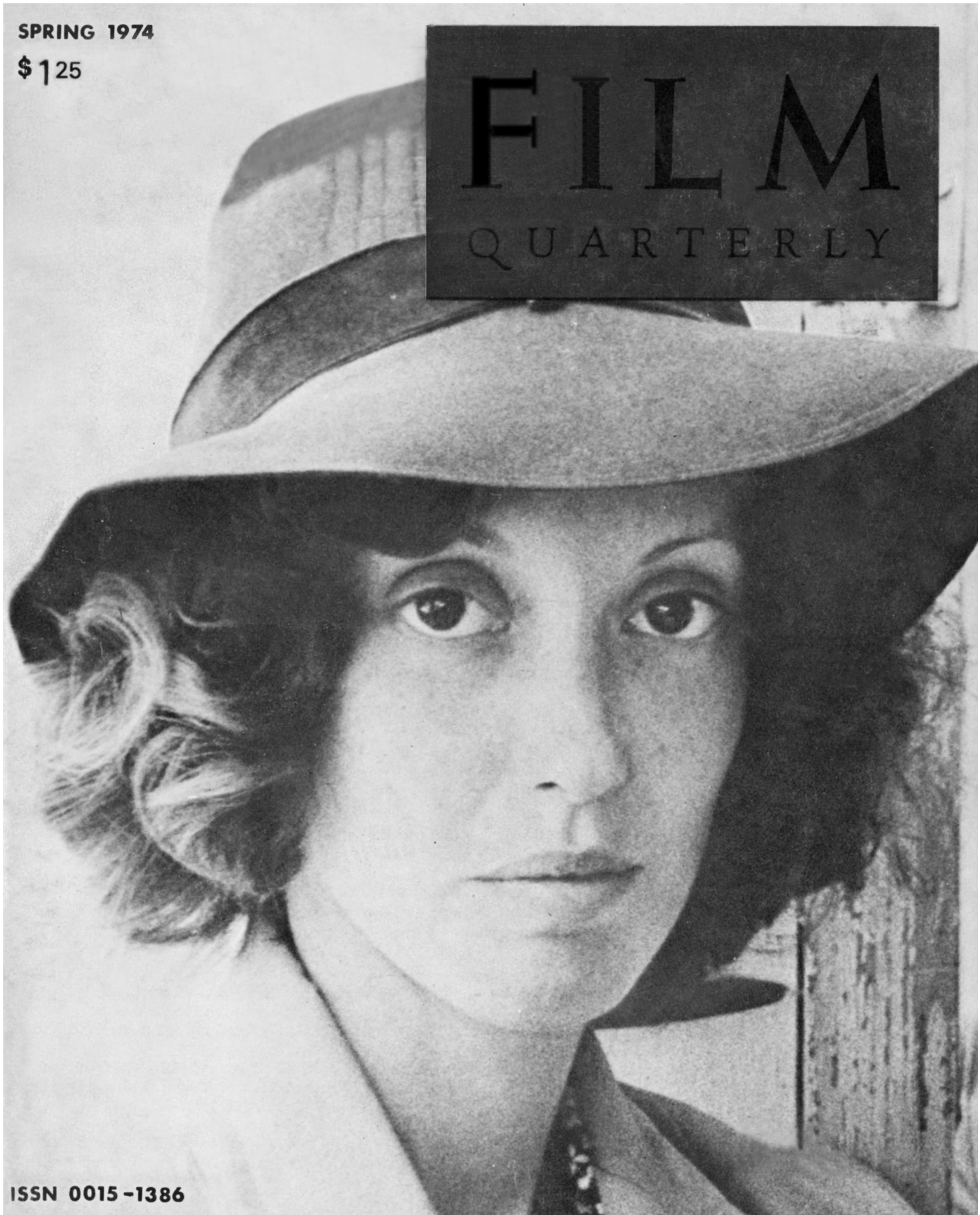

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STEPHEN FARBER

George Lucas:

The Stinky Kid Hits the Big Time

George Lucas's *American Graffiti* is the surprise blockbuster of the year. Made for $750,000, it has already earned over $21 million; Universal is predicting that it may even outgross *Airport*. When he first conceived the film, Lucas could not have guessed that it would be released at the height of the nostalgia boom.

Although actually set in 1962, *American Graffiti* is the quintessential fifties nostalgia movie — a comprehensive recreation of the world of sock hops, drag races, cherry cokes, and Eisenhower complacency. The remarkable thing, however, is that the film recaptures the past without sentimentalizing it. A comedy with unexpected resonance, *American Graffiti* is neither a glorification nor a mockery of the period; it summons up the deeply conflicting feelings that we all have when contemplating our own youth and the primal experience of leaving home.

Dressed like one of the characters in the movie—Ivy League shirt and T-shirts, chinos, sneakers, and white sox—George Lucas could have stepped out of a time capsule; his beard is the only incongruous touch, a hint that he combines some of the irreverence of the sixties with the square earnestness of the fifties. Either way Lucas has little in common with most of Hollywood's chic superstar directors. In fact, he lives a long way from the studios—just north of San Francisco, in San Anselmo, in a spacious, beautifully secluded house that may remind him of the farm he grew up on.

American Graffiti is probably as close to an autobiographical film as a studio-financed Hollywood product will ever be. Lucas, like his characters, grew up in Modesto, California, and graduated from high school in 1962; he spent most of his teenage years on the main drag, cruising. He says, "In a way the film was made so my father won't think those were wasted years. I can say I was doing research, though I didn't know it at the time." Most of the incidents in the film "are things that I actually experienced in one way or another. They've also been fantasized, as they should be in a movie. They aren't really the way they were but the way they should have been." For example, there is a hilarious scene in which the hero demolishes a police car. "Some friends of mine did that one Hallowe'en night," Lucas recalls, "but all that really happened was that the car drove off and went clunk. It wasn't so spectacular. It just doesn't happen that way in real life."

The movie follows four main characters: Steve, the superstraight class president dating the head cheerleader; John, the dragstrip champion who models himself on James Dean and drives the meanest deuce coupe in the valley; Terry, the dumb, creepy kid who only drives a Vespa but finally gets a chance to play the stud; and Curt, the most sensitive and introspective of the group, who chases a mysterious blonde in a white T-bird, and reluctantly boards a plane out of town in the morning—the only one of the four to break free. Lucas says he is, in a sense, a composite of all four characters: "I started out when I was young as Terry the Toad, and I think everybody sort of starts out as Terry the Toad. And I went from that to being John; I had a hot car, and I raced around a lot. Finally I got into a very bad accident and almost got

Haskell Wexler and George Lucas during the shooting of AMERICAN GRAFFITI

myself killed, and I spent a lot of time in the hospital. While I was in the hospital, I became much more academic-minded. I had been working as a mechanic, and I decided to give up cars and go to junior college, try to get my grades back. So for the next two years, while I was at junior college, I more or less was Curt. I was thinking about leaving town, and I had a lot more perspective on things."

It was his car accident that eventually led Lucas into film-making. Unlike many of today's young directors, he had no special passion for movies as a child. "Modesto was a small town, and there were only a couple of theaters. When I went to the movies, I really didn't pay much attention. I was usually going to look for girls or goof off." However, he had always been interested in graphic arts, and after his accident, he began working in photography—taking stills of sports cars. By chance he met the superb cinematographer (and director of *Medium Cool*) Haskell Wexler, who is a sports car enthusiast himself. Lucas happened to be working for the mechanic hired to build one of Wexler's race cars, and they became friendly.

The encouragement of Wexler and his own growing interest in photography brought Lucas to the University of Southern California's film school. "When I finally decided that I was going to be a film-maker," Lucas remembers, "all my friends thought I was crazy. I lost a lot of face because for hot rodders the idea of going into film was really a goofy idea. And that was in the early sixties. Nobody went into film at that time. At USC the girls from the dorms all gave a wide berth to film students because they were supposed to be weird."

For the first time he began seeing movies compulsively. "In a way movies replaced my love for cars. Since I was about 12 or 13 I had had this intense love relationship with cars and motorcycles; it was really all-consuming. After my accident, I knew I couldn't continue with that, and I was sort of floundering for something. And so when I finally discovered film, I really fell madly in love with it, ate it and slept

it 24 hours a day. There was no going back after that."

Since then his obsessive devotion to movies and his fierce, sometimes dogged determination have kept him going even through the most difficult waiting periods. "When I got to film school, the other students said, 'You really can't make movies here. They don't give you enough film, they don't let you keep the camera for very long.' Well, I made eight films at USC, ranging from one minute to 25 minutes. It was difficult, and there were lots of barriers, but it wasn't impossible. I came up against the same discouragement when I left film school: 'You'll never get into the industry. Nobody ever does.' But, you know, I did it because I didn't believe what they said. You just have to be stubborn and bullheaded, and move forward no matter what you're up against."

Lucas managed to find work as a grip, then as cameraman and editor. A futuristic short he made at USC won the National Student Film award and a lot of attention; his first feature was an extension of that short. *THX-1138,* which made very inventive use of existing technology and architecture to create a chilling future world, came and went quickly. Although it found a cult following, it did very little for Lucas's reputation in the industry. When he developed the script for *American Graffiti*—before the fifties nostalgia craze was in full swing—he submitted it to a lot of unsympathetic readers. He wrote the screenplay for United Artists, but they considered the project too risky and dropped it. He spent another year hawking the screenplay to every studio in town before Universal finally agreed to gamble on it.

Despite all the rejections during that period, Lucas stubbornly refused to abandon the project. "We were in dire financial straits, but I spent a year of my life trying to get that film off the ground. I was offered about three other pictures during that time. They all turned out to be duds. One of them was released at the same time as *Graffiti*—it's called *Lady Ice.* I turned that down at the bleakest point, when I was in debt to my parents, in debt to Francis Coppola, in debt to my agent; I was so far in debt I thought I'd never get out. Everbody in Hollywood had turned down *American Graffiti.* Universal had already turned it down once. And they offered me $75,000 to do *Lady Ice,* which is more money than I'd made in my entire life. And I said no. I said, 'By God, I've got a movie here, and I'm going to get it made somehow.' And I did."

The deciding factor was the commitment of Francis Ford Coppola as producer. At the time that Universal was debating whether or not to make the movie, *The Godfather* was released, and one executive suggested to Lucas and his producer Gary Kurtz that if they could involve Coppola on *American Graffiti,* that might swing the studio. His name finally clinched the deal.

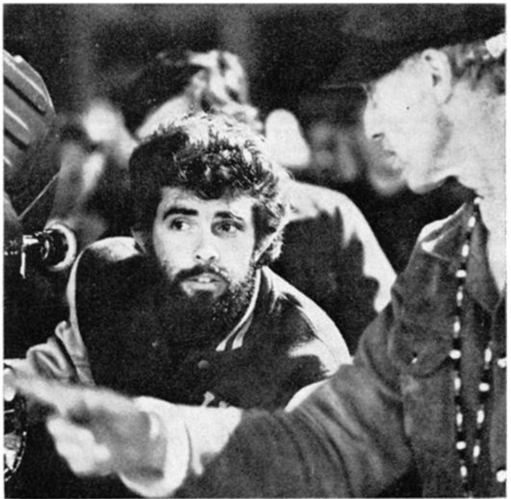
Lucas can thank Coppola for many of his lucky breaks over the last several years. The two met approximately six years ago, when Lucas was on a six-month fellowship at Warner Brothers, and Coppola was shooting *Finian's Rainbow* on the lot. Lucas was assigned to observe Coppola work, and they immediately struck up a friendship. "We were like the only two people on the set who were under 50," Lucas recalls, "and we were also the only two people on the set who had beards." Lucas then worked as Coppola's assistant on *The Rain People,* and Coppola was able to get Lucas his deal to direct *THX-1138* for Warners.

Their working relationship is an unusual one. Lucas says, "Francis is involved on all my pictures, and I'm involved on all his pictures. We more or less work together as collaborators. What we do is look at each other's scripts, look at the casting, then at the dailies, at the rough cut and the fine cut, and make suggestions. We can bounce ideas off each other because we're totally different. I'm more graphics-film-making-editing oriented; and he's more writing and acting oriented. So we complement each other, and we trust each other. Half the time he says I'm full of shit, and half the time I say he's full of shit. It's not like a producer telling you that you *have* to do something. Francis will say, 'Cut that scene out, it doesn't work at all.' And I may say, 'No, you're crazy. That's my favorite scene. I love it.' And he'll say, 'Okay, what do I care? You're an idiot anyway.' Actually, he calls me

a stinky kid. He says, 'You're a stinky kid, do what you want.' And I say the same thing to him. It works very well, because you really need somebody to test ideas on. And you get a piece of expert advice that you value."

Coppola and Lucas once hoped to set up an alternate film studio in San Francisco, where a group of maverick directors could work in a congenial, stimulating, noncompetitive atmosphere. They formed American Zoetrope in 1969. Encouraged by the success of *Easy Rider,* Warners agreed to back a whole series of films under Coppola's sponsorship. A few months later the "youth market" vanished as suddenly as it had appeared, and Warners pulled out of Zoetrope. Lucas recalls, "Francis was developing about seven screenplays—they were all interesting, adventurous scripts. But then Warner Brothers decided not to finance any more youth-oriented, adventurous, crazy movies. They went back to hard-core entertainment films. For them it was a good decision because they made a lot of money on that decision. But they sold us completely down the river."

Zoetrope still exists as a facility—and rents out its equipment to other film-makers—but not as a full-fledged studio. Nevertheless, Lucas believes that an alternate film community may still emerge in San Francisco. "Slowly but surely, a film community is being developed here. Michael Ritchie lives up here now, John Korty lives up here, I live up here, Francis lives up here. They are all close friends of mine, and we are continuing to make movies up here. We sort of support each other. My wife worked as an editor on *The Candidate,* and she's also worked for John Korty to get us through these little tough spots between movies. I hired Michael's wife on my picture. Just recently Phil Kaufman *(The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid)* moved up here, and a couple more of my friends are thinking seriously about moving here. So there is a community here, a very small one, and we all exchange ideas. It's not something you can create overnight. You have to get the environment right for it, and then let it grow very slowly. Unfortunately, we have a lot of problems with the unions up here, but we're surviving in spite of it all. At certain times it's a drag to be so far from LA, but I definitely want to stay here."



George Lucas

Over just two movies Lucas's artistic development has been remarkable. *THX-1138* was a dazzling technical achievement; it revealed Lucas's control of all the resources of film—sound as well as image. Unfortunately, it also exhibited the most common failings of the science-fiction genre: the ideas (drawn from Orwell and Huxley) were rather stale, and the whole movie was cold and arid; the zombie characters could not really stir our sympathy. *American Graffiti* has the same technical flair, but Lucas's work with the actors reveals a new talent; this film has a depth of feeling missing from *THX-1138.* Lucas claims that he wanted to surprise his critics with his new movie: "After I finished *THX,* I was considered a cold, weird director, a science-fiction sort of guy who carried a calculator. And I'm not like that at all. So I thought, maybe I'll do something exactly the opposite. If they want warm human comedy, I'll give them one, just to show that I can do it. *THX* is very much the way that I am as a film-maker. *American Graffiti* is very much the way I am as a person—two different worlds really."

Nevertheless, Lucas is quick to call attention to the themes that the two films share. *THX* concerns one man's escape from the monolithic technological society. At the end the rebellious hero THX emerges from the underground prison, into the sun; it is an ambiguous conclusion, both liberating and a little frightening. *Ameri-*

can Graffiti also ends with one of the teenage boys breaking out of his cocoon, leaving home and escaping the enclosed, insulated world of the fifties. And he has the same mixed feelings that THX experienced on his escape—exhilaration at the new sense of possibilities, a pang of regret on leaving the safety of the familiar world. Lucas says, "I've always been interested in that theme of leaving an environment or facing change, and how kids do it. When I was 18 or 19, I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. Where was I going to go, now that I was more or less free? What was I going to become? You can do anything you want at that age. And the kids who don't believe that are wrong. Both *THX* and *American Graffiti* are saying the same thing, that you don't *have* to do anything; it still is a free country."

Beyond the obvious autobiographical impulses in *American Graffiti,* Lucas says the film reflects his interest in sociology and anthropology: "When I was in junior college, my primary major was in social sciences. I'm very interested in America and why it is what it is. I was always fascinated by the cultural phenomenon of cruising, that whole teenage mating ritual. It's really more interesting than primitive Africa or ancient New Guinea—and much, much weirder."

The American obsession with the car is intensified in California. The kids in Modesto still cruise, and they still cruise in Petaluma, where much of *American Graffiti* was actually shot—Modesto having changed too much in just ten years. For that matter, Lucas points out, "They still cruise in Los Angeles, and it's bigger than it used to be. Van Nuys Boulevard is a big cruise street. We went down there one Wednesday night, which they call Club Night, and it was just bumper-to-bumper cars. There must have been 10,000 kids down there. It was insane. I really loved it. I sat on my car hood all night and watched. The cars are all different now. Vans are the big thing. Everybody's got a van, and you see all these weird, decorated cars. Cruising is still a main thread in American culture."

Lucas's interest in early rock music is another strong influence on the movie. Excerpts from the radio—41 pop songs and fragments of Wolfman Jack's monologue—accompany most of the action in the film. "I have a giant rock and roll record collection—78s and 45s," Lucas reports. "Mainly old rock, pre-Beatles, though I love the Beatles. I was always very interested in the relationship between teenagers and radio, and when I was at USC, I made a documentary about a disc jockey. The idea behind it was radio as fantasy. For teenagers the person closest to them is a fantasy character. That's the disc jockey. It's like younger kids who have make-believe friends. A lot of teenagers have a make-believe friend in a disc jockey, but he's much more real because he talks to them, he jokes around. Especially a really excellent disc jockey like Wolfman Jack. He's part of the family. You listen to him every day, you're very close to him, you share your most intimate moments with him."

Lucas remembers listening to Wolfman Jack when he was growing up in Modesto in the late fifties and early sixties. "When we were cruising, we could get Wolfman Jack from Tijuana. He was a really mystical character, I'll tell you. He was wild, he had these crazy phone calls, and he drifted out of nowhere. And it was an outlaw station. He was an outlaw, which of course made him extremely attractive to kids."

The 41 songs in *American Graffiti* were actually written into the script. When it came to editing the film, Lucas found that some songs he wanted to use were either unavailable or too expensive, so he had to make substitutions and shift some songs around. Even so, he spent $80,000 purchasing music rights, probably a record sum. "Walter Murch did the sound montages, and the amazing thing we found was that we could take almost any song and put it on almost any scene and it would work. You'd put a song down on one scene, and you'd find all kinds of parallels. And you could take another song and put it down there, and it would still seem as if the song had been written for that scene. All good rock and roll is classic teenage stuff, and all the scenes were such classic teenage scenes that they just sort of meshed, no matter how you threw them together. Some-

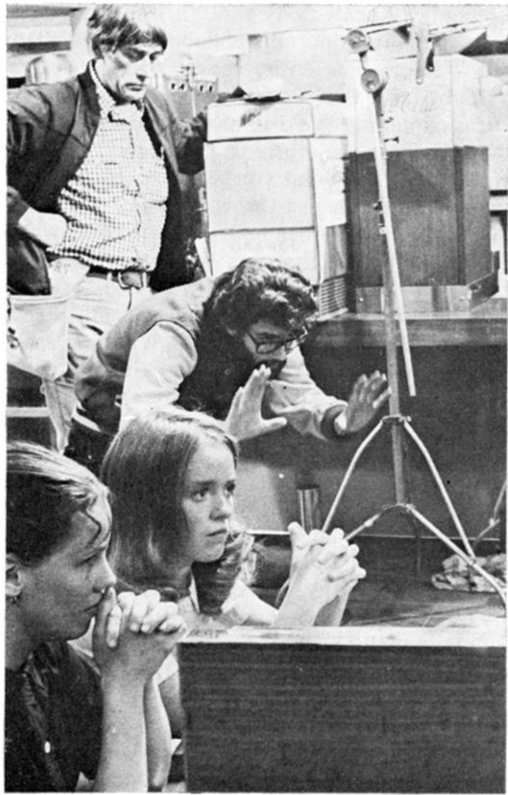
times even the words were identical. The most incredible example—and it was completely accidental—is in the scene where Steve and Laurie are dancing to 'Smoke Gets in Your Eyes' at the sock hop, and at the exact moment where the song is saying, 'Tears I cannot hide,' she backs off, and he sees that she's crying.

"In a way you could trace the film through the Beach Boys, because the Beach Boys were the only rock group who actually chronicled an era. We discovered that you could almost make a whole Beach Boys album out of just *American Graffiti* songs. The blonde in the T-bird is from 'Fun, Fun, Fun.' 'I Get Around' is about cruising. You listen to the words of that and think of the movie. It wasn't intentional, but they were chronicling that period so true that when we came back and redid my childhood the way I remembered it, their songs blend right into the movie. 'Little Deuce Coupe' could be about John and his deuce coupe. 'All Summer Long'—which is sort of the theme song of the film—talks about T-shirts and spilling Coke on your blouse. '409' is about dragging. 'California Girls.' I always loved the Beach Boys because when we'd cruise, we'd listen to their songs, and it was as if the song was about *us* and what we were doing. It wasn't just another song about being in love. They got more specific."

Although *American Graffiti* is a highly personal film, it was not a one-man show, and Lucas is quick to point out the important contributions of his collaborators. His co-writers, Willard Huyck (whom he met at USC) and Huyck's wife Gloria Katz (a graduate of the rival film school at UCLA), worked with Lucas on the original treatment and on the final draft screenplay. "I'm really quite lazy and I hate to write," Lucas confesses. "Bill and Gloria added a lot of very witty dialogue and wrote all the scenes that I couldn't find my way to write. In my script, the characters of Steve and Laurie didn't work at all, and I couldn't make them work. The Huycks saved that. And they brought a lot of character to the hoods. My screenplay was much more realistic, and they added a lot more humor and fantasy to it, and improved it a great deal." (The Huycks have just sold their own original screenplay *Lucky Lady* to 20th Century-Fox.)

An equally important collaborator was Haskell Wexler. The entire movie was to be shot at night, and that created unusual difficulties. Lucas explains, "We'd start at 9:00 at night and end at 5:00 in the morning. In a regular movie, if you don't get what you're supposed to shoot one day, you can just throw up a few arc lights and shoot for another hour. On *Graffiti*, when the sun came up, that was the end of the ballgame. We couldn't get one more shot. It was very hard on the crew. Nobody gets any sleep, so everybody's cranky. And it was very cold—like 40 degrees. We had to shoot it in 28 days, and sometimes we'd do as many as 30 setups in one night. So we had a horrendous problem." Lucas had originally asked Wexler to shoot the film, but Wexler did not want to work in widescreen. However, the two cameramen Lucas hired could not find the visual style he wanted, and Wexler finally agreed to come to his aid. Lucas pays tribute to Wexler: "He's really, in my estimation, the best cameraman in this country. Essentially he was working in a medium he hated—widescreen. He hated Techniscope because it's very grainy and doesn't look very good. I wanted the film to look sort of like a Sam Katzman beach-party movie, all yellow and red and orange. And Haskell figured out how to do it. He devised what he calls jukebox lighting. He has his own company in Los Angeles that shoots commercials, and he was working at the time. So he'd fly up here to San Francisco every night, shoot the picture all night, sleep on the plane down to Los Angeles, shoot all day on commercials, then fly back up here. He did that for almost five weeks. It was just an incredible gesture, and he did a fantastic job. The movie looked exactly the way I wanted it to look—very much like a carnival."

Almost everyone grants the technical triumphs of *American Graffiti*—the achievements in cinematography, editing, and acting. But some critics protest what they think the film is saying. They interpret the movie as a simple celebration of the fifties, and they fear that because it is so popular, it may feed the indifference and complacency of a young audience eager to forget



Lucas at work

today's social problems. How does Lucas answer that charge? "Well, the main thing I would say is that there is going to be complacency whether I encourage it or not. That's because kids in the last ten years have been beating their heads against the wall, and their brains and their blood are all over the pavement."

Lucas also points out that the film is about moving forward, not backward: "The film is about change. It's about the change in rock and roll, it's about the change in a young person's life at 18 when he leaves home and goes off to college; and it's also about the cultural change that took place when the fifties turned into the sixties—when we went from a country of apathy and non-involvement to a country of radical involvement. The film is saying that you have to go forward. You have to be Curt, you have to go into the sixties. The fifties can't live."

At the same time, Lucas admits that he is hoping to revive some of the values of the fifties: "Everybody looks at the fifties as complacent, but I look at the fifties as optimistic. Well, the film isn't really about the fifties anyway. It's about 1962. The Kennedy era is really when I grew up, and that was an era of optimism, not complacency. It was the era of Martin Luther King.

"I realized after *THX* that people don't care about how the country's being ruined. All that movie did was to make people more pessimistic, more depressed, and less willing to get involved in trying to make the world better. So I decided that this time I would make a more optimistic film that makes people feel positive about their fellow human beings. It's too easy to make films about Watergate. And it's hard to be optimistic when everything tells you to be pessimistic and cynical. I'm a very bad cynic. But we've got to regenerate optimism. Maybe kids will walk out of the film and for a second they'll feel, 'We could really make something out of this country, or we could really make something out of our lives.' It's all that hokey stuff about being a good neighbor, and the American spirit and all that crap. There *is* something in it."

Lucas's early success at accomplishing the goals he set for himself may explain his belief in the American ideals of optimism and initiative. "Now everybody says, 'The country's rotten. We've fought for change, but it doesn't work. It's hopeless.' Well, life isn't that way. It wasn't that way for THX, it wasn't that way for Curt Henderson, and it isn't that way for me. When they said I could never get into the film business, I said, 'Well, okay, but I'll try anyway.' Anybody who wants to do anything can do it. It's an old hokey American point of view, but I've sort of discovered that it's true."

Lucas hopes to do more experimental work in the future, but he is amused that many people think of him as an arty director. "Francis is really the arty director," he comments wryly. "He's the one who likes psychological motiva-

tions, Brecht and Albee and Tennessee Williams. I'm more drawn to Flash Gordon. I like action adventure, chases, things blowing up, and I have strong feelings about science fiction and comic books and that sort of world." It is the process of making films that thrills him most: "Some of my friends are more concerned about art and being considered a Fellini or an Orson Welles, but I've never really had that problem. I just like making movies. I was at a film conference with George Cukor, and he detested the fact that everyone called us film-makers. He said, 'I'm not a film-maker. A film-maker is like a toy-maker, and I'm a director.' Well, I'm a film-maker. I'm very much akin to a toy-maker. If I wasn't a film-maker, I'd probably *be* a toy-maker. I like to make things move, and I like to make them myself. Just give me the tools and I'll make the toys. I can sit forever doodling on my movie. I don't think that much about whether it's going to be a great movie or a terrible movie, or whether it's going to be a piece of art or a piece of shit. I never thought of *Graffiti* as a really great movie. I thought of it as a goofy, fun movie."

Despite his disclaimers, Lucas has the most important characteristic of an artist: integrity. He makes movies on his own terms, and fights any kind of interference. On both *THX* and *American Graffiti,* a few minutes were cut by the studio, and Lucas felt the cuts—relatively minor though they were—as a painful violation of his vision. "There was no reason for the cutting," he declares. "It was just arbitrary. You do a film like *American Graffiti* or *THX*—it takes two years of your life, you get paid hardly anything at all, and you sweat blood. You write it, you slave over it, you stay up 28 nights getting cold and sick. Then you put it together, and you've *lived* with it. It's exactly like raising a kid. You raise a kid for two or three years, you struggle with it, then somebody comes along and says, 'Well, it's a very nice kid, but I think we ought to cut off one of its fingers.' So they take their little axe and chop off one of the fingers. They say, 'Don't worry. Nobody will notice. She'll live, everything will be all right.' But I mean, it *hurts* a great deal."

Even though Lucas has now had a major success, he anticipates more of the same battles with studios, adding, "Every time you have a successful film, you do get a few more things in your contract. The film I'm writing now, *The Star Wars,* has been turned down by a couple of studios already, but now we're finally getting a deal because they say, 'Oh, he's had a hit movie. We don't really know about the idea, but he's a hot director, so let's do it.' They don't do it on the basis of the material; they do it on the kind of deal they can make, because most of the people at the studios are former agents, and all they know are deals. They're like used-car dealers."

His next two projects are more obviously "commercial" projects than his first two films. He describes *The Star Wars* as "a space opera in the tradition of Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers. It's James Bond and *2001* combined —super fantasy, capes and swords and laser guns and spaceships shooting each other, and all that sort of stuff. But it's not camp. It's meant to be an exciting action adventure film."

After *Star Wars* he wants to try a slapstick comedy — "Woody Allen, Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello, Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton all rolled into one. It's been a long time since anybody made a really goofy comedy that had people rolling in the aisles. It's very hard to do, which is why nobody does it, but it's a challenge; it's like climbing that mountain."

While hoping that a couple of strong commercial successes will give him more options in the future, Lucas does not feel he is compromising in making more straightforward entertainment movies. He is honestly drawn to the pop-kitsch world of space comics and slapstick comedy. His intensity and his bold visual flair are sure to give an emotional charge to any project he tackles. George Lucas's movies begin with images: "I always see images flash into my head, and I just have to make those scenes. I have an overwhelming drive to get that great shot of the two spaceships, one firing at the other as they dive through the space fortress. By God I want to see it. That image is in my head, and I won't rest until I see it on the screen."

NEAL OXENHANDLER

The Dialectic of Emotion in New Wave Cinema

Raymond Durgnat, in his monograph on the New Wave directors,[1] stigmatizes their films as characterized by emotional "dryness," but this remark does not do justice to the passionate concern for the status of the emotional life that pervades the films of Resnais or Varda or Truffaut or Godard. Yet what is "emotion?" Where is it located in the films and how is it conveyed? Emotion in these films is problematical and this concept, the most contested in all of modern psychology, cannot be assigned an unequivocal valence in the work.

One theory of emotion sees it as motive force.[2] Emotions are seen as arousing, sustaining, and directing activity. So that in this view we might see the generating emotion of the film as inhering in the director and actors who, by organizing and channelling their emotions, contribute them to the characters and the audience. The characters serve as nodal points around which there accumulates a cathexis or emotional charge which is channelled outward so that it dominates the response of the viewer to the film. Seeing emotion therefore as an organizing force, which creates centers of meaning and value, we would find that the acts of emotional organization that originate in the director and the actors structure the interrelationship of all those who participate, whether actively or passively, in the creation and re-creation of the film.

The New Wave directors deal with the precariousness of emotion and with the substitutes and disguises for authentic emotional life that arise out of human interaction. They test emotion and question its validity by their portrayal of character and, at the same time, they force the viewer to re-evaluate his own immediate critical response to the work. These directors share a profound scepticism about the values of bourgeois life, in particular those values that structure our intimate relations; it would not be wrong to see the New Wave movement as a critique of the emotions and an attempt to instruct film viewers in ways of rethinking the emotional dimension of their own lives.

This article treats the emotional concerns of New Wave films by dealing with a number of basic polarities; no single definition of emotion is seen as pre-emptive, but rather a number of different definitions are used as schemas for the interpretation of films. My aim is to sketch a phenomenology of the emotions, presented through the analysis of specific films, which answers at least in part the questions: where is emotion located? how is it conveyed? And the larger question—how can cinematographic emotion be described? With its strongly accentuated corollary qualities of intimacy and distance, the New Wave seems to lend itself admirably to this effort.

THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE USES OF EMOTION

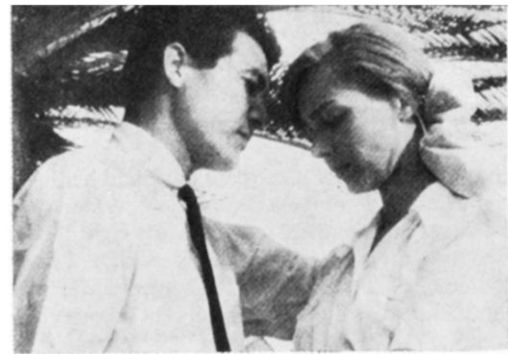
The positive emotions all express appetency, the desire of a subject for an object. They include love, tenderness, desire, etc., and create by their expression a mood of intimacy. Films have always dealt with the intense personal relationships of individuals, that is to say intimacy; but New Wave cinema treats intimacy, and its opposite, distance, in a unique way. It attempts to isolate the moments of intimacy, to set them off and make them thematic; it focusses on the dialectic between intimacy and distance, showing how they conjugate each other; it uses intimacy as the dominant feeling-tone of its films. This is not to say that other directors have not

given us a cinema of intimacy; but its role, for the New Wave, is always a central one, pointing to an historical crisis in human relations which is typical of France in the sixties. Scepticism about love, a downgrading of the concept of the person and, even more crucial, the explosion of the concept of self are themes that challenge the traditional belief in the supreme value of inter-subjectivity. From this historical matrix there emerges the intimacy-distance dialectic of New Wave cinema.

Intimacy occurs whenever we remark the openness of one person to another in those films in which people give, share, reveal themselves to each other in a positive way. This may be the casual intimacy of undressing for bed together, as in Godard's *The Married Woman* or in his *Masculine-Feminine* where we see characters in the Metro or in cafés huddle together to exchange their human warmth and a flicker of urgent emotion. The Rhineland chalet where Jim visits Jules and Catherine in Truffaut's film is also a place characterized by intimacy as is the more sensual studio in *Two English Girls.* But more intimate than any of these is Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour* where we experience a more total sharing and gift of self—even though it is, in the end, inconclusive.

Through both the script of Duras and the directing of Resnais we experience in the film the effort to communicate a shifting emotional relationship, one that is centered around the experience of intimacy with all the decisive power that term implies. For intimacy once experienced leaves a permanent impress on the psyche; the two characters, Hiroshima and Nevers, are marked deeply by their affair and must struggle to come to terms with it, to somehow spell out the new vision of life the affair gives them.

The story belongs essentially to the Frenchwoman, Nevers. Her intimacy with the Japanese, Hiroshima, unlocks the experience of her first love, with a German soldier during the Occupation, and the two experiences coalesce, overwhelming her with feelings of tenderness and fears of that tenderness which makes her vulnerable. Intimacy is imperious and so always a threat to the existing pattern of life (in her



HIROSHIMA, MON AMOUR

case husband and children as well as her career). Intimacy is fragile, improbable, always threatened, yet it has a power of subversion that overcomes the obstacle of rational plans and empirical aims. The two characters are mature, no longer youthful, and so they realize the great value of intimacy even when transient, even when doomed to renunciation. They realize that within intimacy a profound zone of the self, perhaps that zone which makes us most ourselves, comes to exist; so she is placed in communion with her past and relives her first love, in Nevers. Yet she is afraid to be wholly herself, afraid to relive the suffering and madness of her years in Nevers.

Dialogue in the film is reduced to simple affirmations ("You kill me," "You do me good"). Repetitions create powerful, persistent emotions through a kind of hypnotic litany. Resnais's tracking camera, reducing the settings to mere notations, isolates the lovers in their intimacy. Sculptured by front lighting we see the couple in profile, in front face, from above, side by side, or one behind the other, exploring all the possible configurations in which their intimacy can exist. No film that I know focuses so exclusively on the intimacy of two characters or creates a relationship that is at the same time so intense yet so ambivalent. Resnais tries less than other New Wave directors to capture the casual or the contingent; rather it is the essential, the necessary that he wants to show us—he wants to isolate and set off the key moments of a relationship. Yet the emotions presented, except for two exceptions, are filtered and controlled. Only at two moments do we have raw emotions—the heroine's scream as she comes home to her parents' house after having her head shaved; her

hysteria as she sits at the café table and her lover slaps her face. Emotion is always best conveyed by suggestion and understatement; only in this way can the viewer share it. The blatant communication of emotion has a distancing effect. And Resnais is a master of indirect communication.

Hiroshima then is our paradigm of intimacy, our model of a film that presents the painful wrenching open of the self and the sharing of the most private emotions. As such it sets a standard for other New Wave films where positive emotions are expressed somewhat more typically as shot through with negativity or ambivalence. *Hiroshima* is a great affirmative film and belongs with those works, relatively few in number, that successfully communicate the ennobling and curative powers of intimacy.

Intimacy is grounded in several positive emotions, such as tenderness and desire, and may be compounded with sentiments, such as respect and concern.[3] Because of the emphasis on the erotic in New Wave cinema, desire is the next primary positive emotion to consider. Desire may be the prelude to intimacy but it is shifting and fugitive and uncertain of its object. Desire is more deeply rooted in the body than in the psyche; like all bodily emotions it is selfish and egocentric, no matter how it disguises itself. Yet it is a positive force, since it leads us into contact with others: and it may be liberating, to the degree that it destroys habits and compulsions. The first type of desire, the closest to intimacy, seeks a fusional union with its object. Louis Malle's film *The Lovers,* a daring film when it was made in the mid-fifties, explores the dialectic between habit and desire and shows the salutary if destructive act of liberation that desire can produce.

The Lovers is structured by the opposition of two inauthentic relationships (between Jeanne and her husband and Jeanne and her lover, Raoul) against a new and authentic relationship, characterized not by habit and social convention but by the energetics of desire. The problem that Malle sets is to make this woman, forced into narcissism by her inauthentic relationships, open herself to the renewing force of desire; and

THE LOVERS

to do this in a way that makes her attractive to the viewer rather than merely promiscuous. This is accomplished by the cinematographic exaltation of desire in the long nighttime sequence when she strolls and boats and finally makes love with Bernard.

Desire differs from intimacy insofar as it does not include the element of knowledge and mutual revelation. Jeanne and Bernard experience each other sensually as they take their dreamlike walk through the fields and float on the stream. But they do not explore each other or know each other in any profound sense. Even the act of cunnilingus, represented here for the first time in a major feature film, remains a wholly sensual experience interpreted not by words but by the convulsive movements of Jeanne's hands and the moods of ecstacy that pass across her face. Still, knowing the body of a lover is a form of knowledge and Jeanne and Bernard reach the frontier of intimacy. Their decision to run away together contrasts with the indecision of Nevers and Hiroshima in Resnais's film. The decision seems lightly taken, since they know each other only erotically; but Malle's film implies a different and more superficial scale of values, one that gives a preponderant role to the satisfaction of desire. Ultimately, the film is about sexual freedom. It is the most romantic of New Wave films and shows a greater belief in the liberating power of desire than any other film of the movement.

Intimacy, and the positive emotions that generate it, is always threatened in New Wave films by negative emotions such as hatred, suspicion, and contempt. Just as positive emotions imply appetency, these negative emotions imply revulsion and the turning away of a subject from its object. There are many New Wave films concerned with the negative emotions in one form or another; yet each, no matter how negative, implies intimacy as an absent corollary.

Godard's film *Contempt,* based on Moravia's novel, deals with the growing contempt of a wife for her husband and the minute-by-minute unfolding of this empoisoned relationship. The film alternates between glowing Mediterranean exteriors and constrained interiors, where the revulsion of the wife for her husband is enacted in long sequences before the stationary camera. The emotion of contempt, with its undercurrents of hatred and bitterness, is generated through the interaction of the characters and slowly infiltrates the audience. The destruction of intimacy, the creation of strong negative currents, the desire of the wife, Camille, to pull away from her husband Paul, this is emphasized by the stasis of the interior shots and by the slow rhythm with which the film builds in intensity until Camille runs off with the American producer, Prokosch, in his red sports car. Her flight is the culmination of her growing repulsion and the final realization of the negative emotion that has dominated the film.

CONTEMPT

In Jacques Rivette's strange film, *Paris Belongs to Us,* we experience the negative emotion of fear through a host of compulsively driven characters, all moving in tight circles about each other, all trying to escape real or imagined terrors. The mood of Rivette's film has been described by Durgnat as "zig-zagging from one uncertainty to another" which, together with the image of the circle, describes the shape of the film. It presents us with a group of marginal artists and intellectuals who are afflicted with the Kafkean disease of paranoia.

The film is, on the one hand, a somewhat amateurish attempt to capture the *film noir* atmosphere of Carné and Hitchcock. There are menaces, shadows, veiled threats and mysterious deaths. Yet the deaths are stagey and the threats abstract. One comes out of the theater remembering mainly that the heroine has been in and out of phone booths many times and has taken innumerable pointless automobile trips around Paris. Reintegrating the film in an historical ambiance that includes Kafka and Camus, the McCarthy hearings and the Kennedy assassination, one can give it provisional acceptance; yet even then, the suspense is wavering. At the end, where everything is explained rapidly, we absorb too rapidly to really care. In Kafka's world the threat is real; the hero of *The Trial* dies at the end of the book. People are liquidated in Rivette's film, but the master conspiracy out of which most of the film's atmosphere is generated proves to have been a mere aberration of one of the characters, Pierre.

The film, nonetheless, does convey a sense of fear and is the most completely negative film made by the New Wave. The kinds of repulsion suggested and their depth of feeling are conveyed by an aesthetic that carefully selects and

incarnates the negative emotions. From the emptiness and passivity of his heroine to the dry, schematic vision of Paris that he portrays (a succession of furnished rooms, streets, cars and phone-booths), Rivette proves himself expert in the art of orchestrating alienation.

Many other kinds of negative emotion could be discussed: anomie or lack of will in *The Cousins;* betrayal in *Breathless;* promiscuity in *Jules and Jim.* These are emotions or affectively tinged states that convey negative emotion; but there is no space to discuss them here.

I will conclude this section by saying a few words on the subject of *distance,* that opposite number to *intimacy* which is generated by the negative emotions.

Again and again in New Wave films characters are frustrated in the impulse that draws them together. Instead, they recoil, are forced apart, and their relationship loses itself in the fragmentation of urban life or in some form of destructive violence. Many films end in the breakdown of a relationship—*Breathless, Masculine Feminine, Jules and Jim, The Cousins,* etc. The characters recoil from each other or stiffen in death. The promised intimacy has not materialized, the negative forces have won out.

The New Wave always portrays life as a struggle between intimacy and distance and, in the end, distance usually triumphs. For this reason, the New Wave directors have been seen as pessimistic, as cynical and sterile. But this view is typical of the post-modern generation. It is the logical consequence of the historical themes outlined earlier: scepticism about love, downgrading of the person, explosion of the concept of self. Yet the negative approach of the New Wave is not pushed as far as it is by Beckett, Arrabal, Genet, or Burroughs.

In line with the theme of distance, an aesthetic of distance plays a prominent role in the films. Here again Godard, with his Brechtian heritage, takes the lead in introducing distancing devices into his films: shots framed by gunfire, titles, characters who turn their backs to the viewer, and the explicit renunciation of a psychological—if not an emotional—cinema are found in Godard's work. But the use of aesthetic distancing, the forcing of the spectator to become conscious and even analytical, rather than emotionally involved, is a typical feature of New Wave films. (Although at the same time a director such as Truffaut has always sought for emotional involvement by the audience with his characters. But he is the exception rather than the rule.) Rivette's *Paris Belongs to Us* discourages viewer involvement in the emotions of the characters to the extent that most audiences find it boring. Truffaut reminds us of his directorial presence by his constantly moving subjective camera, his use of narration, and his playfulness in conceiving and shooting the scenes of his films. Agnes Varda and Alain Resnais, the two most accomplished users of intimacy, also use distancing at crucial points in their films. Resnais, for example, allows the love affair in *Hiroshima* to run down, to trail off. The viewer's need for a climax is frustrated. The film ends in doubt, hesitation, analysis rather than fulfilled positive emotion. Varda too can stand back from her characters, see them at a distance, after moments of touching intimacy and revelation.

Godard's BRITISH SOUNDS

An aesthetic of distancing concerns primarily the spectator's emotional response to the film; its purpose is to force him to renounce the immediate pleasures of identification and catharsis for a more analytical and objective look at the characters. Doctrinally, of course, it comes from Brecht and his belief in art's power to

effect social change. But, in the New Wave at least, it is rooted in a general scepticism about the power and validity of emotion, a need to test emotion and subject it to the scrutiny of intelligence. Intimacy and distance are dialectically related and, between them, generate the emotional dynamic of the films.

PRESENCE AND ABSENCE

There are other forms of affectivity in New Wave films besides the easily schematized positive and negative emotions. Indeed, we have scarcely begun to touch the emotional dynamics of these films. And so rather than continue with the schematics, I feel impelled to make a radical shift, moving our study of emotion to a new plane where emotion is not immediate and direct but the subtle, evanescent accompaniment to other aspects of the films. This represents a shift, even a break in my argument; but in thus approaching emotion from a totally different angle we may grasp more readily its protean nature.

The literary critic Albert Béguin spoke of the quality of *presence* in a work, the emotional charge that accompanies the intimate awareness of a fellow consciousness or of an object. For Béguin the apex of literary art was the ability to make the reader share in the heightened reality of the Other, whether person or object, to transmit the openness of a consciousness or the "being there" of an object in such a way that its existence was shared by the reader. This sharing of existence releases a flood of affectivity, a heightened emotion which must be positive since it implies mutuality and sharing, increased awareness of one's own existence and participation in the human community.[4]

It is to Godard that we must turn if we wish to find examples of a cinema of presence (just as we will also find a cinema of absence in his work); and *Two or Three Things That I Know About Her,* his most accomplished film, is especially valuable as a source of examples.

In this film Godard claims that he has attempted to give both interior and exterior description of objects and persons:

> I mean that I cannot avoid the fact that all things exist simultaneously inside and outside. For example, this can be shown by filming a building from outside, then from inside, as if one had entered a cube, an object. In the same way a person, his or her face, is generally seen from outside.

This description, as Godard carries it out in the film, communicates the sense of "presence" to the viewer and that release of emotion that accompanies it (an emotion that is both joyous and painful, negative and positive, a release and a holding back). Godard returns to the primitive cinema which makes naive use of the powerful magic of the photographic image. Simply to show an object, to transmit its color, capture the play of shadow upon it, move round it, see it from close up and from far-away is to communicate via the exploded and exploding screen image the existence of that object, the immediacy of its being there in our perceptual field, to incarnate its challenge and confrontation of us, its reciprocal evocation of our own unsupported existence.

As we see the building site which is the film's opening image—the cranes, the barge, the trucks —we are not afflicted with Sartrean nausea or Heideggerean dread but with a powerfully expanding sense of monstrosity, of size and power beyond human limits, an emotion not so much afflicting as exalting even though these are the first notes of one of the film's major themes, the theme of the violent and convulsive change taking place in the streets of Paris; and we are reminded of Baudelaire's "The Swan," a poem that resonates in powerful accord with this lyrical and tragic film.

> *Old Paris is no more (the form of a city*
> *Changes more quickly, alas, than the heart of a man);*
> *I see only in my mind that camp of booths,*
> *The piles of rough-hewn capitals and shafts,*
> *The grass, the heavy blocks turned green by the water of pools,*
> *And, shining on the tiles, the crowded bric-a-brac.*[5]

Like Godard's film, this poem about the old and new Paris centers upon the figure of a woman (in Baudelaire's poem Hector's wife Andromache) who is exiled amid the construc-

tion of the renovated city. Appearing then with the presentation of the City comes Juliette, the second antecedent for the Her of the title. She is seen in the banality of her clothes, the color of her hair; yet that very banality makes her vulnerable, open, for she is *present* to us in the immediacy and spontaneity of our own consciousness (this is the force of the cinematic image) and we know that she will have no secrets from us. The double vision of Juliette (interior and exterior) continues. She tells us in confidence:

What am I looking at? . . . The floor. That's all. I feel the material of the table-cloth against my hand.

Banal in their simplicity, her immediate sensations of the physical world are revealed to us; and yet it is through that simplicity that we participate in and respond emotionally to her existence. Later she speaks more profound if inchoate ideas through which her existence leaks out as if through a wound:

Shot from the thighs up of Juliette before her kitchen sink piled with household products (Tide detergent, bleach, softener). Her back towards us Juliette washes the dishes but from time to time turns her face toward the camera.

It was a typical proof of the existence of God. I was in the process of doing the dishes. I began to cry. I heard a voice which said: "You are indestructible." I, me, myself, everybody. . . .

Time is very confusing, I don't know . . . No, no definition really imposes itself. . . .

The thoughts of Juliette begin slowly to cohere, to come into focus precisely around her desire to recapture and distill an emotion, the emotion of the world's presence to her and her presence to it:

I don't know where, nor when. I only remember that it happened. It's a feeling that I searched for all day long. There was the odor of the trees. That I was the world . . . That the world was me. A landscape, it's like a face.

Throughout the film various characters meditate on the meaning of the term "reality" as does the commentator, who is Godard himself. This reality is elusive, changing, but its most precise incarnation seems to occur at the moment of

TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER

presence, as when Juliette says, "Suddenly I had the impression that I was the world and that the world was me."

The characters struggle for their existence in the city of smog and concrete, among the apartment blocks and the acres of asphalt; their own reality seems contested by the omnipresent products—cars, detergents, clothes—spewed out by the consumer society. And yet the film is not negative or wholly pessimistic; despite the oppressiveness of Juliette's life, she rises above it. She does this through an emotion, an emotion which gives her the awareness of her own reality and of the world's mutual existence with her.

Juliette, *to herself.* I only remember that it happened. Maybe it's not important. It was while I walked with the metro worker who was taking me to the hotel. It was a funny feeling. I've been thinking about it all day. The feeling of my connection with the world.

Juliette's entire being is centered on this effort to capture an emotion, the emotion of presence.

No matter how strong the motif of presence, however, it always includes its corollary, absence. Indeed, at times, in *Weekend* for example, absence takes precedence as the major emotion of the film.

A major statement about absence occurs in the introduction to Roland Barthes's *Writing Degree Zero:*

Starting from nothingness where thought seemed to emerge happily from a stage-set of words, writing has thus traversed all the states of a progressive solidification: at first object of a glance, then of a doing, and finally of a murder, it attains today a last

> avatar, absence: in these neutral forms of writing, called here "writing degree zero," one can easily discern the very movement of a negation, and the inability to accomplish it in a duration, as if Literature, tending for a century to transmute its surface into a form without heredity, no longer found purity except in the absence of all signs, proposing at last the accomplishment of this orphean dream: a writer without Literature.

Absence, death, nothingness; these themes have been placed at the center of the exegesis of modern literature by Maurice Blanchot who is echoed here by Barthes. There is a kind of vortex at the center of the work, a delirium fastened on the experience of nothingness just as, in earlier times, the work focussed on the plenitude of God or of man's experience of his own reality. The emotions connected with absence are fear, anguish, boredom and sometimes anger—the two protagonists of *Weekend,* for example, are constantly angry at each other and at the world.

Other films beside *Weekend*, with its delirium of destructiveness, portray the theme of absence —the inability of characters to relate to a real world. In Agnes Varda's *Cleo from 5 to 7* there is the emptiness of narcissism; wherever she looks (until she meets the soldier at the film's end), Cleo sees only her constantly reflected self and is filled with the anguish generated by that doll-like image, so empty of solidity and substance. In Rivette's *Paris Belongs to Us* the characters are motivated by compulsive drives that have no substance in reality; all their frantic comings and goings are shown to be empty of meaning. In Godard's *Two or Three Things* prostitution, that is sex in the absence of love—and, in a larger sense, the doing of work one hates for a monetary reward—is the form taken by absence. Though all the characters are searching for the reality of presence, their daily life takes the negative form of absence—absence of meaning, absence of love. Here, as in most New Wave films, absence and presence stand in a dialectical relationship to each other. There is no cinema of pure absence just as there is no cinema of pure presence. The ontological relationship of subject to object is a constantly shifting one; there is a constant struggle for the reality of existence and a constant falling away from that reality. The vaunted "ontological reality" of the photographic image celebrates both the absence and the presence of the object. It is only an image of the object that we see, the object itself is absent. In this world of shadowy images it is fitting that characters too exist and fail to exist simultaneously, reach toward us and toward each other with a grasp that is, in the last analysis, empty. Yet something has happened, an emotion and a sense of presence have been communicated; we are aware of this even as we walk out of the theater with the memory of shadows and nothing more. The cinema is a dialectical experience and the emotions it offers us arise out of the inherently paradoxical nature of our metaphysical condition.

THE EGOLOGICAL AND THE DAEMONIC

Our excursion into the study of emotion has cut into films at various angles to bare the emotional bones; but it has not yet asked the genetic question—although this was implied at the beginning, in the statement about emotion as motive force. Yet the question imposes itself: what

◀ CLEO FROM 5 TO 7

is the source of emotion, why does it exercise such power over us? Is it because it stems directly from the deepest springs of personality? To find the source of emotion we must resort to a psychology of depth. Jung has given a partial answer:

> As a matter of fact, an emotion *is* the intrusion of an unconscious personality. The unconscious contents it brings to light have a personal character, and it is merely because we never sum them up that we have not discovered this other character long ago. To the primitive mind, a man who is seized by strong emotion is possessed by a devil or spirit; and our language still expresses the same idea, at least metaphorically.

The unconscious source of emotion is present in a number of New Wave films where we feel emotion surge forth with a power that surpasses its objective corelative, the structure of events that is meant to convey it. If the anger and revulsion of Godard's *Weekend* seem to arise normally from a series of cataclysmic events (car accidents, murder, etc.) we are nonetheless aware that those events are absurd and that Godard has presented them with an irony that undercuts them. Yet the emotions the film conveys from the directorial psyche to our own are not absurd; they have the power and spontaneity of emotions that are truly grounded in the unconscious. The mystery and bizarrerie of some of the images—Alice in Wonderland and Léaud playing the 18th-century philosopher—are also tinged with unconscious power. The film's anecdote is no more than a skeleton used by Godard to call from the depths and to orchestrate his deepest emotions; and it is these we experience immediately and directly, rather than the somewhat arbitrary images of the film.

Truffaut's *The Bride Wore Black,* a Hitchcockian exercise in allegory, succeeds in liberating the unconscious drive for blood; although the motive is conscious—revenge—the drives behind it surge up from a hidden source deep within the character played by Jeanne Moreau. The drives give rise to a complex, an organized structure of motives that controls the character's behavior. The somewhat mechanical unfolding of the plot, in which one victim after another is massacred, echoes the mechanical unfolding of an emotional complex motivating behavior.

When I talk about the unconscious drives of a character I am using a convention; for characters exist only as portrayed. While their hidden dimensions may be implied, they cannot be hypothesized any further than those implications. So that, in the last analysis, we come to the creative mind (or minds) behind the work. A mind that, in the works of the New Wave, is likely to have more unity and independence of extraneous influences than that found in any other body of cinema. The emotions, then, refer back to their source in the *auteur's* unconscious; they are projections of his drives, his dreams, his terrors. The greater the personal stamp on the film, the more unified the unconscious syndrome. Once again it is Godard, that emotion-shy Calvinist, who carries us furthest in the direction of a cinema of the unconscious. In the great films of his middle period, before the didacticism of *Wind From the East* and the Dziga Vertov films, he improvised for us a body of work that reflected the myths of the contemporary unconscious. The dream (and catastrophic failure) of fusional love. The transcendence of the criminal. Self-abandonment and abjection. War as the personal solution. And finally, the fumble of revolution. Godard has, no doubt selectively, shown us our myths which are also his own; and his cinema stands as the image of the contemporary unconscious —violent, paradoxical, and unfulfilled.

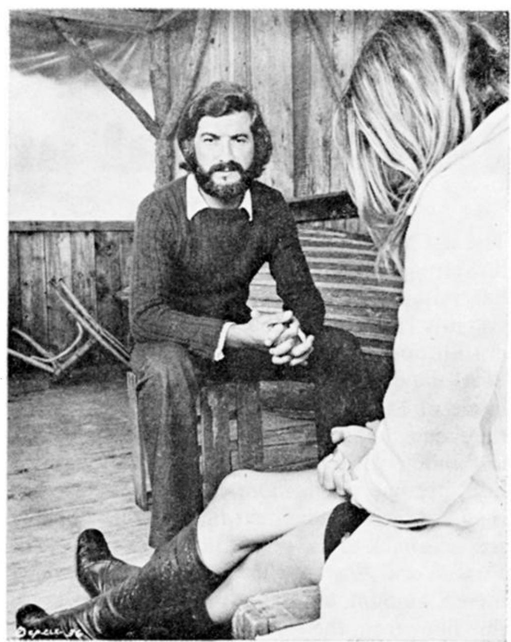
Against emotion, which arises from the unconscious, Jung opposed *feeling*. The latter is

◀ WEEKEND

a function of consciousness and subject to ego control.

Eric Rohmer is the director who best uses feeling as opposed to emotion; who gives us a cinema where feelings are precisely orchestrated by the choices of the characters. Rohmer puts us in a moral and emotional world much like that of the 18th-century comedy of Marivaux where we are concerned with the complex nuances of feeling as characters explore their relationships with each other and move toward fleeting and tentative solutions. In Rohmer's films the characters experiment with their feelings, try them out, move toward and away from choice or commitment; the goal is the development of the self, the ego—as with the young man who wishes to touch Claire's knee; he is cultivating his *moi,* testing out new and exquisite sensations. The hero of *Chloe in the Afternoon* is drawn by his sexual fantasies, toward involvement with Chloe; yet at the end he retreats, under the impulsion of his moral sense, having realized that an affair will threaten his real self, his real life—with his wife and child.

Emotion then, is a complex, a polyvalent term. It is not localisable at any one point, nor is it to be got at by a "pointing" method—by merely saying, This is fear; this is anger; this is love; etc. Emotion appears always in flux, is dialectical by nature, and can be discussed only in terms of polarities. In the New Wave cinema, its status is especially precarious and wavering, subject to constant shifts and variations. If nothing else, I hope I have made it clear that emotion is of the essence of New Wave cinema and that an understanding of this cinema requires that we explore the nature and meaning of cinematic emotion.



CLAIRE'S KNEE

NOTES

1. *Nouvelle Vague: first decade* (Essex: Motion Publications, 1963).

2. I have preferred not to give sources for the theories of emotion to which I refer. This is because I wish to emphasize the personal and spontaneous aspect of this approach to a complex and murky issue. These are intuitions and insights that cohere around a central core that is expressly left undefined; for emotion is an undefined concept. For those who wish to pursue the study of emotion on a more theoretical level I recommend Magda B. Arnold's *The Nature of Emotion* (Penguin, 1968) and James Hillman's *Emotion: a comprehensive phenomenology of theories and their meanings for therapy* (Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1962).

3. The use of the terms "emotion," "feeling," "sentiment," "mood," etc. by psychologists shows no area of common agreement. Emotion may be negative and feeling positive for one; the reverse for another, etc. I use the terms emotion and sentiment here as differing by degrees of intensity, emotion being the more intense. In addition, sentiment seems to have an intellectual and/or moral dimension.

4. For Sartre the awareness of the existence of the Other produced not joy but nausea; but this is the early Sartre of *Being and Nothingness* rather than the more serene, post-analytic Sartre of *The Words.*

5. "The Swan," translated by Wallace Fowlie. (New York: Bantam Books, 1963.)

GRAHAM PETRIE

István Gaál and 'The Falcons'

The last ten years have witnessed an astonishing flowering of talent in the Hungarian cinema that has raised it to the position of the most consistently interesting film-making country in Eastern Europe. For North American audiences this development is almost synonymous with the name of Miklós Jancsó, but his films, exotic as they appear to Western audiences almost totally unfamiliar with the Hungarian cinematic tradition, become much more comprehensible when they are seen in a context that stretches in some respects back to the period immediately after the First World War and in particular owes an immense amount to a handful of extraordinarily fine films from the forties and fifties—*People on the Alps* (1942), *Somewhere in Europe* (1947), *The Soil Under Your Feet* (1948), *For Whom the Larks Sing* (1959). In all of these an explicitly political orientation is combined with the type of setting and landscape (especially the whitewashed houses and the immense barren plains) and even the clothing and physiognomy that audiences have come to associate with Jancsó alone.

Equally, Jancsó, for all the originality and brilliance of his work, is not so much an isolated genius as the best known of at least half a dozen other figures of comparable talent. Some of these, like Imre Gyöngyössy, Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács, and Ferenc Kósa have clearly been influenced by Jancsó's visual style (though Gyöngyössy, in his superb *Legend About the Death and Resurrection of Two Young Men,* has evolved a technique and method that are dazzlingly his own), while others, most notably István Szabó and István Gaál have displayed from their first films onwards a style and temperament that are strikingly individual.

Gaál is forty years old and has so far made five feature films; he came to maturity during the Rákósi period of the early fifties when the country was in the grip of a system of Stalinist terror: fear and self-interest combined to bring about the denunciation and betrayal of friends and neighbors, while arbitrary arrest and unjust imprisonment were commonplace. The mental atmosphere of this period is brilliantly evoked in two of his films, *The Green Years* (1965) and *Baptism* (1967) and it appears, seen from a different perspective, as the rationale according to which Lilik oganises his training camp in *The Falcons* (1970). When Gaál and the film-makers of his generation began work in the early sixties they were determined that their films should form part of a thorough examination of that terrible period and the reasons that had brought it about; at the same time they were concerned with helping to establish a humane and just socialist society. From this perspective, the other main theme that emerges from Gaál's work—it forms the basis of *Current* (1964) and *Dead Landscape* (1971)—is the problem of adjustment to a rapidly changing society as villagers drift away in ever increasing numbers from the stable and traditional pattern of rural life that they have been rooted in for generations, and find either that they cannot adjust psychologically to their new existence or that in coming to terms with it they throw up impassable barriers between themselves and the families that they have left behind.

Gaál, who comes from a peasant background, has experienced this problem too, and the political and social concerns of his work are therefore far from being the abstractions, wish fulfilments, or fashionable games that they are in the hands of so many Western film directors. Although his films are committed, however, they are far from being dogmatic or mere propaganda for one particular set of political beliefs: he strongly

István Gaál's CURRENT

resents, in fact, attempts to read specific political meanings into his work and, on a recent visit to Canada with *The Falcons,* became increasingly impatient with those who, ignoring the visual and aural structure of the film, attempted to impose on it the simplistic denunciation of Communist (or Fascist) "tyranny" that they had come expecting the film to reveal. Gaál's main concern is with the defense of individual integrity and human dignity against repression and authoritarianism of all kinds, and a major theme of his films is the attempt to preserve basic moral values of justice and humanity in circumstances designed to suppress or intimidate these.

Although his films have often been called "austere" and "severe," Gaál himself is a man of warm and outgoing personality and there is a vein of sly humor running through even the most somber of his works. When talking about his films he prefers, like most directors, to discuss style and technique, the sheer difficulty of actually registering these images on film, rather than questions of intention or meaning. He is himself a fully competent cameraman and photographed Sándor Sára's famous short *Gypsies* (1962) as well as handling a second camera on some of the more complex scenes of *The Falcons,* much of his own footage appearing in the completed film. As well as writing or collaborating on all his scripts, he insists on carrying out all the editing himself, physically handling and cutting the film rather than merely supervising this, as most directors do. His attitude to film is immediate, sensual and tactile: he says he loves the smell of raw film stock. He supervises every detail of the art direction of his films, and has always worked with the same composer, András Szöllösy, one of the leading figures in contemporary Hungarian music.

All these factors should do something to qualify the impression of an ascetic and highly intellectual film-maker which emerges from most critical accounts of his work. Gaál is basically a visual poet and the meaning of his films emerges from the nature and juxtaposition of his images, and the relationship between these and the music, natural sounds, or silence that accompany them, rather than from explicit dialogue or debate. In particular he has a very strong feeling for the interaction between character and landscape and an ability to create scenes that emerge as visual metaphors, subtly crystallizing the essence of a film far more effectively than words. Though all his films, especially *Dead Landscape* and the unjustly neglected *Baptism,* display these qualities to a greater or less extent, they come

together most completely perhaps in *The Falcons*.

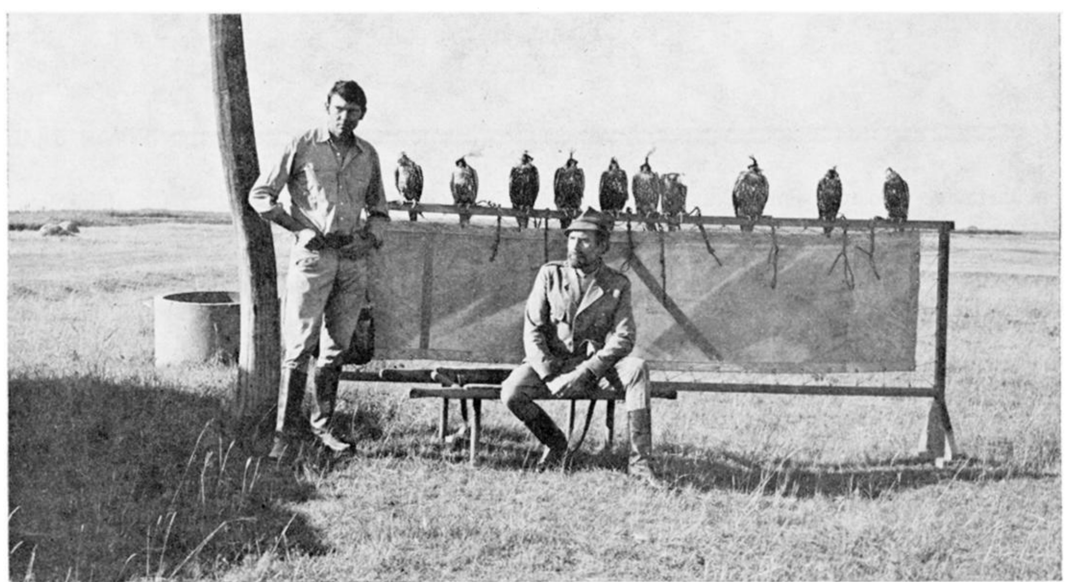
This was Gaál's first feature in color and, with typical thoroughness, he ensured that color became, like landscape, an expressive element within the film, and not a mere decoration. The setting of the film—bare, flat plains, broken only by clumps of trees—has inevitably been compared to that of Janscó's work: certainly Gaál, like Janscó, makes use of landscape as a metaphor for the bleakness and coldness of the moral behavior of his characters; but Gaál constantly maintains an interaction between the human beings and their setting, the tone of the landscape changing as they change, whereas Janscó, having established one kind of relationship, proceeds to exploit the formal possibilities of this, playing off vertical and diagonal movements of his people against the vast and unchanging horizon.

The Falcons is a film that demands to be interpreted on more than one level throughout, with the surface action constantly pointing to another, metaphorical dimension beyond it. Though it is usually spoken of as an allegory, this is somewhat misleading, for it suggests that, as in most allegories, the basic story is contrived, vague, or unreal and has significance only as a stepping-stone to the "higher" or "truer" meaning beyond it. In fact Gaál takes great care to give the central action of the film an almost documentary authenticity of detail, so that it takes on a legitimate fascination of its own; his method is that of what he has called "realistic abstraction"—maintaining a firm basis in physical reality, but taking on, through the images or the editing, a further dimension.

A young man arrives at a camp at which falcons are being trained to keep the local bird population under control. The head of the station, Lilik, views his task in mystical, almost religious terms, and has imposed a rigidly authoritarian system to ensure that it is carried out with maximum efficiency: he divides his birds into "superior" and "inferior" categories and imposes a vast gulf between them and the creatures they are trained to hunt; he constantly extols the virtues of obedience, order, control, the maintenance of a strictly established hierarchy in which everyone knows his place and his duties. The boy is fascinated at first by the skill of both trainers and falcons, the cold, hard beauty that results from the discipline imposed on them; he is shocked, however, then disgusted and repelled by the methodical cruelty and suffering that is taken for granted as part of the total pattern, and these drive him finally to leave the station.

It is obvious that even a summary of the film that attempts to be as neutral as possible must suggest that it is as much about the mentality of totalitarianism as it is about the training of falcons. What gives it its unique and ambiguous quality, however, is that there is no point at which one element drives out or blatantly outweighs the other: the study of authoritarianism is carried out *by means of* an analysis of the technique of training falcons, and the film remains immediate, physical, and concrete from its first frame to its last. The boy's growth to moral awareness parallels that of the heroes of Gaál's three previous films and, as in them, it is presented through an accumulation of specific incidents, through what *happens* to him, rather than by means of discussion or explicit analysis.

The movement of the film is steady and controlled throughout and even the climactic scenes are examined with gravity and restraint, are understated rather than emphasized. The characters are constantly, and unobtrusively, defined by the settings they are placed in or that they themselves create: Lilik, for example, has constructed the training station so that the buildings take on the arrangement of an encampment or a fortress, with his own quarters set apart in a position from which he can supervise the others. The dominant color scheme of the film is one of cold and muted yellows and blues, with the faded green of the landscape as a daytime alternative to the darkness and flickering firelight of the camp at night. Throughout the film the characters are dressed in yellow, blue, or white; the only exceptions are outsiders—a group of farmers in red denims—and Teréz, Lilik's woman, whom he generously shares with his fellows on the nights when he has no need of her. She is an archetypal Gaál character, aware that she is



THE FALCONS

cooperating with something evil, yet believing it is really none of her business and that she can remain detached from it all; though she stays on in the camp after the boy leaves, she has been affected by his example and, when we last see her, she is wearing a faded pink blouse instead of her familiar white.

Music is used to heighten our awareness of the moral dimension that lies behind the physical action: a soft haunting theme accompanies most appearances of Teréz; while the first scene of the training of the falcons, the opening of the scene in which they are set to work to rout a few magpies from their hiding place in a haystack, and the bizarre scene in which Lilik arranges a nocturnal military funeral when his favorite falcon dies, are all given a warlike, marching rhythm, based on drumbeats. The theme associated with the boy mixes woodwind and drums, suggesting the tension within him between the potential humanity contained within the woman and the inhumanity of Lilik. Most of the film, however, dispenses with music to create a haunting aural atmosphere of the tinkling bells of the falcons, the harsh cries of command, the whirring of wings, the throb of hoofbeats, the wailing of the wind, the bleating of sheep, the mysterious purr of telephone wires that opens and closes the film. Silence too is used for powerful emotional effect, especially in the scene in which Teréz first comes to the boy's room to offer herself to him: the quietness of their love-making stresses its strangeness and the remoteness between them.

As usual Gaál obtains some of his most striking effects through editing, but he also moves the camera much more freely than in other films, and a distinctive pattern of sweeping circular movements emerges as the film proceeds. The camera prowls within the circle of the trainers as they prepare for the first demonstration of their skill; it explores the contents of Lilik's room with the boy; it circles the haystacks within which the frightened magpies have hidden themselves, it swoops round the boy and Lilik as the former holds a crippled heron on which a falcon is to be perfected in the art of killing; it follows the boy as he walks round the fire at which the trainers gather in the evening; a 360-degree pan searches the barren field in which Lilik and the boy have hidden in an attempt to entice back an escaped falcon; as Lilik rushes frantically to save his precious birds during a thunderstorm, the camera circles the yard with him; and, it follows him as, like an ancient Germanic warrior, he urges his horse round and round the dead falcon as it lies in state.

In addition to this, Gaál makes a point of cutting emphatically on movement as often as possible through the film, creating a forward rhythm that is both fluid and remorseless. Long lenses are frequently used, both to distance us from

the characters and to assimilate them into their background: Lilik and the boy galloping soundlessly over the plain to save a falcon that is being beaten to death by indignant farmers (it had entered their territory and was torturing its prey); and throughout the final scene in which the boy leaves the camp. Only one scene, however, employs an obvious visual distortion: the boy's nightmare, filmed in black and white and slow-motion, where an extreme wide-angle lens monstrously exaggerates the shape and movement of Lilik as he advances on him, birds perched on his arms and shoulders.

A brief analysis of a few of the key scenes in the film should serve to illustrate how Gaál combines camera movement, cutting, music, and color to create an effect that is simultaneously concrete and metaphorical. Soon after his arrival the boy watches as three horsemen, arranged in a circle, perfect their total control and domination of their falcons. The birds are hurled from one man's wrist to that of his fellow and are given no chance to pause or rest before being thrown to the next man: they are being taught the virtue of submission and that they have no will apart from that of their master; the parallel to the methods by which police states break down the resistance of their opponents is there for those who wish to perceive it, but no one in the film draws it and it remains implicit in the physical construction and movement of the sequence. It is built up from dozens of quick cuts: the birds in flight, the moment of throwing, the moment of receiving, repeated over and over again. At first the shots are quite long and follow a segment of the action in its entirety; gradually they become shorter and shorter till the effect is that of a continuous whipping motion in which the birds are allowed no respite at all; a relentless and endless physical persecution. (Gaál says he envisioned this scene in the form of a spiral, with wide circular movements to begin with, narrowing as it reached its apex.) The only sounds are the trampling of the horses, the shouts of the trainers, the jingling bells and beating wings of the birds. Occasional cuts to the admiring face of the boy show that, as yet, he perceives only the aesthetic dimension of what is happening and that its moral implications escape him.

The boy's moral education is taken a stage further in the magpie hunt where the falcons' training is first put to use. Once again the effect comes mostly from the cutting as a couple of terrified magpies are relentlessly harried from their hiding-place; they take refuge among a flock of sheep and hop in bewilderment among the animals' feet; finally, after a disproportionate expenditure of energy, one of them is killed. Then the boy is given the task of holding a hooded heron to the ground as Lilik sets a falcon to attack it again and again; the dissonant music mirrors his moral confusion, the bells of the falcon, the flutter of the victim's wings keep up a constant pressure on him; finally he tells Lilik that the bird has suffered enough and can take no more. "It must," Lilik replies grimly, and the camera tracks slowly in on the boy's anxious face.

The scene that makes the boy fully aware of his complicity with something brutal is that in which he and Lilik set out to recapture Diana, an escaped falcon that has taken on a mythic significance in Lilik's mind and has become a symbol for him of something fierce and independent that must be admired and yet tamed. Each man conceals himself in a shallow pit, clutching in his hand a pigeon whose beating wings should draw Diana within close enough range to be seized. The boy waits and waits, the bird stirs feebly in his hands, he searches the intense blue sky for a sign of life, the camera zooms gently in on him across the barren field, and at last Diana appears: the camera zooms down on the fluttering, terrified pigeon in a series of violent shock cuts and the boy releases the bird. He staggers from his hiding-place, tearing the protective bandages from his hands, clutches his stomach as though he is about to vomit, then runs across the field, the only sound that of his heavy breathing. The camera zooms back and away from him, stressing his isolation in the vast landscape, and the noise of a train cuts harshly into the silence.

His departure from the camp is delayed for some time longer, though this incident makes

him aware that he can preserve his moral sanity, his self-respect, only by leaving (none of this is ever stated in words and once again it is the visual progression of the film that tells us what is happening to him). It is early morning when he goes, a dark silhouette in the mist, birds rustling and chirping in the trees. The camera zooms steadily away from him as he makes his way through a wood, creating an almost black-and-white effect as it outlines him against the trees. There is a cut to the camp where Teréz, in her pink blouse, begins the task of feeding the falcons, opening another day in the cold routine of the camp: "meat and two pigeons." The camera returns to the mist, the boy, then withdraws from him as he begins to run; there is the hum of telephone wires, the song of birds; a further zoom back and he leaves the frame; then a zoom in, slowly, on the telephone wires till they fill the screen; their humming becomes louder, there is the steady beat of drums. It is an ending that is mysterious and ambiguous and, as so often in Gaál's films, the landscape survives the characters. It is better, I think, for not being explicit, for maintaining the subtlety of the remainder of the film and, if it is argued that escape is too passive a solution, at least it is better than conscious or unconscious collaboration, and more useful than a brave but futile resistance against overwhelming odds. Gaál's films and characters constantly work towards self-knowledge and an understanding of the groundwork for action, rather than indulging in romantic gestures of defiance.

Not all of the film proceeds solely through the visual and aural suggestiveness that makes these particular scenes so memorable. Lilik is quite articulate about his philosophy of life, sometimes rather too much so, as when, several of the falcons having strangled themselves in their leashes trying to escape from the flooding of their cages in the storm, he warns that this is what comes of too much freedom of movement and that henceforth he will have to keep them on a tighter leash. But generally the film moves by means of implication rather than direct statement, creating the obsessive need for order, domination, ritual unanimity and rigid planning (Lilik needs to fulfill a certain quota of birds killed to justify his work, and keeps the legs of

THE FALCONS

his victims to provide accurate statistics) that characterize the authoritarian mentality in all its manifestations. It is a mentality based on fear, and Lilik betrays this in his insistence that the people of the surrounding countryside are conspiring against them; external danger, of course, justifies even stricter control within the camp. People are treated as no more than objects: Teréz satisfies Lilik's need for power and enables him to make benevolent gestures towards his subordinates; sex is a means of control, not communication. Cruelty and torture are inevitable and even welcomed as essential means towards the achievement of the great design. This, and much more, emerges, without strain or over-emphasis, from a film that is also, to all intents and purposes, a documentary on the rearing of falcons, and a lyrical and poetic meditation on figures within a landscape.

Time and again, Gaál quietly returns in all his films to an insistence that human beings must take responsibility for their actions, that even the most restrictive or depressing circumstances offer no excuse for moral inertia. His most recent film, *Dead Landscape,* though not perhaps his best, is the one in which he tries to present his characters and their dilemmas most obliquely, relying on the melancholy of the dying village and the autumnal landscape to take the place of dialogue and verbal analysis. He says that he sees this film as a turning point in his career, the logical conclusion to his themes and stylistic development to date. His immediate plans, at least as far as a feature is concerned, are uncertain: he had been invited to make a film for RAI and had prepared a script based on the short story *Saul* by Miklós Mészöly (the author of the original story of *The Falcons*). The sudden cancellation of RAI's imaginative film production program, however, has made this impossible, and Gaál's insistence that the settings and faces of the film have an authentic Mediterranean character, together with the relatively high cost of the project, make it unlikely that the film can be made in Hungary.

Gaál's situation reflects in miniature the problems of Hungarian cinema in general as well as those of many other small film-producing countries: despite the quality of his films and the fact that they have been extensively written and talked about, they have still been far too little *seen.* The reluctance of both distributors and audiences of foreign films to take risks with anything that does not come from France, Italy, or Sweden, together with the inability of most smaller countries to mount extensive publicity campaigns for their films, leaves several of the most talented directors in the world in some kind of limbo, with their only chance of reaching an international audience coming through co-productions that all too often smooth out or destroy the national and individual characteristics that made their films interesting in the first place. Gaál himself has too much integrity to commit himself to anything that he does not wholeheartedly believe in, and he would rather remain a small, unknown film-maker in a small, unknown country than achieve a wider recognition through making what might turn out to be destructive compromises: it would be a pity, however, if these were to remain the only alternatives he has.

István Gaál

MICHAEL SHEDLIN

Case Study vs. Process Study

TWO FILMS MADE FOR ITALIAN TELEVISION

Radiotelevisione Italiana recently financed a number of feature films by directors of international reknown, including Antonioni, Rossellini, Rocha, Cavani, Rossi, Jancsó, de Seta, Bresson, Andrade, Sanjines, the Taviani brothers, Pasolini, Bertolucci, and Godard, many of whom are avowed revolutionaries. Two of these films—*San Michele Had a Rooster* by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani,[1] and *The Night of San Juan* (also called *The Courage of the People*) by Jorge Sanjines[2]—are important new works in themselves and are also lucid examples of two very different styles of revolutionary cinema: the case-study (subjective) approach, and the process-study (objective) approach. While these films are perhaps not the definitive examples of their "type," I have selected them because they are excellent and because they are virtually unavailable to American audiences; as such, I felt a responsibility to enter them into the critical record.

THE NIGHT OF SAN JUAN

Before defining and contrasting the two styles, it will be necessary to describe both films in some detail. Sanjine's film is a "true story" about a 1967 massacre of Bolivian mining workers by government troops. It opens with a symbolic recreation of an earlier "confrontation"—the Catavi massacre of 1942. The sequence is stunning in its simplicity and completeness. We see an open, hilly expanse—nothing but land and sky. Suddenly, a line of soldiers is revealed entrenched in the dust; close-ups of machine guns, rifles, bullets. A group of several hundred workers and their families emerge from the distant hills and sweep across the bleached earth, chanting "Long live the workers!" They are shouting and shaking their fists. They are unarmed. The workers advance to a point, and then the army simply guns them down and tosses them into mass graves.

The slaughter is followed by a brief documentary sequence of black-and-white still photographs detailing subsequent massacres of Bolivian workers through 1967, including Potosi (1947), Siglo XX (1949), Sora-Sora (1964), and Llallagua (1965). Set to a pulsating percussion rhythm, this sequence not only shows pictures of the massacres, but in every case juxtaposes a photo of the principal political-military leaders of the time, while a voice-over commentator patiently informs us of their names and titles.[3]

An historical context is established and an analytical perspective suggested by the presentation of these two seemingly uncomplicated sequences. Sanjines is not producing mere spectacle. By concentrating all of our attention on the opposition of two fundamental forces—army and citizenry—and by indicting certain authorities by name, Sanjines demands that we confront the *reasons* for this conflict, rather than simply absorb the narrative images. If radical movies have one common characteristic, it is the desire to jar the audience into a deeper questioning of what goes on outside the theater. Let us therefore briefly speculate on the implications of Sanjines's opening scenes—beginning with his image of basic conflict and moving toward an articulation of his overall political perspective.

A standing army is ostensibly maintained for the protection of the nation-state from foreign invaders, but its primary and ultimate function is to insure the continued domination of the ruling class, which is made up of the nation's rich and the technicians whom they sponsor to manage the government, commonly called "elected officials." The principal tool of a government is violence and the threat of violence,

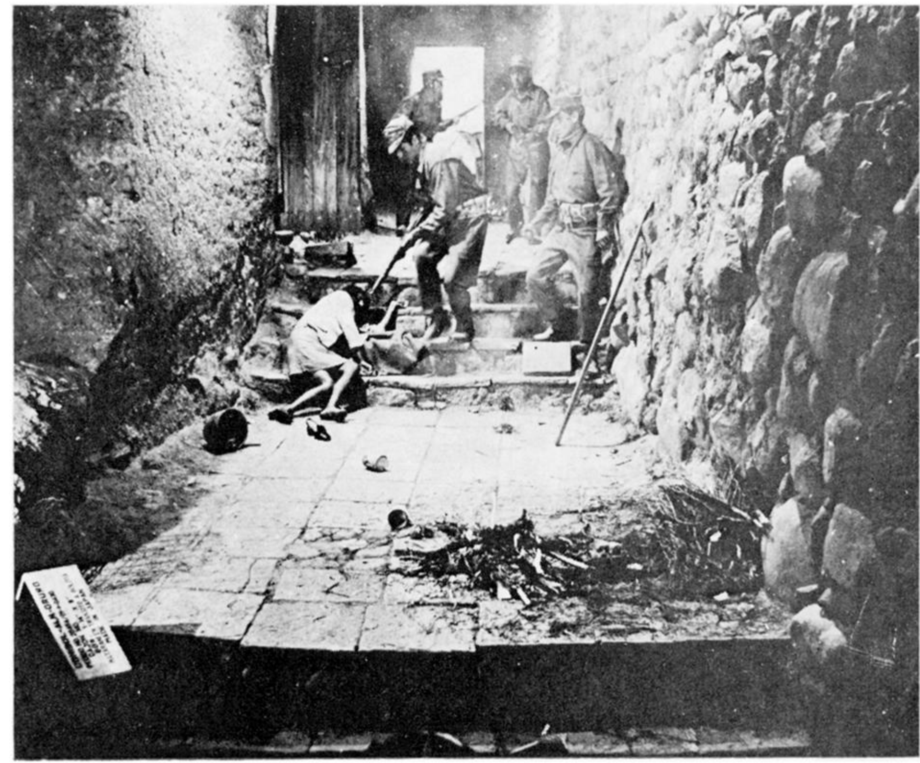
although governments go to elaborate lengths to avoid conspicuous brutality by subduing the population through careful manipulation of all cultural processes. Occasionally, an individual or a group will come upon a portion of knowledge that threatens the hegemony of the ruling class. The citizens in possession of this knowledge are systematically intimidated, maligned, deprived, arrested, and tried. If they act in a group they are arrested, attacked, or killed. If they act in a large group, and if they sufficiently irk the wealthy, they will be attacked by the standing army. All of these activities on the part of the government are sanctioned by the law, whereas the slightest resistance (e.g., a sit-down strike) results in prosecution and possible imprisonment.

In spite of such controls, groups of people frequently develop an awareness of their own potential for liberation, which leads to an active desire to be free: free from arbitrary regulations (laws), free from thought control (licensed education), free from economic exploitation (wage labor), and free from the imposition of organized professional violence (police, army, national guard)—in fact, free from authority of all kinds. Needless to say, the development of this awareness greatly displeases the ruling class, which invariably dispatches some branch of the army to destroy the insurgents and extinguish the glow of rebellion.

This is the fundamental conflict that Sanjines so forcefully conjures on the dusty Bolivian *altiplano*. I am not suggesting that Sanjines is an anarchist (he probably favors Bolivian nationalism at this stage), but the spirit that informs his work is manifestly anti-authoritarian and insurrectionary. The essential purpose of *The Night of San Juan*—from the opening massacre to the closing massacre—is to drive into us the notion that authorities are not to be trusted, that they lie and murder. Sanjines probably does not reject all forms of government, but he does call for worker control of the means of production, a conviction that coincides with a long history of repressed Bolivian syndicalism.

The main body of *The Night of San Juan* is a recreation of the conditions and events that led up to the June 24th, 1967, assault by government troops on the isolated mining town of Siglo XX. After the two opening sequences, we are shown establishing shots of the town while the narrator informs us that the Siglo XX tin mines are the most important in the western world. A company town, Siglo XX has a population of 20,000; the average life span is 29 years, infant mortality sometimes reaches 50%, and over two thirds of the inhabitants suffer from tuberculosis. The narrator introduces us to several survivors of the San Juan massacre and tells us that all of the performers in the film are actually residents of Siglo XX.

At this point, perhaps ten minutes into the film, the narrator disappears, and a series of more conventionally styled dramatic scenes unfold that acquaint us with the crisis of survival faced by the miners and their families. (1) *Hunger.* A group of women demand that the barren company store stock sufficient supplies. The clerks simply shrug. (2) *Disunity and fear.* A meeting is shown wherein the women of the town agitate for some kind of collective display of strength, and accuse their men of cowardice. The men reply miserably, "We are disarmed, we have no leaders . . . " The women threaten a hunger strike. (3) *Hopelessness and humiliation.* Another meeting, this time between the women of Siglo XX and their condescending bosses. In reply to the demands of the irate wives, the administrators lay down a pack of typical capitalist solipsisms (so quintessentially articulated by the factory boss in *Tout Va Bien*): "We have many problems at the national level," say the bosses. "Be patient. We'll take care of everything . . . We won't be able to solve anything in this way, will we?" The women eventually drown them out by clacking stones. Another confrontation confirms the impossibility of grievance redress: a small group of miners enters the company's outer administrative offices to inquire after the whereabouts of some arrested friends. After first ignoring them, the arrogant company agents give them a complete runaround and disclaim their own obvious re-



NIGHT OF SAN JUAN: *Top, the massacre; bottom, miners' meeting*

sponsibility for the political arrests. The company man ends up screaming at a miner, "You're a savage! Get out!" (4) *Dangerous working conditions.* We cut down into the mines for a look at the kind of labor performed by the workers. First we see drilling, then, while a new voice-over describes his horribly oppressed career as a miner, we see a workman in a dank shaft lighting a dynamite charge. Sanjines cuts away before the explosion, but the claustrophobic exhaustion and catastrophic potential are established.

After carefully sketching in the conditions under which the citizens of Siglo XX are forced to subsist, Sanjines begins to describe the tentative but radical resistance movement that flowers in the dark tunnels. The miners are planning a large assembly on the 25th of June to express solidarity with peasants, urban workers, students, and although it is mentioned quietly, with Dr. Ernesto Guevara in the Southeast. A major June 22nd pre-assembly meeting is briefly shown, and although we are aware that resistance is spreading, we are given little insight into

the process by which the workers have become radicalized. It is possible that Sanjines, by playing down the specifics of the miners' political transformation, is trying to emphasize the cyclical, inevitable emergence of rebellion. Rhetoric and didacticism are largely avoided, in favor of an increased concentration on the innocence and good will of the workers and their families as they conduct an all-day celebration on the 24th, complete with drinking, dancing, and anti-imperialist ballads sung by little girls.

Intercut with the extended festivities are a couple of short, ominous shots of President Barrientos's soldiers, equipped with US gear, racing toward Siglo XX on a train. The mood of impending death that has been sustained from the opening frames is now dramatically intensified. After a brief and characterologically unconvincing respite wherein an Indian soldier confesses his fear of being sent into Siglo XX to shoot his own people, all the portents of disaster finally come to fruition, and the massacre begins. It is night. Everybody is either drunk or asleep. Soldiers swarm into the town, kick down doors, drag people out into the dirt streets and shoot them. Women and children are gunned down, workers are lined up against a wall and executed, incapacitated stragglers are tortured and beaten, even the Indian soldier is killed by his superior officer when he hesitates during the shooting. Only a few of the workers manage to acquire guns, but most are too drunk to use them effectively; several sticks of dynamite are thrown, but there is no question that we are watching a slaughter and not a revolt.

This sequence, which lasts nearly a quarter of an hour screen time, is filmed, like the rest of the movie, in minimal, unstylized, purposely plain techniques—stark, but without the studied austerity of Bresson or *San Michele Had a Rooster.* We are offered no cinematic diversions, no kinetic excitement, no interesting violence—only death, suffering, and suppression.

In an oddly anti-climactic epilogue, Sanjines shows us the ambulances arriving at dawn, and three hard-core resistors who toss some dynamite at the occupying troops but are soon strafed by a fighter plane. Then, as the narrator comes back on to fill in some details of the massacre, we see survivors visiting the graves of their murdered relatives. This seems to be the end of the film, but Sanjines suddenly pulls a strange one: behind the final credits, he takes us back to the naked hills where the opening massacre took place, and, to swelling inspirational music, stages a second, similar march (without opposing soldiers); this time the workers walk exuberantly past the camera in a sea-of-humanity effect, suggesting endurance and continued resistance.

This "positive" ending seems conspicuously out of place in light of the depressive nature of the rest of the film, and neither inspires us nor lightens the burden of solemnity imposed by the events depicted. It almost looks like Sanjines attached the final sequence as an afterthought, perhaps to lift the spirits of those who so painstakingly re-enacted the massacre.

SAN MICHELE HAD A ROOSTER

We can classify both *San Juan* and *San Michele* as hard-core radical films, but with distinctly different tones and intentions. Where *San Juan* deals with sweeping mass action and avoids emphasis on individual characters, *San Michele* concentrates entirely on the tribulations of a single protagonist. Where *San Juan* generalizes its message from a detailed examination of a specific historical event and geographical location, *San Michele,* although set nominally in Italy in the mid-1800's, is consciously "universal" and "timeless."

San Michele Had a Rooster is a remarkably sustained dramatization of revolutionary isolation. The preface is a brief scene of a young child being locked up in a tiny room for a minor infraction. Cut to an official document which tells of small bands of armed subversives (Internationalists) who roam through the countryside attempting to foment rebellion. The document advises us that most of these groups have been wiped out, but that one obstreperous band—called the Pisacane group—remains at large. Their "leader" is Giulio Manieri, a former math major presently self-employed as an icecream vendor.

The true opening sequence is a classic visual

statement about the relationship of revolutionaries to the populations they are seeking to liberate. The shot is stationary, as are nearly all the shots in the film, but is airy, deep, and expansive. In the foreground we see a dozen anxious men—the Pisacane group—with several large leather satchels full of rifles. Across a wide valley, in perfect focus, is a walled-in town: the community, the public. Shot with a long lens, the village in the background is hung like a clay tapestry behind the milling Internationalists. In a marvellously clear and direct pictorialization, they are placed totally outside of society, completely removed from their beloved masses.

As we begin to move in closer to the revolutionaries, we see that they are in no sense crazed terrorists, but rather are gentle, somewhat terrified nice guys. Manieri (presumably the grown-up child prisoner) is seen smiling, and in the first close-up of him we observe his calm, somewhat messianic, but nonetheless genuine, clear-eyed fervor. The Tavianis stress the essential vulnerability and dedication of these characters by portraying them as scared rather than tentative; they handle their guns awkwardly and derive no thrill from armsmanship.

As they approach the town, one member of the group puts his forehead up against Manieri's shoulder. "I wish it were tomorrow so I'd know how it went." The "invasion" of the village begins. The Internationalists enter the empty square in front of the town hall. This is filmed in another stationary long shot, with the town hall as the background, the town granary on the left, and the church on the right; our impassive viewpoint forms the fourth border of the cinematic square.

A rumpled policeman emerges from behind the camera and walks up to the subversives without fear. He is captured, along with the mayor. Manieri and crew enter the town hall and fly the black and red flag of the Internationale out an upper-story window. A few citizens peer blankly out from the church. Most of the activity consists of the nervous radicals hopping around the empty square, bumping into each other, losing their way, and desperately trying to break down the door of the granary. As we continue to observe from our relatively objective point of view, clusters of municipal documents flutter out the upper windows onto the dust; a tiny bonfire is ignited. At last, with no assistance and only minimal attention from the baffled populace, the granary is opened and bags of food are pulled out into the square. Manieri, turning and shifting miserably in the empty courtyard, calls out, "Don't mistrust us, we're the Internationalists. We want to make a clean sweep of all authorities . . . "

He speaks to the people in the church doorway about their right to the food from the gra-

SAN MICHELE HAD A ROOSTER ▶

nary and about liberty itself. Manieri does not rant, rather his brief entreaties are almost melancholy and resigned. He soon sees that the citizens will make no commitment to the action. The confusion that reigns in the square is neither destructive nor creative: a confrère runs up with news of a thousand soldiers advancing on the town; a child drags away a sack of grain; the mayor, who seems merely annoyed, asks to be freed, but Manieri becomes incensed and scolds him for being an oppressor; a new rumor of 5000 soldiers is aired; citizens—previously invisible—dash across the square toward their homes. Finally, when Manieri and his band are reduced to chasing after the frightened townspeople and shrieking reassurances at their backs, it becomes apparent that their vanguard insurrectionary project has failed.

Seeing that it is all over, the captured policeman and mayor ask if they can be released. Manieri says, "Sure." The radicals convene to discuss escape details. "This time it didn't come off," mutters Manieri, exhilarated but crushed. "Next time it will be better." As they are preparing to leave the square, the policeman—at the mayor's command—shoots down Guelfi, a young member of the band who is particularly close to Manieri. They discover that their comrade is dead; Manieri shoots the mayor. At this point, a citizen emerges from the noiseless surroundings with a shotgun at the head of Mannoni, the comrade who had wanted it to be tomorrow. On top of the emotional/accidental killing, this setback proves too much for the Pisacane group. They are unnerved, and utterly defeatable. A solitary citizen captures and holds the entire band. "Be good boys now," he admonishes them. Manieri is already beginning to rehearse his public declarations. "The trial will be another chance to make ourselves better known . . . " Upon that statement the camera pans slowly away from the impoverished band and across the motionless, deserted town.

In this stark and despairing sequence, the Taviani brothers establish a number of premises and conditions. First, and most important: there exists *no popular impulse*. The revolutionaries, although they are actually living out their own revolution, are acting in a vacuum. The populace neither knows nor cares about the abstract concept of social liberation—to the severely oppressed, oppression is reality and reality is immutable. This means that the revolutionaries are out of touch not only with their concrete environment but also with any theoretical position that might guide them toward effective fomentation. The members of the Pisacane group, and Manieri in particular, are operating within a subjective framework—it is their own need to revolt that drives them (buttressed by a cultivated faith in the imminence of spontaneous rebellion)—not some abstract, formalized, scientific analysis. Such thoroughgoing subjectivity condemns the anarchists to historical marginality. And yet the Tavianis do not portray these men as silly fools; indeed, these are true anti-authoritarians who seek neither to manipulate nor to "organize," but rather to ignite, to inspire, to liberate by example, in the hope that the masses will simply rebel and exist under conditions of freedom. That the public is not ready for them is not really their fault—on the contrary, the Tavianis imbue them with a certain purity of motive that mitigates against dismissing them as "mindless" utopians.

But their weaknesses are decisive. Not only have they adopted an impractical method of achieving popular support, they are essentially nonviolent (the mayor was killed because of his own aggressive treachery), they are easily intimidated physically, and they are not ruthless like their opponents (they released the policeman without laying a hand on him). For reasons we shall discuss later, we conclude that the Tavianis are not so much criticizing the notion of spontaneous rebellion in favor of laborious, disciplined organization as they are examining the nearly insoluble conflict between the pure, unmanipulative spirit of revolt and the pragmatic imperatives imposed by the need to combat organized authorities and public subjection. In other words, when an individual is forced to bring his personal rebelliousness out into a wider arena (out of compassion and the necessity of freeing others to secure his own freedom) he faces literally a whole world of opposition and

adversity with which he must grapple and compromise in order to survive. Within the cult of Revolution, pragmatism is the highest diety.

Along comes Giulio Manieri, who refuses to compromise, who refuses to adjust to "objective conditions," but prefers instead to live out his pure dream of liberation. The question arises: can such intense personalism possibly be founded on truly revolutionary motives, and can it ever lead to efficacious activity? In the second major section of the film, the Tavianis begin to explore Manieri's motivations — the personal uses of revolution. They posit a crucial radical quandary: the relationship between "selfless" dedication to the workings of helpful social change, and essentially "selfish" egoic gratification derived from involvement in grandiose and ostentatious social maneuverings.

The section begins with a brief scene of a group of anonymous authorities reading the statement made by Manieri upon receiving his death sentence. "Thank you for this trial that has allowed our ideas to be made public . . . Thank you for the satisfaction I derive from your eyes; you don't know where to look. You can neither astonish nor frighten me. I frighten you."

The remainder of Part Two consists of a long cart ride to the place of execution (the church in Manieri's home town), with the hero now totally alone and isolated. His only companions are the attending soldier-policemen to whom he speaks but who say nothing themselves. No crowds line the road—it is clear that Manieri is fooling himself in thinking that his ideas have touched the public. As he huddles handcuffed in the horse-drawn cart, a child walks up behind. Manieri smiles, a last friend. The boy throws something at him and dashes off. Manieri demands that the soldiers stop and get him some water from an acquaintance who is passing on the road. The peasant is silent and scornfully suspicious of his shackled liberator—no communication is exchanged, the peasant's gaze is empty of compassion or comprehension.

As the executioner's cart approaches the killing ground, Manieri begins to sweat and to address his guards. "You'll be famous because you were the last ones to talk to me." He is not so much crazed with egotism as he is grasping at some kind of psychological center to which he can adhere. After talking hurriedly about his own notoriety and about how his body will be disinterred and celebrated when the revolution comes, Manieri speaks of his comrades by name —Mannoni, Guelfi, Battilani—he draws great comfort from his association with them. All of this time, Manieri is talking to the guards as well as to himself and the world. "I'm crying out of emotion, not fear!" he advises them. "You can report that." He needs to retain a sense of himself as an historical force; because of his protracted isolation from society at large, and now from his own conspirators, Manieri is reduced to envisioning his significance as a martyr, as a legend, as a ghost. His sense of self, however, is not of a breast-beating, ego-tripping variety. Rather, it reveals how completely Manieri has integrated his own existence into the endless cycles of libertarian struggle. He does not separate himself from the process of revolution. Hence, he does not see himself as prestigious and notable because he has risen above his peers or distinguished himself as an individual performer, but rather because he is an embodiment of revolution itself, because the revolution lives *through* him, and since he views revolution as the supreme ethical adventure, it follows that he views himself as a natural moral exemplar. In this regard, Manieri is perhaps guilty of infusing a cultural-political-economic conflict with mystical qualities, and of romanticizing his own relationship to the class struggle, but he is *not* guilty of individualistically exploiting the revolution for private psychological benefits. This is a key distinction that the Tavianis are marking: Manieri's weaknesses and failures are not so much due to impure motivations as to an exalted spiritual faith in the power of the mere *concept* of freedom to activate liberating motion—a benign fanaticism that fogs a rational assessment of practical means. Manieri believes that his spirit, even his dead revolutionary body, will inspire others to act accordingly and free themselves. The principal contradiction in this attitude, of course, is that Manieri is not free.

The prisoner arrives at the death square and a black bag is put over his head. Although he is shaking and his knees buckle, he has remained proud and defiant right up to the end. A few bourgeois watch from an ornate balcony; not a single representative of the masses is on hand. Suddenly, the squad leader walks back into the frame, removes the black bag and informs Manieri that his sentence has been commuted to life imprisonment. The next scene is a brief one, and it conveys the schoolboy militancy to which Manieri has descended, perhaps as a result of the dual workings of defeatism and the delirium of having his life returned to him. A doctor is examining him. He grabs the doctor's ears and wrenches them painfully for an extended period of time, while he curses him with maniacal disgust. "People like you will be swept away," he sneers delightedly. The doctor says, "Quit it, boy. We know how to deal with bad manners here." Manieri draws ten years solitary confinement. End part two.

Part Three is a precis of Manieri's total sequestration. Now, within the barren brick cell, he is completely cut off from any human contact. At first, he structures his days with exercises, geometry, drills, etc., and he talks to himself. "I'm not crazy," he says, after he sees that a guard has been spying on him. "I'm ridiculous . . . better ridiculous than resigned."

Manieri attempts to fill up time by recreating the world outside, and the Tavianis accomplish this effectively by fading up certain nostalgic sounds as Manieri describes scenes from his past, while we see nothing but the brick walls that surround him. Informal reminiscences do not sustain him, however, and the central sequence of this section is a "meeting" convened by Manieri, in which he plays not only himself, but several of his comrades as well.

He begins by speaking generally of the revolution and the individual. He speaks of "self-government at the municipal level," and briefly outlines a radically decentralized political organization (the word "anarchist" is never mentioned in the film). But the meeting does not proceed smoothly. Manieri's comrades (played by Manieri in different position around the cell) criticize him for indulging in private gratifications and for misunderstanding the position of the revolutionary activist in society. Manieri, who when playing himself stands and munificently addresses his seated comrades, is concerned at these accusations. "I know what I am," he says quietly. He replies to the challenge of privatism: "One always works for others when he works for himself."

In this marvellously straightforward expository sequence, Manieri confronts his own fears and guilts about his radical morality; the criticisms of his beloved comrades are no more than an inner dialectic that he, and presumably all radicals, undergo. Manieri accuses himself of being "too extreme," and of alienating even the members of his own band. For this he has no answer, and the sequence concludes with Manieri feeling that his fellows will never really understand him. Whereas earlier in his "career," Manieri might have expected to be understood because he saw himself as nothing more than an agent of a larger, irresistibly lucid force (revolution), now that he is turned in upon himself and emptied of any possibility of participation — by physical imprisonment — he is forced to erect a psychological barricade around his essential foundations lest his own comprehension of himself become diffused and untenable. Hence, by adopting the position that nobody can truly understand the sublimity of his psyche, Manieri both protects himself from dissolution by reinforcing his uniqueness, and further removes himself from popular reality by withdrawing into a labyrinth of personal justifications.

This is the conflict that the Tavianis bring up again and again, and anyone who has struggled with revolutionary ideals will be familiar with its intensity: the attempt to integrate one's life into a genuinely revolutionary scheme while at the same time developing one's individuality according to subjective drives. To achieve this, one needs a view of revolution as a process of desire and relative fulfillment rather than an achievable goal, and one must understand oneself well enough to know how much of the world's tension one can appropriate without in-

ternalizing social psychoses and confusing guilt with cathexis.

For Giulio Manieri, who is clearly misunderstood, madness would be equivalent to his misunderstanding of the revolution and of his part in it. But Manieri is not mad. He may be quirky, idealistic, impractical, and lonely, and indeed it was his over-emotionalism that resulted in his "capital crime," but he *does* maintain a subjective view of revolution in that he acts from his feelings and his needs rather than conforming to the dictates of some extrinsic dogmatic formulations.

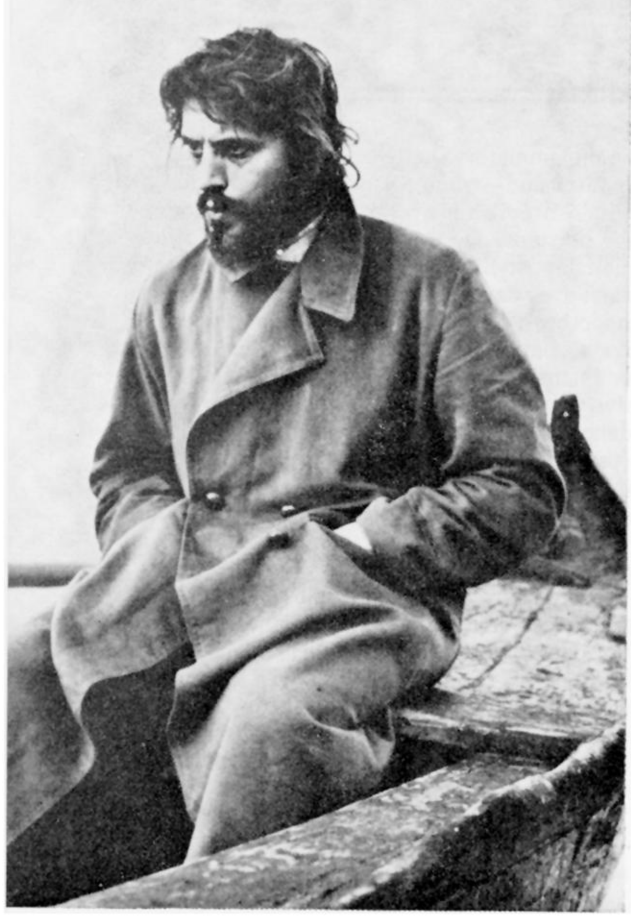
It would appear that the Taviani brothers fault their hero for precisely this subjective approach. They suggest that Manieri's surreal and introverted revolutionism is the *cause* of his imprisonment rather than the result, that he winds up in real and symbolic solitary confinement because he was unable to blend himself into a popular movement. (In the opening images, there is a literal chasm between Manieri and the villagers.) And yet, the Tavianis' attitude does not reflect the kind of hackneyed simplification that dismisses anarchists as incoherent dilettantes. On the contrary, their exploration of a revolutionary's essential contradictions seems intensely personal and intentionally inconclusive because the film-makers are struggling with these same issues themselves. The Tavianis imply, in this third section, that Manieri's insularity as a radical parallels the isolation of the artist (a rebel of sorts); during his solitary stretch, Manieri constantly fictionalizes dramatic encounters and creates a semi-fantasy world in order to be able to survive.

Before going on to the final section, it would be worth noting that the solitary confinement sequence, like the rest of *San Michele,* is played in a noticably humanistic manner, with discreet, uncomplicated techniques, and a tender concentration on the character's sympathetic qualities —Manieri is shown curled up on a brick ledge in his cell with his hands between his legs in childlike and innocent nap; he never complains or exhibits malice; at one point he weeps, not so much out of self-pity, but because people are oppressed. The film is exceedingly austere and noninflammatory, heightening our reflective responses and—while focussing our attention on Giulio Brogi's superb performance—discouraging our tendency to abandon ourselves to mesmerizing stylistic maneuvers and suspenseful narrative developments. *San Michele* flows smoothly and quietly, even abrupt transitions are accomplished without jarring shifts of light or intensity of action. The camera sits impassively in medium-shot, never swinging in to dance with the actors, never shifting the spatial (psychological) relationships within the frame by dollying, panning or zooming. The effect is serene; we meditate on Manieri's situation as we might gaze at a series of clear, smooth oil paintings.

Part Four, which we shall call the Canal Sequence, consists of Manieri's transference, by boat, to a Venetian prison. He has completed his ten years of solitary and is seen floating along a deserted waterway in a narrow gondola, guarded by a single soldier. No other signs of life are visible on the banks of the canal or for miles around—Manieri's isolation continues. The sequence has a fascinating blue crepuscular chill to it, suggesting autumn, evening, dampness, stiffness and resignation.

For the first time since the beginning of his imprisonment, Giulio makes contact with the outside world: a prison gondola transporting a group of young "subversives" drifts into the same canal. Manieri stops huddling and helps his boatman row to catch up with the new blood. "I'm Giulio Manieri," he calls out to them. His gondola moves up on theirs but never really travels along beside it for any distance— throughout the sequence their boats drift aimlessly along, as if no real contact between new and old is desired. The youths, also guarded by only one armed official, are familiar with Manieri's deeds, but do not seek to open up a dialogue with him. Instead, they sporadically address disparaging remarks in his direction.

One young man sums up the "new way": No one carries out armed expeditions any more, he insists. The struggle has shifted away from the peasants and into the industrializing sectors. The fellow informs Manieri, with mocking smugness,



San Michele Had a Rooster

that his former Pisacane comrades have all dissipated into anonymity or have been absorbed back into the establishment. Manieri is devastated. The young radicals, seemingly indifferent to his suffering, continue to badger him. "We don't know anything about philosophy," they snort when Manieri makes an abstract plea for justice. "Only science and economy." They are cold and abusive, finally shouting at him that he "set the working class movement back 15 years."

This sequence is a brilliant visualization of concrete revolutionary quandaries. The two gondolas meander along with the supposedly like-minded passengers screaming at each other across the water of life. Not only are they intolerant and factionalized, but they are insensitive to a comrade's needs, and, more importantly, none of them even attempt to overpower the phlegmatic and unimposing guards. The young dialectical materialists are shown as being obsessed with delayed gratification: they break into hysterical laughter at the thought of their *future happiness,* while they assist their captors in propelling their gondola to prison.

Sedately, the Canal Sequence develops into a floating carnival of flagellation, martyrdom-rationalization, physical cowardice, cooptation, and defeat. Manieri, his élan numbed and his fantasies of comradeship shattered, is unable to formulate his usual daydreams in the open air. "I'll have to wait until I'm back in a cell," he mutters, but he knows that his fervor is draining out of him like blood into the water. "I can't start over again." Finally, after jokingly passing up a tremendous opportunity to shove his guard overboard, he simply lies down on the front of the boat, composes himself, and rolls off into the blue canal. The movie is over.

The key statement of this section is the Tavianis' suggestion that the young revolutionaries, presumably calculating Marxists, are no better off than the spontaneous loser Manieri. This is a distressing conclusion, but it does point to the need for a continually evolving concept of political struggle rather than a reliance on already existing schemes. The fact that the Tavianis refuse glib solutions is important: at the same time that they depress us, they offer us the opportunity to work out of our despair in thoughtful, individualized ways, since they propose no inspiring strategies or tactics to gratify us dramatically (cf. the end of *Blood of the Condor,* which implies that picking up the gun is The Answer).

A comparison of *San Michele* and *Night of San Juan* and the aspects of political cinema they represent, should probably begin with an examination of the intentions of the film-makers. Broadly speaking, *San Michele* is the kind of a film that seeks to investigate, to analyze, to clarify revolutionary sentiments, motivations, and action patterns—for those who are *already committed* to a leftist political lifestyle and who will

presumably identify with the contradictions of the main characters. These films are made for radical intellectuals and/or members of the movie-going public who search out political provocation. A few examples of other films in this genre are: *The Confession* (Costa-Gavras), *The Damned of the Earth* (Orsini), *Partner* (Bertolucci), and *China Is Near* (Bellochio). The characters in these films are active revolutionaries who have already negated the dominant culture, as compared with the "Rites of Radical Passage" movies that follow the developing consciousness of naive, oppressed, or uncommitted characters within a political setting, such as *The Working Class Goes to Heaven* (Petri), *Tout Va Bien* (Godard-Gorin), and *Blushing Charlie* (Sjöman). The characters in these latter films go through transitions and reach awarenesses that their creators would like the moderate audience to experience in fact. The films are ostensibly less extreme, less threatening to commercial viewers, who must be initiated gradually into the world of class war, along with the characters on the screen.

Those film-makers, like the Tavianis, who have chosen a characterological, intellectual approach specifically directed at refining revolutionary ideals, are well aware of the contradictions involved in their undertaking. Here is a statement by Vittorio Taviani, translated from *Jeune Cinema* #45 by Amy Wallace: "It is nevertheless clear that our films—like all the cinema of searching—address a public which searches. They interest those who have the same interests as those who are at the origin of the film. . . . In our capitalist society, non-homogenous, which it will take much time to overthrow, the cinema of searching cannot be a cinema of the masses. On the other hand, it produces in cinema what is also produced on politics' own turf: the most advanced groups of the left—precisely those which refer themselves to the base to justify their action— are the constricted 'minorities' so to speak, with a very limited influence on the masses."

Film-makers like Sanjines, on the other hand, who make what the Tavianis describe as propaganda cinema (process-study), seek to make films *with* and *for* the masses—films that purposely avoid intricate psychological contradictions and theoretical abstractions, and deal concretely with workers' day-to-day experience and the *means* of throwing off oppression. All three of Sanjines's features have been made with, indeed made possible by, the direct participation of the communities involved.

Sanjines defines his objectives in *The Night of San Juan* as "the rescue from oblivion of events that should not be forgotten and over which veils of confusion and error have been thrown; the rescue from oblivion of key historical situations and of names that must be written down in the book of the people's justice. And, above all, the explanation of the role played by the imperial army in the development of the reconstructed events, citing this enemy as the cause, source and origin of the systematic repression of which the mining proletariat is the object." Additionally, Sanjines wants to stress "the historical relationship with the struggle of Che Guevara, since the slaughter was designed to choke off the moral and material support that was being prepared in the mines, where the struggles and triumphs of those fighters had begun to sow legend and faith." (*Cineaste,* Vol. V, #2)

The Night of San Juan and other documentary-like recreations of repression and rebellion seek to expose historical distortions and to recommend armed militancy; they deal in events and actions rather than sentiments and alternatives. "The cinema of propaganda," declares Paolo Taviani, "must insist on its role as an instrument. Its value depends on its immediate efficacity—a notion foreign to cinema (in the cinema of propaganda at its limit, cinema doesn't count)." The cinema of propaganda is likened to a slogan in a workers' struggle. Taviani goes on to point out that it is a "cinema based on the work of a group: which tends to bring together the protagonists of the film (and the cineaste is but an instrument in their hands)." Films that fit these characteristics range from *Salt of the Earth* (Biberman *et al.*), to *Narita—Peasants of the Second Fortress* (Ogawa *et al.*), to *Coup Pour Coup* (Karmitz *et al.*), and much of the

work of Joris Ivens such as *The People and Their Guns* or *The 17th Parallel.* They celebrate the diligence and courage of the proletariat in opposition to the indolence and venality of the oppressors, whereas the intellectual films concentrate on *internal,* personal struggles of conscience, purpose, and responsibility. The propaganda films, in their quest for clarity, are prone toward simplification of psychological, social and ethical complexities, while the case-study films are always in danger of appealing only to those sectors of the population who (1) already agree with the theses of the film, or (2) are not likely to act in a militant manner.

Events are no more real than experience. Objective conditions are no more truthful than a day in an individual's life. Consciousness is the result of an immeasurable rhapsody of influences and desires, of which film is but an infinite kaleidoscope. The diversity of the modern radical cinema is its healthiest characteristic. All aspects of life must be analyzed, all prevailing attitudes challenged. All movies are significant. For society to be transformed, individuals must free both their motivational cores and their conscious daily activity.

The extent to which cinema facilitates this change is inestimable. However, a possible indication of the impotence of "revolutionary art" is to be derived from the fact that the films discussed above were financed by the Italian Government, which obviously feels that it can absorb them and strengthen itself in the process.

NOTES

1. The Taviani brothers have been making radical movies since 1950. After a series of documentaries made in collaboration with Valentino Orsini, and *Italy is Not a Poor Country* with Joris Ivens, the Tavianis started making dramatic features: *A Man to Burn* and *The Outlaws of Marriage* (both with Orsini), *The Subversives* and *The Sign of the Scorpion,* and finally *San Michele* in 1971. The Tavianis write their own scripts.

2. Jorge Sanjines made two features previous to *The Night of San Juan: Ukamau* and *Blood of the Condor.* He has been in exile from Bolivia since August 1971.

Sanjines and the Tavianis represent two divergent notions about the relationship of politics to cinema. The Tavianis: "One must not confuse things. One thing is cinema, another is politics. The two serve to change things (to know them in order to change them, to change them in order to know them); but with the instruments, the incidences, the times to make them work differently. Their respective utilizations depend on their autonomy. If the cinema submits itself to serving as a sounding-box for politics, it would be stripped of its major responsibility, even in its relations with political work, especially that which comes from individual consciousness."

Sanjines, however, states that "film and politics are for us—and I am speaking in the name of the group that I work with—one and the same thing." He does not separate artistic production from political action. This is not mere rhetoric. He goes to the people to make his films, he makes the films with their help, about their specific struggles, and when finished, travels throughout the country with a projector showing the film to as many people as he can. Sanjines's principal concern is the condition of the Bolivian public. He accepted the RAI production deal only after they agreed to let his group have exclusive exhibiting rights for Bolivia. He does not seek to place his works in the "intellectual supermarket" of film festivals and international commercial distribution, but rather to "illuminate the road" for the Bolivian masses who, he feels, have accumulated sufficient hatred and pain to initiate an armed liberation struggle once the causes of their oppression have been made clear to them.

3. Bolivia, a landlocked nation twice the size of Spain, has 3.5 million inhabitants, 75% of whom are Indians, mostly descended from the Quechua Incas. The Spanish first imperialized Bolivia, seeking silver and then tin. Native revolutions broke out in 1661, 1730, 1776–80, and "independence" was achieved in 1825. Since then, some 200 coups, assassinations, or similar tumultuous changes of government have occurred. Bolivia is a one-product economy, and is entirely dependent on world tin prices for its solvency. The tin mines provide between 60% and 90% of the country's exports, and the number of miners varies between 20 and 40 thousand. In April, 1952, a "revolution" was carried out by a stormy urban coalition known as the MNR—the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement. Formed officially in 1941, but preceded by dissenting students and young professionals, the MNR has traditionally been comprised of two disparate factions—those favoring a mass-based socialist collectivization, and those seeking "national renovation" through electoral politics and reforms imposed from above. Despite radical nationalist rhetoric

and a conscious attempt (since 1947) to broaden its base, the MNR remained an elitist, parliamentary, statist organization, and workers tended to distrust it; it was entirely out of touch with the peasantry. In 1952 MNR civilian irregulars overthrew the ruling junta, with crucial actions carried out by armed miners, including the seizure of a munitions train. Paz Estenssoro returned from exile and took over the presidency, nationalizing the tin mines but protecting the medium-sized mining corporations. The state-capitalist tin company, Comibol, is one of the biggest such operations in the world; it recognized unions and for a time the conditions of the miners appeared to improve. By the mid-sixties, however, after another coup, Comibol began trying to cut back the work force, lower wages, and break the unions. In 1965 a large strike threatened to turn into an insurrection, and the mining areas of Bolivia were subjected to virtual military occupation. Later a progressive (Torres) liberalized the society slightly, but he was then overthrown by a US-supported coup.

Reviews

DON'T LOOK NOW

Director: Nicolas Roeg. Script: Allan Scott and Chris Bryant, based on a story by Daphne du Maurier. Producer: Peter Katz. Paramount.

"I know who I am," says Chas, the murderous thug of *Performance,* and clearly the unnamed girl of *Walkabout* could say the same thing just as smugly. Both movies open with rapidfire montages of modern urban life; and even though we grasp the abrasive, jolting desperation that they convey, we also lose our bearings as the fast editing overwhelms our power to puzzle out the connections between disparate juxtaposed shots. But Chas and the girl obviously don't feel this way. He crashes through his chaotic world with perfect aplomb; she never loses the docile, obedient, faintly prim look that she brings to elocution classes. They don't see the madness in which they are immersed until later, when Chas hides from triggermen in a weird mansion full of drugs and bisexuals, when the girl finds herself marooned in the Australian outback with her younger brother and an aborigine who speaks no English. At this point in each movie, staccato cutting gives way to mostly lengthier, more leisurely shots, and the undermining of each character's complacency begins. Nicolas Roeg's third film, *Don't Look Now,* enacts the same ritual through an occult melodrama.

The movie has a serious weakness that had better be gotten out of the way right at the start: its creaky plot (to be given away here) derived from a story by Daphne du Maurier, who specializes in romantic sludge. Roeg, with adaptors Allan Scott and Chris Bryant, has enriched her account of a British couple vacationing in Venice to recover from the death of their daughter, only to meet a pair of women claiming to bear messages from her. Now John and Laura Baxter are in Italy because he is helping to restore a church endangered by the sinking city, whose rotting grandeur works a spell of its own. But too often the gears grind when Roeg tries to shift from this old-hat storyline to the subtext of fear and uncertainty that he has built into it. The murderer plaguing the city is clumsily introduced; the eventual relationship of the killer to the daughter through the red raincoats that both wear is utterly contrived; the ambiguous bishop, the creepy clairvoyants, the detectives, even the surprise ending are all covered with moss. Robert Mulligan ran into this problem in *The Others;* he gives us a mesmerizing vision of childhood's joys, secrets, and terrors, only to have the cornball plot that he is stuck with just about destroy its poetry and resonance. *Don't Look Now* suffers less than this from its groaning Gothic load, but its tortuous plotting does cramp Roeg's style in a way that the simple premises of *Performance* and *Walkabout* do not.

Even so, Roeg successfully plunges us into a formerly peaceful, ordered world now smashed into jagged arcs and shards by sudden, pointless death. After their daughter's accidental drown-

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Even so, Roeg successfully plunges us into a formerly peaceful, ordered world now smashed into jagged arcs and shards by sudden, pointless death. After their daughter's accidental drown-

Donald Sutherland in DON'T LOOK NOW

ing in a pond on their property, the daily life of the Baxters disintegrates into confusion and anxiety. Visions and hallucinations disturb them; bleeding red stains appear everywhere; water and broken glass form sinister link-chains; portents and mysteries, cries and whispers abound. Both are sane, reasonable people—John is an unbending rationalist — but mere reason cannot assuage their grief or answer their unspoken "Why?" Months later, in Italy, they are outwardly reconciled but inwardly drained—especially Laura, who cannot banish the numbing apathy that still torments her and resists all comforting logic. Unlike the glitter rock vampires of the jet set, who seem to batten lustfully on disintegration and decadence, the Baxters are genuinely, poignantly lost, though John pretends that he is not. Roeg's style pitches us headlong into their disorientation. During the drowning sequence, slow motion lengthens John's frantic rescue attempt and his animal howls almost unbearably, capturing the way that shocking, unexpected anguish seems to stop the flow of time. Later, an eerie shot of a falling stick introduces a scene in which John narrowly misses death on a crumbling scaffold; a teeth-rattling piece of suspense, this episode, scarily protracted, also suggests magic, supernatural powers in a universe where nothing adds up, all explanations are futile, meaning has vanished.

Roeg joins Eisenstein, Resnais, and Lester in leaning heavily on editing for his effects, but his montage is not quite like anybody else's. It mostly lacks the Proustian dimension that Resnais imparts to *Hiroshima, mon amour* or the mosaic-of-time splintering that he imposes on *Je t'aime, je t'aime*. It has none of the pop-comic tone of most Lester movies; even the more emotional *Petulia,* which Roeg photographed, is not exactly comparable despite its fragmentation because it does not suspend time or get involved with the otherworldly. Eisenstein's montage creates or demonstrates connections between

shots. We can be sure that these connections exist, at least in his mind, and we can almost always grasp them immediately because they have generally been reduced to the simplicity—often the simple-mindedness—of a slogan or a cartoon. But Roeg's montage does not say that two shots are connected; it says that they *might* be. Eisenstein's editing aims for certainty; Roeg's, for uncertainty. With Roeg, A plus B does not necessarily equal C; it may equal D or Q or nothing, and plus may be minus. When his rapid juxtapositions outrun our ability to sort them out, we tumble into an uncertainty that, in the hands of a hack, would be merely cheap but that, in his, becomes genuinely metaphysical. He uses them to undercut our total allegiance to reason, our dogged confidence that we are standing on solid ground.

The film's supreme example of this approach is its beautiful, already classic love scene, which according to friends who also saw the original version was insignificantly modified for American release to avoid the dreaded X. (Fourteen shots of nudity were removed and fourteen others, identical in length to them but slightly less explicit in content, were substituted. This is a victory, since original plans apparently called for the entire scene to be lopped out. Why, since the trims deemed necessary to grant it an R were so minor, it couldn't have been rated R uncut, you might as well not bother asking, given the antique morality of the MPAA raters.) In one of the most imaginative leaps in film history, Roeg intercuts shots of John's and Laura's love-making with shots of them dressing for dinner afterwards. The reverberations are complex. The sex shows how much in love, how strongly committed to one another, John and Laura are. But the dressing places them apart from one another, with mutually bemused expressions that suggest, simultaneously, blissful memories of the love-making and intimations of their coming separation. The unisexual overtones, noted by Pauline Kael and Molly Haskell, connect with the theme of *Performance* and the heroine's memory of the wilderness in *Walkabout.* Yet, as one person pointed out to me, they also indicate something more mundane: the way that many happily married couples come to resemble each other during their years together. Because we see the sex in flashes and because the emotions of the sex also suffuse the dressing, the intercutting makes the sequence doubly erotic—yet also melancholy. For we sense that, no matter how intense their love or how satisfying their sex may be, John and Laura still cannot save themselves. The splintered editing imposes a feeling of desperation on their thrusting and caressing. And since the two scenes are shown simultaneously although they presumably happened one after the other, we get lost with the characters as past, present, and future merge into a single evanescent mirage.

Somewhat the way that Pontecorvo's films promote revolution but focus on counterrevolutionaries, Roeg's examine hidden forces but pivot upon characters who deny their existence. In *Performance,* Chas initially claims that Turner and the other inhabitants of the mansion must be freaks and perverts. The heroine of *Walkabout* hews rigidly to words and civilized biases while her brother, too young to be restricted by them yet, communicates with the aborigine without language. In *Don't Look Now,* their encounter with the strange women splits the Baxters. Laura eagerly believes their story; John harshly ridicules it. Yet he cannot help her the way that her stunned, tearful, wholehearted

acceptance of the women does. She does collapse and suffer after encountering them, but she also emerges from the experience serene and comforted. In the scene in which she breaks down before them, Julie Christie's face is especially delicate and touching; her subtle modulation during the film from darting, pulsating little movements to calm and self-assurance expresses the change that she undergoes. By giving in to the possibility and the wish for contact with her dead daughter, Laura at last breaks through her blocked emotions—regardless of whether or not the occult really exists. John cannot follow her; he is tied to reason alone as the girl of *Walkabout* is to words alone. He draws the audience to himself by embodying its skepticism. Yet, although the absolutes, the universal certainty and meaning, that religion once provided have irrevocably crumbled, the longing for them, for a time when Answers seemed to exist, may remain, even in a staunch rationalist like John. The church that he helps to repair is a multifaceted emblem of his own soul. It gutted interior and scarred walls symbolize a dead orthodoxy whose former consolations and mysteries linger in memory, like his daughter. He imagines that his interest in it is solely aesthetic. But Donald Sutherland's finely graded, low-key performance slowly reveals that every facet of John's personality—his forbearance, his quiet sense of humor, his gentleness with the distraut Laura—is part of an elaborate defense against the force of his suppressed desires.

But his resistance to the possibility of the occult and his refusal to accept his own second sight are not just village atheism; they also stem from intense psychological conflicts. The most obvious is guilt over his daughter's death, rather crudely underlined when Laura says that the little girl played by the pond with his permission. This only blurs the issue. We do not need her dialogue to perceive his remorse. Blaming himself, even unjustifiably, is an utterly natural reaction to such a devastating blow. But it is also an *irrational* response, just the kind that John's pride as a man of reason will not allow him to accept in himself. By categorically rejecting Laura's experience, he isolates himself from her and from her help. As his scorn for his own ESP emerges, we perceive it as his sole means of coping with his sense of guilt, which he is too frightened to confront by himself or expose to his wife. But his scorn only intensifies his guilt, for had he acknowledged his psychic gift when it signalled him that his daughter was in danger, perhaps he could have reached her in time. From this it is a short step to wanting reunion with her, a wish that his unacknowledged drives towards punishment and atonement turn into a death wish.

John's final yielding to his secret yearnings triggers the ending of the film and makes it moving, despite the plot contrivances that also bring it on. Like Chas, who eventually embraces his desire for some kind of soul-union with Turner (which probably reflects the ideas of Donald Cammell, the writer and co-director of *Performance*), John, chasing the mysterious red-coated figure, acts out his fantasy of reaching beyond the grave to his daughter. Like the girl of *Walkabout,* he is seeking his own "land of lost content"; the sylvan parkland of his English home in the first sequence suggests her haunting remembrance of the outback. A heartstopping close-up of her wistful face (the equal of Chaplin's great conclusion to *City Lights*), reveals the very instant when, years too late, she silently comprehends the value of her experience and the depth of her loss. The climax of *Don't Look Now* is not quite so elegiac—partly because it is also the snapper of a gimmicky plot, partly because Roeg's handling of the elusive figure in red is a bit awkward, curiously inferior to the gossamer ghost of Miss Jessel in Jack Clayton's *The Innocents*. But the same disquieting note of misunderstood experience can be heard in it. John's earlier premonitions—a black gondola with Laura and the women on it, Laura's rhapsodically heightened departure from Venice by boat, a murder victim fished from a canal and momentarily resembling her—he mistook for anticipations of her death. Actually, they foretold what he has unknowingly been seeking, his own end. It is a tribute to Roeg's artistry that this originally tricky conclusion, like the rest of *Don't Look Now,* can transcend itself, even im-

perfectly. There should be no further doubt about his high position in contemporary film.

—MICHAEL DEMPSEY

BADLANDS

Produced, written and directed by Terrence Malick. Photographed by Brian Probyn, Tak Fujimoto and Stevan Larner. Warner.

Appraising a new director's first film involves both risk and challenge, since there is no recourse to his "normal" approaches and intentions. With Terrence Malick there is only a clue from his previous career—which included a year of teaching philosophy at MIT—to suggest that *Badlands* may have some significance beyond its purely narrative interest.[1] The film itself suggests as much.

Its story is simple—far too simple for an ordinary action film. It is based on the real-life exploits of Charles Starkweather and Caril Fugate in 1958 and is set around the same period of time. In Rapid City, South Dakota, Kit (Martin Sheen), a 25-year-old who drifts from one job to another, teams up with 15-year-old Holly (Sissy Spacek). When her father (Warren Oates) objects, Kit shoots him. The couple go on the run, and Kit shoots several other people who might threaten their freedom. Eventually Holly gives herself up and Kit—now a notorious outlaw—allows himself to be captured.

In outline, *Badlands* recalls other recent films on similar real-life themes, from *Bonnie and Clyde* to *Dillinger*. But Malick's approach sets it apart. He does not load the story with expressive details. Most particularly, although the behavior of Kit and Holly seems to beg for explanation, Malick never delves into their past or conjures up psychological "insights." His film is cool and reticent.

This distancing of the characters and their behavior is reinforced by the formal organization, which skillfully combines old and new conventions. From time to time Holly's narrative voice takes over the sound track, reminding the viewer that the events he is watching are already past, completed. Unlike the traditional narration, however, Holly's comments do not explain, create curiosity, or cue the viewer's emotions. Her expressionless tone and second-hand phraseology ("Better to spend a week with one who loved me than years of loneliness" . . . "The world was like a far-off planet"), which do not falter even for the killing of her father, serve to chill rather than excite the viewer. Only in the final scene—which shows clouds and a setting sun while Holly tells of Kit's execution—is there any hint of the nostalgia which most films that are set in a remembered past evoke so easily.

Malick also uses the more modern narrative approach which rejects a smooth flow in favor of terse, self-contained sequences. He often makes the viewer aware of the space-time gaps between adjacent scenes by means of a strong visual contrast and the use of a rapid fade instead of a cut. Thus the first view of Holly (and the first scene in the film) shows her sitting on her bed with her dog; then a rapid fade leads to a view of back streets and a garbage truck on which Kit is working. The shift from a close view of a motionless interior to a distant exterior view of movement sets the tone of the film. For Kit and Holly there is no underlying continuity between events, just as there is no inner bond between themselves or between each of them and the "far-off planet" of the world.

Many individual scenes in the film are striking or beautiful or both, suggesting at first the irrelevantly eye-catching photography by which many tyro (and veteran) film-makers are seduced. But here it is not irrelevant at all. It presents us with Kit's and Holly's perception of the world—a random succession of surface phenomena which may fascinate them but convey no meaning. Probably for this reason, Malick makes a few scenes willfully enigmatic: a panting catfish that Holly throws into the back yard because it is sick; Kit standing on a dead steer; a brief glimpse of a llama in the woods; Kit standing on the Wyoming border with his gun across his shoulders, like a scarecrow. But since the viewer looks for meaning everywhere, such scenes run the risk either of seeming cute (like the llama[2]) or of undergoing far-fetched interpretation. Elsewhere, Malick avoids deliberate enigma, relying instead on the lucidity of visual impact to make events stand out in

perfectly. There should be no further doubt about his high position in contemporary film.

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Its story is simple—far too simple for an ordinary action film. It is based on the real-life exploits of Charles Starkweather and Caril Fugate in 1958 and is set around the same period of time. In Rapid City, South Dakota, Kit (Martin Sheen), a 25-year-old who drifts from one job to another, teams up with 15-year-old Holly (Sissy Spacek). When her father (Warren Oates) objects, Kit shoots him. The couple go on the run, and Kit shoots several other people who might threaten their freedom. Eventually Holly gives herself up and Kit—now a notorious outlaw—allows himself to be captured.

In outline, *Badlands* recalls other recent films on similar real-life themes, from *Bonnie and Clyde* to *Dillinger*. But Malick's approach sets it apart. He does not load the story with expressive details. Most particularly, although the behavior of Kit and Holly seems to beg for explanation, Malick never delves into their past or conjures up psychological "insights." His film is cool and reticent.

This distancing of the characters and their behavior is reinforced by the formal organization, which skillfully combines old and new conventions. From time to time Holly's narrative voice takes over the sound track, reminding the viewer that the events he is watching are already past, completed. Unlike the traditional narration, however, Holly's comments do not explain, create curiosity, or cue the viewer's emotions. Her expressionless tone and second-hand phraseology ("Better to spend a week with one who loved me than years of loneliness" . . . "The world was like a far-off planet"), which do not falter even for the killing of her father, serve to chill rather than excite the viewer. Only in the final scene—which shows clouds and a setting sun while Holly tells of Kit's execution—is there any hint of the nostalgia which most films that are set in a remembered past evoke so easily.

Malick also uses the more modern narrative approach which rejects a smooth flow in favor of terse, self-contained sequences. He often makes the viewer aware of the space-time gaps between adjacent scenes by means of a strong visual contrast and the use of a rapid fade instead of a cut. Thus the first view of Holly (and the first scene in the film) shows her sitting on her bed with her dog; then a rapid fade leads to a view of back streets and a garbage truck on which Kit is working. The shift from a close view of a motionless interior to a distant exterior view of movement sets the tone of the film. For Kit and Holly there is no underlying continuity between events, just as there is no inner bond between themselves or between each of them and the "far-off planet" of the world.

Many individual scenes in the film are striking or beautiful or both, suggesting at first the irrelevantly eye-catching photography by which many tyro (and veteran) film-makers are seduced. But here it is not irrelevant at all. It presents us with Kit's and Holly's perception of the world—a random succession of surface phenomena which may fascinate them but convey no meaning. Probably for this reason, Malick makes a few scenes willfully enigmatic: a panting catfish that Holly throws into the back yard because it is sick; Kit standing on a dead steer; a brief glimpse of a llama in the woods; Kit standing on the Wyoming border with his gun across his shoulders, like a scarecrow. But since the viewer looks for meaning everywhere, such scenes run the risk either of seeming cute (like the llama[2]) or of undergoing far-fetched interpretation. Elsewhere, Malick avoids deliberate enigma, relying instead on the lucidity of visual impact to make events stand out in

arresting isolation. For example, when Kit sets fire to Holly's house, the conflagration is presented in sharp, sensuous images of flames swirling around a doll's house, a piano, the dead father's face; and while they do carry a meaning for the viewer—the burning of Holly's bridges to her past—the first, equally valid impact comes from their inconsequential beauty.

This visual immediacy, which might seem to clash with the formal and narrative distancing of the film, in fact extends it. The viewer sees vividly but always at a distance. Just as Malick offers no psychological explanations to cloud our image of Kit and Holly, so he makes few attempts to involve us (melodramatically or kinesthetically) in their actions. Thus the killings are presented casually, without either the pathos or the cynicism that would be implied by a sudden recourse to slow motion, rapid cutting, or gory close-ups. The camera is never overtly subjective: while we share in Kit's and Holly's way of seeing the world, we remain outside them. In fact, *they* form part of the phenomena that challenge *us*.

As we try to make sense of their actions we see them trying to do the same with the phenomena of their world. In an attempt to create continuity, Kit memorializes notable events: he launches a balloon to mark his bond with Holly, builds one rock cairn on the site where they first make love, another where he is about to be captured. Holly finds it easier to grasp phenomena when they have settled in the past: she muses over old photos in a stereopticon and, of course, retrospectively imposes the verbal structure of her commentary on her whole experience with Kit.

After the burning of the house, when Kit and Holly escape from Rapid City, they make a particularly ambitious attempt to cope with reality. They build a tree house in the woods, and Kit pays special attention to defenses and warnings so that they can live in their own small manageable world without intrusions from outside. But their world cannot stay closed forever. A group of bounty hunters discovers them, and although Kit's defense system works—all the hunters are killed—their cover is blown. They have to move on, out once more into vastness and confusion.

Although Kit and Holly break violently with society they still cling to fragments of its structure, as if they might one day discover the meaning it seems to carry for other people. Thus when they go on the run, Holly makes a point of taking her school books along; and later Kit, playing with a dictaphone, delivers a speech apparently devoid of irony on the need to respect teachers. By paying lip service to the god Education, they might in the end be touched with understanding. Meanwhile they must fall back on simpler, more accessible myths. Holly turns to her favorite reading matter, fan magazines, and in her commentary reshapes her past life to conform to their world view. Kit, delighted to find he looks like James Dean, accepts the role of doomed hero, not forgetting the last gesture of donating his body to science.

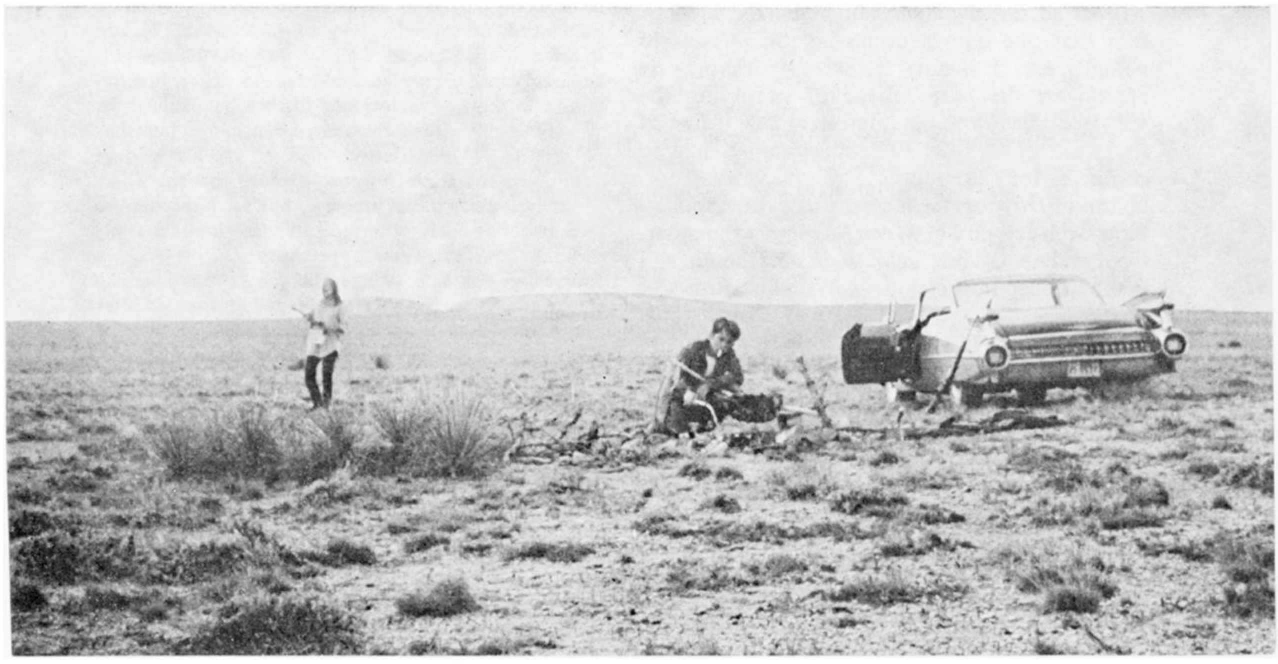
My verbal summary may imply, wrongly, that the film takes a patronizing attitude toward Holly and Kit. But there is no attempt either to excuse or condemn. Nor does the film make any judgment of the world they live in—though it is easy to think so. Since hardly any scenes cue our emotions, we may attach excessive importance to the few that do. For example, I was tempted to connect Kit's shooting of Holly's father with an earlier scene where the father, to punish Holly for seeing Kit, shoots her dog: Aha, I thought, Malick is rattling the old symbols of violence begetting violence, of rigid authority inviting its own destruction. And the satirical edge of a few later scenes—a "montage" of vigilantes forming to hunt for Kit and Holly; the folk-heroic respect paid to the manacled Kit by national guardsmen to whom he gives his possessions as souvenirs—seemed to further resolve the film into a denunciation of American society today, with the Badlands of the title standing metonymically for the whole nation.

These scenes may indeed reflect Malick's views—as brief political gestures he could not help making[8]—but the rest of the film shows quite clearly that it cannot be reduced to so simple a message. The distancing and discon-

tinuity of Malick's approach resist monolithic interpretation. In fact, they throw doubt on *any* point that appears neatly and completely expressed in a handful of scenes—even a simple twist of the plot. Thus after killing Holly's father, Kit records a suicide message at a coin-operated booth; later he leaves the record outside the burning house, hoping the police will think he died in the fire. The fact that the later scene revealed a hidden "meaning" in the suicide message came as a slight shock, making me aware that nearly all the other scenes in the film are clear and self-contained. *Badlands* has virtually no level of meaning between the individual scene and the totality of the film.

On this second, macroscopic level, as we've seen, the discontinuity of the film itself carries meaning. In addition, the film gradually reveals an underlying *continuity* of meaning—in the physical displacements of Kit's and Holly's odyssey. They start out in a city—that is, a neatly laid out grid of streets which belongs to an ordered society. (This symbol almost becomes overt in the billboard picture of an idealized residential area which Holly's father is seen painting out in the plains—as if he carries order with him wherever he goes.) Kit, working on a garbage truck which slavishly follows the grid, makes the first move to escape; he gets a job on a ranch outside the city. Then, after the shooting of Holly's father, both of them make a break with the city and try to create their own micro-society in the woods. Forced to go on the run, they steal a car but soon turn off the highway and start driving across the plains— leaving the beaten track, breaking their last link with the social order. This farewell to society is celebrated in a fine sequence where they pause by a railroad in the middle of nowhere, watch a train pass by—its clattering proximity only emphasizing the distance they have traveled away from the regular and the familiar—and then leave a pail full of junk beside the track as a memorial. From here on they lose their bearings: Kit points to a distant mountain and says they'll find freedom there in Saskatchewan—which lies much further north —while Holly's narration says that the city lights they glimpse at night belong to Cheyenne— which lies much further south. They cannot, of course, find any lasting geographical escape: Kit has to return to a highway for gas, and this leads to his capture. But in another sense, as Kit accepts the role of folk hero which people now thrust on him, he never does return, and the

Terrence Malick's BADLANDS



film ends fittingly up in the clouds—in the plane carrying him back to Rapid City to stand trial.

It's amusing to note—and, I'm sure, entirely coincidental[4]—that *Badlands* offers a geographical extension of *North by Northwest,* starting at Hitchcock's destination (Rapid City is only a few miles from Mount Rushmore) and continuing in the same direction. I mention this for two reasons. First, the (deliberate) melodrama and implausibility of the events which change the hero's life in *North by Northwest* point up the sheer casualness of the incidents which lead Kit and Holly along their odyssey. None of the crucial events in their lives—not even the killings—are endowed with any portent or seem to stand out from the trivial and the routine. In this, the unexplained and perhaps inexplicable rampage of Kit and Holly touches our own experience, as we struggle to make sense of our lives and plan wisely for the future, only to discover too late that many of the real turning points came and went unnoticed. The difference is that Kit and Holly appear to have virtually no plans or expectations: thus no surprise, no regret, no wishful thinking on their part blurs our view of what happens to them. The film remains memorable above all for this lucidity.

Then there is the second reason for mentioning *North by Northwest.* From all that I've written so far, *Badlands* might be the kind of film that one enjoys discussing but groans to actually see. It is not. It shares with *North by Northwest* the basic virtue of gratifying the viewer and holding his interest. I saw it first at the New York Film Festival, where it had to compete for attention with the coruscating charm of *Day for Night* on the one hand and the blowtorch ferocity of *Mean Streets* on the other. Cool, reticent, and lucid, *Badlands* could still make its deep impression. —WILLIAM JOHNSON

NOTES

1. Malick also spent a year at the AFI's Center for Advanced Studies, where he worked on several scripts and directed as well as wrote a short film, *Lanton Mills.* This offbeat comedy, in which two Texan outlaws ride into Los Angeles on horseback and attempt a bank holdup, reveals little of the timing and control which give such strength to *Badlands.*

After completing this review I was able to clarify some points by talking with Malick. These comments are appended in the remaining footnotes.

2. Malick says he hoped this scene would be too brief for the viewer to identify the animal.

3. He tells me he had no conscious thought of political symbolism, though he did foresee the title might suggest that Kit and Holly were venturing on primitive *moral* territory.

4. Yes indeed, says Malick. His only deliberate reference to another film is Kit's gun-across-shoulders pose, which is modeled on James Dean's in *Giant.*

Short Notices

[We plan to devote this section to films that are not in theatrical release and hence do not receive comment from the weekly film critics.]

The Foreigners, by Johan Bergenstrahle, is a Swedish film with most of its dialogue in Greek—appropriately, since it concerns Athenian immigrants in Stockholm at a loss to cope with their adopted country. A family of five men and two women, they're locked into menial jobs and unable to fathom their exclusion from this allegedly egalitarian land. In a drunken moment the father longs for the sense of community they had in Greece but, sobering, recalls the heel of the colonels which had decided their flight. There are both desperate and sensible ways to get ahead, but none seem to be working out. The daughter tries selling herself to a smooth-faced executive. One of the sons takes lessons in Swedish and dreams of all the gorgeous blonde girls he could meet if only he could talk to them. Frustration at working as factory and kitchen help sometimes erupts in fights among themselves, but more often they are glad to have each other, at least. The film doesn't have much dramatic impetus because the characters themselves make little progress, but its inspection of their plight is finely observed. In tone the final scene is unlike anything except perhaps that of Wajda's *Everything For Sale* (where Olbrychski runs laughing among the horses to shake off the pall that settled after The Actor's death). Here, the father has died, and the sons, with no greater prospects than before and presumably less cohesion, are coming back from the burial. But instead of going back into their tenement they stay in the courtyard and, with increasing enthusiasm, improvise a game of soccer among themselves. Like many Swedish directors in the decade since Bo Widerberg declared the need for politically aware films, Bergen-

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I. F. Stone's Weekly (62 minutes) amounts to a valentine for America's irascible newsman's newsman, Isadore F. Stone. Stone would be a delightful subject for any film-maker—a combination of wit, pungency, and relevance with a face reminiscent of an aging, myopic elf. Jerry Bruck's documentary is most successful when it allows Stone to speak for himself, less so when the politics and technique of the cinematographer intrude. At its best, *I. F. Stone's Weekly* shows a remarkable man at work and allows him to muse about journalism, politics, and public officials, those "masters of the disingenuous statement." Stone was never an insider. In publishing his famous weekly from 1953–1971, his usual technique was to pore over volumes of the *Congressional Record* and devour countless domestic and foreign newspapers, sifting them for overlooked facts, gleaning tell-tale bits of information to be squirreled away in massive files for later reference. Using this technique combined with a massive intelligence and photographic memory, he put together material for the *I. F. Stone's Weekly* with a careful eye to the factual, the documented. Stone was an heroic outsider unafraid to take on the pompous, the powerful, and espouse unpopular causes. His boldness and unwillingness to compromise incurred the wrath of Joseph McCarthy, Spiro Agnew, and got Stone banned in 1941 from the Washington Press Club for taking a black judge to lunch. Stone admits that his outsider role has put him at a disadvantage, but the position has its rewards. "The establistment writers know a lot more than I do, but half of what they know isn't true." By carefully avoiding being taken into the fold, Stone has also avoided intimidation and unconscious self-management of the news.

When dealing with the man and his newspaper work, director Bruck is on firm footing, and the resulting portrait is delightful. However, periodically Bruck cinematically editoralizes using heavy-handed contrasting shots that underline the obvious. In newsreel footage Walter Cronkite refers to Marshall Ky as a "great hero of the Vietnamese people" while Stone prints excerpts from an earlier interview where Ky stated (in no uncertain terms) his frank admiration of Adolf Hitler.

Bruck brings the documentary to a climax by intercutting footage of LBJ at a Marine Corps base, shots of aerial napalm bombing, and I. F. Stone receiving an honorary doctorate at Amherst College, all this with a men's chorus singing in Latin in the background. While a cinematic conclusion to the film, the scene strays a bit from I. F. Stone's personality and accomplishments. But Stone's compelling personality survives both the scrutiny of the camera and the technique of the cinematographer. One could only wish the film spent more time delving into the man's considerable journalistic accomplishments, capturing a bit more of the self-confessed "maniacal zest and idiot zeal" of a "truth junkie with all his foibles intact." —Steve Bevitt

Marilyn, Bruce Conner's eleventh 16mm film, is constructed of brief segments excised from two Marilyn Monroe softcore nudies of the early forties (she was about 19). The clips are few, and are repeated over and over, punctuated heavily by black spaces of opaque leader. The sound track is the song "I'm Through with Love," which Monroe sings in *Some Like It Hot*—repeated five times. The images: Monroe lying down and smoothing her hair, Monroe playing with an apple, Monroe stepping out of a skirt, Monroe rolling onto her back, etc. She wears only panties. The effect is hypnotic and depressing. Rhythmic repetition of movements emphasizes the ritualization of "erotic" material in general. Watching Marilyn hulk endlessly through these banal motions is like watching every poor naked individual who has ever been used to purvey graceless and profiteering sex. The film has a dreamlike quality: it is not linear, its affective power derives from droning visual cycles—short, pure, looped, reiterated, non-forgettable. Our fascination with the contours of her flesh is indulged and honed. The effect is disconcerting: we cannot forget the horror of her life and death in America, and yet we are obliged by minimalism to examine the sway of her breasts and the shape of her nipples. The voyeurism is painful and relentless. "Mailer has speculated," says Conner, "that this may not be Marilyn because the breasts are so large, but I have written him a long letter arguing that she is real." Nicholas Ray declared at a showing of the film in Berkeley that the image was indeed *not* Marilyn. Conner, however, seems certain. Perhaps new experts with inside information will step forward. . . . The last image of the film is a quick clip of Marilyn sprawled face down on the floor, motionless. It seems calculated to convey a feeling of death. Where the film proceeds structurally, it ends dramatically. The whole thing is very provocative and upsetting. Marilyn seems drunken and dead inside. There is no vivaciousness or beauty, only necromancy and doom. —Michael Shedlin

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Books

The flood of film books continues, and in hopes of giving some sense of organization to the tide of titles, we have provided below reviews of some of the most important (others will be reviewed in later issues) plus a section of brief listings, arranged by rough categories. Unsigned annotations are by Ernest Callenbach.

NEW FILM HISTORIES

DEVELOPMENT OF THE FILM: AN INTERPRETIVE HISTORY. By Alan Casty. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973. $5.95.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MOVIES. By Gerald Mast. New York: Pegasus, 1971.

A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE CINEMA. Volume 1: BEFORE 1940. Volume 2: SINCE 1940. Edited by Peter Cowie. New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1971.

With the comparatively recent interest in serious film scholarship still growing and with the opportunities for seeing old and even "lost" films constantly increasing, it is not unreasonable to expect that we may soon see a major revision of the sense of film history that we have inherited in one form or another from Paul Rotha, Richard Griffith, Arthur Knight, and others less systematic in their renditions of the cinematic past. These three recent paperback histories provide no such radical departures, though the Casty volume in particular outdates much that has come before it. But their appearance is an important event for contemporary film scholarship and their various successes and failures may set the stage for bolder efforts.

All three of these histories deal with pretty much the same territory, but what they offer the reader varies sharply. First, then, some merely descriptive distinctions. *Format:* all three are organized more or less chronologically, but while Cowie's is divided into two volumes and organized by nation, Mast's is built around major periods and trends, and Casty's is constructed in terms of an unfolding theory of the art's main directions. *Range of emphasis:* Cowie's volumes are subtitled "Before 1940" and "Since 1940"; a little more than half of Mast is devoted to the silent cinema; and three-fourths of Casty concerns the sound era. *Ratios of information and analysis:* Casty is strongly inclined toward close analysis; Mast mixes detailed discussions of major films with an occasional chapter of straightforward information; Cowie and his 30-odd collaborators give us varying mixtures of brief evaluations and basic information.

The two volumes edited by Peter Cowie are the least impressive of this group, with a good many of the difficulties deriving simply from the limitations in format. Cowie has gathered together the contributions of nearly three dozen writers and despite a preface that wishes otherwise, all these critics' efforts frequently add up to little more than a loosely organized catalogue of names, titles, and dates. Space problems and the varying talents of the contributors are factors in the two volumes' unevenness, but *A Concise History of the Cinema* suffers most from the application of an encyclopedic impulse to what turns out to be a very cramped space. The attempts at discussion of various national cinemas are frequently sketchy and superficial, though there are several exceptions. Volume II is the stronger of the pair, thanks to comparatively substantial entries by Cowie on Welles, Robin Wood on Hitchcock, Cowie on Scandanavian cinema, and Cowie, Roy Armes, and Suzanne Budgen on Italian cinema.

But if this *Concise History* has a distinct value, it lies less in its treatment of mainstream trends and figures than in its proliferation of names and its information on "minor" national cinemas. Mast and Casty provide more illuminating views of film history, but it is Cowie and company who tell us a little about Nikolai Ekk, the "Pilsner" films of Sweden, Alexander Kolowrat, Jorgen Roos, Kimisaburo Yoshimura, etc. But even in terms of this modest but real service, the Cowie volumes have built-in limitations: if you want to know when Mario Bava was born,

you can find out here—but you'll have to do it without direct help from the index, which lists only the titles of films.

Mast's *A Short History of the Movies* is much more substantial than Cowie's *Concise* effort, but in some ways it is an even greater disappointment. Because of its simple language and its persistent attempts to give close and comprehensive readings of important films, Mast's book seems at first to have great potential as an introduction to the wealth of film history. But his discussions trip over their own conclusions often enough to make one wary not only of its usefulness as an introduction, but also of its authority as a view of film history. Though none of these histories is really original in terms of historical perspective, Mast's vision certainly seems the least original and the most old-fashioned. His somewhat disproportionate interest in the silent film may be justified as part of the historian's interest in the cinema's past, but alongside his all too ready reverence for so many textbook classics and his penchant for making various modernist films sound like essays in traditional humanism, the Mast version of film art's development begins to take on the unconvincing air of a hand-me-down classicism. Though he is not afraid to take a crack at something like *Metropolis,* his rather starry-eyed appreciations of standard classics sometimes strike a tone which is closer to press agentry than to criticism.

Mast certainly deserves credit for thoroughness in putting together a serviceable introduction to film history, but his discussions are sometimes seriously blurred by his imprecision as a critic: his linear approach to *Citizen Kane* divests that film of the ambiguities that make it something more than an elaborate technical exercise: his comments on the drag scene in *Grand Illusion* emphasize scathing satire in a moment marked by Renoir's tenderness and pathos in the face of obvious ironies; he tries to make Tati sound exactly like Keaton and Chaplin when it would be much more illuminating to talk about their differences; he writes that "The real subject of the Antonioni films is education" when he really means, or seems to mean, that Antonioni is trying to reshape modern consciousness. And sometimes his remarks seem far-fetched (*The General* is a "denigration of the heroic" and "the spiritual ancestor of *Doctor Strangelove*") or downright inaccurate ("The Ford world is one of night, fog, rain and shadow" or "The typical Hawks study is the contrast between the tough, weak man and the weak, tough man. . . . "). *A Short History of the Movies* is a better book than this brief catalogue of problematic passages might suggest, but such examples give some indication of Mast's imperfections as a critic.

Though perhaps less accessible than Mast's to readers at the introductory level, Casty's "interpretive history" is the most satisfactory (and sophisticated) of this group of paperbacks. While he uses his literary background to much greater advantage than Mast does, Casty is also much more responsive to the film medium. Mast seems to value the visual only insofar as it can be paraphrased into verbal significance, but Casty verbalizes the visual in ways that touch much closer to both the meaning and the elusiveness of "cinematic" experience. And Casty is at once more critical of and more genuinely responsive to the films he discusses; less awed by the giants of the film history he has inherited, he brings a good deal of freshness and candor to his evaluations. He also has a gift for going to the heart of a film-maker's vision and sometimes succeeds in saying more with less. But if he is a better critic than Mast, Casty should be credited even more for producing what is probably the most engrossing film history to have appeared so far in this country. His perspectives on the art's achievements gain from both his coherent theory of film history and his wide-ranging assimilations of the last decade's explosion in film awareness. The theory focusses on the hyperbolic profusion of modes of expression in the silent area, the consolidation of realism in the thirties and forties, and the multi-cadenced eclecticism ("the open style") of the last two decades. This eminently functional notion provides no dazzling new revelations, but it does give his individual discussions continuity

and a helpful larger context. And since it is used flexibly, his theory increases the richness of his discussions when it might have done the opposite.

Casty's volume is not without limitations, however. Some of his conclusions are certainly debatable, though they are almost always too well thought-out to provide the easy targets for dispute that turn up in the other two. Occasionally he trips over his terminology—as when he invents "Surreal Expressionism" in a nonetheless honorable attempt to define the styles of Fellini and Pasolini (the confusion is all the greater here, since earlier in the book he has invoked expressionism where a reference to surrealism would have been more to the point). And though his discussions of American cinema are often good, his overall approach seems somewhat dubious in places: the American *film noir* is enlighteningly placed between neorealism and the personal expressionisms of Cocteau and Ophuls, yet the singling out of Billy Wilder as the master of *film noir* seems unfair to both the genre and Wilder; and Casty's choice of John Huston, Carol Reed, David Lean, Alfred Hitchcock, and John Ford as "five representative cases of the studio style" misses the issue of "studio style" and *auteurs* by limiting the discussion to comparatively independent figures and omitting directors like Hawks, Cukor, Minnelli, and Walsh who created personal styles in the midst of various "studio styles." Moreover, like the others, he is primarily concerned with directors and while his efforts in this area are quite good, they also leave something of an imbalance. Ideally, a genuine film history, or in any event a longer one, will do more with the contributions of performers, writers, cameramen, studios. With or without the auteur policy, Casty is right to emphasize the director's centrality, but the powers and achievements of the cinema obviously do not limit themselves to the inspirations of directors alone.

And finally, despite his admirable range of insight, Casty's history reflects much of the critical atmosphere of the sixties and seventies, but not enough of their exploratory spirit. He has embraced an established perspective on film history, brought it up to date, freshened it with his own personal receptivity. But the overall pattern is in a way all too familiar. The breadth and authenticity of Casty's interests are above reproach, and yet his book arrives at a time when the inherited schemas of film history are being challenged almost daily by rediscovered directors, rediscovered films, and the revaluation of idols, icons, and ideologies.

Casty has provided us with an updated and refined view of previously established territory. To his credit, he has avoided the seemingly obligatory encomia of Mast, yet like Mast he has not really challenged the make-up of the territory itself. Seeing Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* recently, for example, has restructured my view of the Russian silent cinema (and the continued freshness of Vertov's radical cinema is, among other things, a fine example for T. S. Eliot's notion about the ways in which the present alters the past, and vice versa: Vertov and the New Wave were made for each other). I've seen enough of Abel Gance's work to feel that he too deserves more of the territory than he usually gets. Buster Keaton's genius as a performer has been amply recognized, but not nearly enough has been said about his brilliance as a director. There are so many American movies of the thirties and forties which have enduring qualities that one might be tempted to defend that era as the richest single period in film history—even though ideological muddles, various unresolved questions on the issue of film authorship, and the deeply entrenched pseudo-issue of art v. entertainment make that an especially difficult task. Beyond that, the increasingly international nature of film art more and more gives the lie to the nationalistic rationale of most film historians—the shortcomings of this approach are perhaps most dramatically evident with surrealism, which constitutes one of the most vital of film "traditions," but which seems almost nonexistent if viewed in merely national terms. In a similar connection, the emphasis on feature-length "dramatic-narrative" films is perhaps a necessary convenience for the authors of *short* histories, but it ignores the imposing evidence that the film, more than any other art,

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No single history or historian need be criticized too harshly for omission or failure on any one of these specific points: they all have their reasons. But I think that the general issue is unavoidable. And it is very much to Casty's credit that, for the time being, he has pretty well eliminated any need for another (short) history in the established line, and he has done it in a way that edges toward a re-opening of all the issues (his unifying theory, for example, is a step toward a fertile internationalism). Hopefully, now that he has made it harder to go back, it will be easier for someone else to move ahead.

—PETER HOGUE

DIANYING—ELECTRIC SHADOWS

An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China

By Jay Leyda. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1972. $12.50.

Leyda's monumental book falls into a near-vacuum of information about Chinese film. It will serve the same function as his *Kino* did for Russian film: it provides a historical foundation upon which studies of contemporary Chinese film work can rest.

They will rest uneasily, Leyda makes clear. To the usual difficulties of international understanding, the Chinese case requires us to add unusual cleavages: those stemming from Chinese ethnocentrism, and the even more important ones stemming from the revolution. Leyda, an outsider whose knowledge of Chinese language and culture was very imperfect, would be the last to claim any rigorous understanding of China or its films. But, by doing what he could, which is enormously more than anyone else has, he made a start. He saw large numbers of films, new and old. He studied and digested the film history written by Cheng Chi-hua, which covered the period up to 1949, and relied on it (to a not altogether clear degree) in preparing his own text. By the skimpy means open to foreigners in Peking, he observed the Chinese film community at work, up to just before the Cultural Revolution—in which Cheng and his orthodox history were condemned, archive work became impossible, and Leyda left the country. And he recorded in his diary, fragments of which appear in *Dianying,* the perplexities of the harsh existence he and his wife led in Peking.

Dianying provides a readable account of the Chinese industry from its beginnings in 1896. The names and films are, of course, totally unknown in the West; as a few of the films become visible, some of them will take on meaning for us. The record of the industry, like that of the country, is tumultuous: foreign penetration, strife between Kuomintang and Communists and Japanese, underground leftish film-making, timid new beginnings after 1949. But Leyda's assay of the net achievements, whether before or after the revolution, is low. He makes a tantalizing series of observations on what might have been: *if* Chinese film had been able to draw on the strongest elements (such as the work of Lu Hsun) in literature; *if* it had developed its occasional realist tendencies, instead of relying on stock situations and unchanging characters; *if* it had not been crushed by political control. But such speculations, like China-speculations generally, raise more questions than they answer. We literally do not know, and probably never will—no film histories are likely to be written in China for a long time—by exactly what process feature film-making was phased out in China, nor what the major political arguments about it really were. We do not know what has happened to the few talented film-makers whose work, in Leyda's eyes, marked them as potential contributors of real importance to Chinese culture. Leyda's own views of the present and probable future are melancholy in the extreme: "Particularly conspicuous is the passivity of film-makers, who wait so long to be told what to do and delay so long in finding ways, safe ways, to do it, that the film is the last art to promote any movement or to reflect any urgent measure."

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JEAN RENOIR

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If he had lived, Bazin would probably have written the definitive book on Renoir. As it is, his tragically early death, combined with the haphazard journalistic pressures of his life, has left us with a kind of rough first draft. Some of the text is relatively finished analysis; some comprises notes for brief lectures introducing Renoir films at the Paris film societies that Bazin haunted; some is mere plot summary intended to preserve memory; some of it sketches out critical ideas intended to be developed later. To this material Truffaut, in filial devotion to both Bazin and Renoir (father and grandfather figures respectively) has added critical commentary by other hands, plus early scenarios for *Lange, Grand Illusion,* and *Rules of the Game.*

Much of the Bazin material is fascinating, displaying the same easy, ardent, masterful critical skill we see in Bazin's finished writings. Here, for example, is his analysis of the circling-camera scene in *Lange;* an essay which deals at length with *Rules of the Game* and adumbrates most of Bazin's major thematic concerns; a looping, enthusiastic essay on *The River;* and a sympathetic treatment of Renoir's "third period," after he returned from Hollywood. Too much, however, is merely tantalizing: asides that might have grown into major developments, plot notes that may have meant the beginning of interesting analyses. *Rules of the Game* keeps reappearing, as a kind of fundamental pivot around which Bazin's analysis orients itself, but most other films get terribly short shrift: two pages on *Boudu,* three (mostly plot-line) on *La Chienne,* etc.

Watchers for the definitive Renoir book (if such a thing is conceivable) will now await Raymont Durgnat's forthcoming study, in which his supple and subtle psychological acuteness will come up against Renoir's anarchist and deceptively offhand strength. —ERNEST CALLENBACH

DOCUMENTARY DIARY

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John Grierson, the Founder of documentary, did critics and future generations of film-makers a characteristic mischief when, in his review of *Moana,* he mentioned in passing its "documentary qualities." His elaboration of documentary as "the creative treatment of actuality" didn't do a great deal to clarify matters, and anyone who knew Grierson in his last years would agree that he enjoyed the ambiguity immensely. What Grierson created, it seems, is a kind of social democratic aesthetic, in which positive value is placed on finding narrative and dramatic structures and emphases in what otherwise would seem the most banal of everyday life. It is a kind of naturalism with the warts removed, abandoning the scientistic objective description of Zola and Flaubert for a style which capitalizes on the inescapable distortion of the lens, the bias of camera position, and the inherent omissions of film editing. Surprising as it might be to diehard cinema-veriterinarians, the documentary movement from its earliest days made such use of "faked" material as was necessary, and justified it by the social or aesthetic purpose. Flaherty's Eskimos re-enacted portions of their lives and of his notions of what their lives had been in half a jumbo igloo—whole igloos being pretty dim and dark places. Grierson's ***Drifters*** had its share of studio mock-ups as well, as Paul Rotha describes in some detail in his *Documentary Diary.* The social intent of the films came first and concerns of artistic purity seem to have been largely irrelevant.

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Reinterpreting a social or artistic movement requires a set of tools which are difficult to fashion, and signposts which are inevitably diffi-

cult to find. One needs the ability to see with double vision, and the capacity to differentiate then from the now. One needs as well the ability to reconstruct the taste of the age when the movement occurred, in ways which reduce the romance of pseudo-nostalgia to manageable proportions. Events and epochs have a way of getting out of proportion with the passage of time. It has been almost 45 years since the beginnings of the British Documentary movement, almost 50 years since John Grierson wrote about *Moana,* but Rotha provides us with the feeling of what the movement must have been like, as viewed from the inside.

When an aesthetic movement is re-examined, we call it re-evaluation. When a social movement is re-examined, we call it revisionism. On the left, revisionism used to be a dirty word, applicable to Trotskyites, opportunists, deviationists, social fascists, and other unmentionable unpersons. More recently, those historians, usually of the left, who have been re-examining history have earned the label of "revisionist" from the colleagues on the right, and have at least partially rehabilitated the term by not publicly flinching from its application. The documentary movement, in Paul Rotha's view, was largely a social movement, and in that sense his re-evaluation of it is a kind of revisionism. That it had aesthetic content is incontestible, although the major thrust in Rotha's *Documentary Diary* leads to the impression that aesthetic influences entered solely as artistic means to social ends.

The British documentary movement, until 1939 at least, was a unique manifestation of social democratic ideology. Such Marxism as it contained seems in retrospect largely romantic in nature, and while the works of Dziga-Vertov, Eisenstein, and Turin were admired, one is hard put to trace serious influences. The social agendas of the USSR and Britain in the thirties differed so greatly that, then as now, no imported recipes were suitable for British tastes. The looming presence of John Grierson dictated an evolutionary role for film in raising consciousness, and such ideology as may have entered into the films themselves seems much more the product of John Stuart Mills and Walter Lippmann than of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and the commissariat. This is, of course, not to say that many of the individuals involved in the movement did not have their own pressing revolutionary social agendas, but the films themselves are good evidence that group production and a strong producer could control militant urges as well as artistic excesses. As Rotha points out, Grierson's critics on the left protested that none of the films produced were opposed to the system of parliamentary democracy in a total sense. At their best they concerned themselves with a humanization of the system, and a recognition of the nobility of those who toil to make it work. The restoration of importance to human labor in *Drifters, Granton Trawler, Night Mail, Shipyard,* and many of the early documentary films was the result of a mixture of social optimism and *noblesse oblige.* At another time and in another place, Grierson might have been describable as a guilty liberal. In Grierson's time and place his work and that of Rotha and the other members of their team should be viewed within the context of ameliorating the class divisions between the relatively small ruling class and those whom Orwell described as the black caryatids on which the society rested. The irony in this situation is that the documentary movement was encouraged and protected by such ruling-class figures as Sir Stephen Tallents of the Empire Marketing Board and Sir Harry Bunbury within the General Post Office. Ironically, the rising Labour Party found it impossible to see more in the possibilities of using film for social change than an inspiration to tour a stage play based on Tolpuddle martyrs through the provinces.

Paul Rotha is an admirably clear, cogent, and personal writer. His book is, above all, a fascinating personal memoir dealing with the transformation of Rotha the aesthete and critic (his *Film Till Now* was pretty much written before he had any serious production experience) to Rotha the craftsman with a conscience. Chapters dealing with his personal development alternate with more general chapters which chart the development of the documentary film move-

ment. Film-makers are not, by and large, an introspective lot, and Rotha's personal diaries and memories are uniquely instructive and fascinating. The major problem with *Documentary Diary* lies not with the writer or the book, but with the potential re-evaluator of the documentary movement who may make of Rotha's personal history something other than what it is. A book so carefully and conscientiously wrought is seductive in that, while Rotha's personal history and reminiscences are by their very nature unique unto him, they are not necessarily definitive of what the movement was about to all who were involved, to all who saw the films, or, for that matter, to all who paid for them to be made. Rotha's book is useful as an intriguing and fascinating memoir, but also as helpful reminder that social intent is a long and noble tradition in documentary, whether the sponsor notices or not. —HENRY BREITROSE

LIVING CINEMA:
New Directions in Contemporary Film-Making

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It is at least arguable that the development of light, portable synchronous-sound cameras utilizing fast film stock constitutes the most aesthetically pregnant event in cinema since the invention of sound itself. Marcorelles, a Paris critic unattached to any of the past or current cliques, is a vehement partisan of what he terms "direct cinema"—what resulted when people like Leacock, Pennebaker, and the Canadians (especially Pierre Perrault) got hold of the new equipment and began to confront people and situations with it.

Marcorelles knows the criticisms that Godard and others have made of direct cinema and its sub-province, *cinéma-vérité:* that it is impossible to achieve the kind of "objectivity" the direct practitioners claim, both because their presence and shooting activity affect what they are filming, and because real objectivity is inherently impossible for philosophical and ideological reasons. Marcorelles achieves no resolution of the issue, but his book has value in its profusion of facts and running observations about nonfiction films that have been too little discussed. In any case the impact of direct cinema cannot be dismissed simply because the abstract issues it raises have not proved capable of resolution. Many of these films are, quite simply, marvelous in their revelation of people and events utterly beyond the coded and conventionalized imaginations of scriptwriters, directors, and performers. The fictional cinema (whether Hollywoodian or Godardian) seeks to impose imaginative or political structural limitations upon its materials; the direct cinema seeks to impose materials found by the sensitive cameraman into the structure of some kind of film art. Perhaps the underlying dilemma is indeed inescapeable: film too rigorously controlled becomes artificial and thin; and film too rigorously "objective" becomes dull and pointless. The medium draws strength precisely from the tension between these elements, and we would be foolish to try to extirpate one at the expense of the other. —ERNEST CALLENBACH

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In terms of the overall myth that Koch explores, Warhol's near death at the hands of Valerie Solanis in 1968 is as thematically essential as films like *Harlot* and *Vinyl.* The whole career is taken up, and not only the conventional art-producing aspects of it: Warhol's fear of being touched, his voyeurism and his preoccupation with death are interconnected, brought to the center of the stage, and analyzed at length. The psychology of narcissism is investigated as sharply here as it was depicted in Koch's novel *Night Watch,* a striking attempt to humanize some of the descriptive techniques of Robbe-Grillet in a narrative informed by several overt references to film, where "star quality" (of a kind) was as much an issue as it is on this occasion.

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Battle of Algiers, by Joan Mellen.
Rules of the Game, by Gerald Mast.
Henry V, by Harry M. Geduld.

FOCUS ON FILM SERIES

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Focus on Shakespearean Films. Edited by Charles W. Eckert.
Focus on Howard Hawks. Edited by Joseph McBride.
Focus on Bonnie and Clyde. Edited by John G. Cawelti.
Focus on Shoot the Piano Player. Edited by Leo Braudy.
Focus on the Horror Film. Edited by Roy Huss and T. J. Ross.

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a collage of interviews with everybody concerned with the production, right down to the office boy. Scrappy but informative.

The Making of Gone with the Wind. By Gavin Lambert. Boston: Atlantic-Little Brown, 1973. $7.95. A highly readable and intricately detailed account of perhaps the most successful film of all time. Lambert appears to have found out everything that mattered in this incredible story, and he tells it with a novelist's skill together with an insight into script construction and performances lacking in the only really competing book, Ross's *Picture*. The film is, of course, interesting for other reasons than the phenomenal response it enjoyed (and still enjoys): it is the epitome of the producer-as-*auteur* film, and Lambert's story is almost as much about David O. Selznick as about his chief monument. Sidney Howard, who was chiefly responsible for the script, "compared the producer of movies to the New Zealand kiwi bird, which has wings but is unable to fly." In *GWTW*, however, Selznick in his own peculiar way reached "the summit of what can be called the Selznick style."

The Primal Screen: Essays on Film and Related Subjects. By Andrew Sarris. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973. $9.95. A collection of essays, mostly ranging through the sixties, some on weighty topics, some on individual films, all displaying Sarris's usual affability under pressure. Two items especially interesting as critical internecine warfare are on Lawrence Alloway and Pauline Kael.

Saturday Afternoon at the Bijou. By David Zinman. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1973. $11.95. A nostalgia book about B-movies and series.

A Way of Seeing: A Critical Study of James Agee. By Alfred T. Barson. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1973. $9.50.

DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, AND PERFORMER STUDIES

The Amazing Careers of Bob Hope. By Joe Morella, Edward Z. Epstein, and Eleanor Clark. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1973. $8.95.

Bardot: Eternal Sex Goddess. By Peter Evans. New York: Drake Publishers, 1973. $6.95. Though overblown ("The Vadim-Bardot alloy was to change the very shape, look, consciousness, the resolve and the animus [sic] of women in the second half of the twentieth century," etc.) this is nonetheless more factually informative than Simone de Beauvoir's surprising tribute to Bardot, and sadder.

Cecil B. DeMille. By Charles Higham. New York: Scribner's, 1973. $10.00. The rehabilitation of the producer proceeds apace: Higham's detailed and sympathetic treatment of the greatest *monstre sacré* of Hollywood abundantly proves that there is some good in everybody, even DeMille (whose *The Cheat* caught the eye of André Bazin many years ago). The biographical side of the book is satisfyingly rounded; the critical side leaves it still somewhat unclear whether DeMille's unique blend of sexuality and religiosity was intentional *kitsch* or something more mysterious.

The Cinema of Andrzej Wajda. By Boleslaw Michalek. New York: A. S. Barnes, 1973. $2.95. A workmanlike study, readable and useful in situating Wajda in Polish contemporary history.

The Cinema of Luis Buñuel. By Freddy Buache. New York: A. S. Barnes, 1973. $2.95. A complete analysis of the films—less brilliant than Raymond Durgnat's book, but factual, careful, and systematic.

Directors in Action. Edited by Bob Thomas. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973. $5.95. Interviews, mostly very brief, from *Action,* the magazine of the Directors Guild.

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a collage of interviews with everybody concerned with the production, right down to the office boy. Scrappy but informative.

The Making of Gone with the Wind. By Gavin Lambert. Boston: Atlantic-Little Brown, 1973. $7.95. A highly readable and intricately detailed account of perhaps the most successful film of all time. Lambert appears to have found out everything that mattered in this incredible story, and he tells it with a novelist's skill together with an insight into script construction and performances lacking in the only really competing book, Ross's *Picture*. The film is, of course, interesting for other reasons than the phenomenal response it enjoyed (and still enjoys): it is the epitome of the producer-as-*auteur* film, and Lambert's story is almost as much about David O. Selznick as about his chief monument. Sidney Howard, who was chiefly responsible for the script, "compared the producer of movies to the New Zealand kiwi bird, which has wings but is unable to fly." In *GWTW*, however, Selznick in his own peculiar way reached "the summit of what can be called the Selznick style."

The Primal Screen: Essays on Film and Related Subjects. By Andrew Sarris. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973. $9.95. A collection of essays, mostly ranging through the sixties, some on weighty topics, some on individual films, all displaying Sarris's usual affability under pressure. Two items especially interesting as critical internecine warfare are on Lawrence Alloway and Pauline Kael.

Saturday Afternoon at the Bijou. By David Zinman. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1973. $11.95. A nostalgia book about B-movies and series.

A Way of Seeing: A Critical Study of James Agee. By Alfred T. Barson. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1973. $9.50.

DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, AND PERFORMER STUDIES

The Amazing Careers of Bob Hope. By Joe Morella, Edward Z. Epstein, and Eleanor Clark. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1973. $8.95.

Bardot: Eternal Sex Goddess. By Peter Evans. New York: Drake Publishers, 1973. $6.95. Though overblown ("The Vadim-Bardot alloy was to change the very shape, look, consciousness, the resolve and the animus [sic] of women in the second half of the twentieth century," etc.) this is nonetheless more factually informative than Simone de Beauvoir's surprising tribute to Bardot, and sadder.

Cecil B. DeMille. By Charles Higham. New York: Scribner's, 1973. $10.00. The rehabilitation of the producer proceeds apace: Higham's detailed and sympathetic treatment of the greatest *monstre sacré* of Hollywood abundantly proves that there is some good in everybody, even DeMille (whose *The Cheat* caught the eye of André Bazin many years ago). The biographical side of the book is satisfyingly rounded; the critical side leaves it still somewhat unclear whether DeMille's unique blend of sexuality and religiosity was intentional *kitsch* or something more mysterious.

The Cinema of Andrzej Wajda. By Boleslaw Michalek. New York: A. S. Barnes, 1973. $2.95. A workmanlike study, readable and useful in situating Wajda in Polish contemporary history.

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MISCELLANEOUS

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Indian Films 1972. By B. V. Dharap. (Motion Picture Enterprises, Alaka Talkies, Tilak Road, Poona-30, India. Rs. 35) With some 400 features per year, India is the largest film-producing country in the world, and likely to remain so. But reference and scholarship resources are still slim. This carefully prepared volume is based on the author's accumulated production records which go back to 1930, and is the first of a projected annual series. Technical and cast credits, thumbnail story-line, songs, and distributors are given. Both Hindustani and other language films are included, as are 35mm and 16mm/8mm shorts which obtained distribution.

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Controversy & Correspondence

AUTEURISM: MORE AFTERMATH

I appear in so many contradictory disguises in John Hess's article: as a "misplaced Fugitive," a "bourgeois formalist," a New Critic, an "Impressionist"—and at one and the same time both an elitist who scorns trash in favor of art *and* someone determined to turn the clock back from a proper concern with art to the trashy attitude of the moviegoers of past decades—that I can only conclude that he is less concerned with examining what I wrote than with foisting on to me responsibility for every critical position that he happens to dislike. If he had read, for example, further than the Introduction to my book on Truffaut, he would have discovered that I pay a good deal of attention to the element of social criticism within the films and that I even conducted a discreet flirtation with structuralism and semiology in my closing chapter. My intention in my article on *auteurism* was to deal with a very specific problem rather than to produce a total theory of film criticism; no doubt I proceeded from certain conscious or unconscious assumptions, but they are rarely those that Hess wishes to attribute to me.

Nevertheless, there are moments within Hess's article when he and I seem to be close enough to speaking the same language for us to be able to conduct a fruitful disagreement. Hess suggests that there are several "*auteur* theories" and that I mistakenly attribute to all of them the follies of the most recent American versions of *auteurism*. I agree that the theory has indeed gone through several stages, though I tried to make it clear in my article that my main concern was with the mindless dogmatism that currently goes by the name of *auteurism* and still maintains a tenacious grasp on far too much film teaching and film criticism all over North America. Certainly the original *politique des auteurs* had immense significance and importance and produced, as I pointed out in my article, a valuable reassessment and reinterpretation of, in particular, the Hollywood tradition. Despite this, it seems to me that my basic premise still stands: the original *Cahiers* critics *were* trying to bypass the issue of control and said to themselves, in effect, "Even under the conditions of studio film-making, it is still possible for men like Hitchcock, Welles, Renoir, Hawks, and Lang to make personal films." The best possible commentary on the paradox contained in this assumption is probably to be found in *Day for Night,* where Truffaut explicitly tells us that it is the American backers who ultimately determine the shape of *Meet Pamela* (the script has to be altered and simplified to secure their continued financial support), while Truffaut himself succeeds in making a film *(Day for Night)* that everyone agrees only *he* could have made. *Day for Night* can be seen as Truffaut's farewell to the heroic days of *la politique des auteurs,* an implicit acknowledgement of both its truths and its defects.

Minor points in this section of Hess's article that deserve comment are the sleight-of-hand that passes off Hitchcock and Hawks as "lesser, often low-budget directors" of the fifties, a tactic worthy of *auteurists* themselves in their attempt to provide a rationale for their (often perfectly valid) hunches and personal tastes; his incorrect assertion that it was Sarris who first formulated the principle that the minor work of a true *auteur* is more interesting than the best work of a non-*auteur,* when in fact this was a fundamental credo of the young Truffaut and was tirelessly defended by him on innumerable occasions (Hess acknowledges this two paragraphs further on, thus contradicting himself), and the equally incorrect statement that *Cahiers* was not interested in labelling and classifying directors when in fact a major double issue of the magazine (Nos. 150–151, Décembre 1963–Janvier 1964) was devoted to just this task—with not a scriptwriter, actor, or cameraman being deemed worthy of mention, and an appendix providing almost a dozen categories of directors considered unworthy of inclusion among the elect. These and similar inconsistencies in Hess's argument suggest a much stronger continuity in the *auteur* tradition than he cares to admit.

However, this section of Hess's article contains useful information and presents an arguable corrective to some aspects of my own position. The same cannot be said of the first half of his second section which, proceeding from the curious delusion that I am simultaneously a New Critic, an Impressionist, and a Formalist, not unnaturally foists on me a series of incompatible theories that have little relation to anything I have written in my *auteur* article, my book on Truffaut, or anywhere else. And finally, having chided me for not providing any

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acceptable alternative to *auteurs* after all, Hess hastily wheels out the fashionable *troika* of Structuralism, Semiology and Marxism, and urges us to take his word for it that it is a sound investment for the future (whether these fundamentally incompatible methods[1] are meant to be taken in isolation or in some kind of mind-boggling combination is left purposefully unclear).

Like most advocates of these techniques in the English-speaking world, Hess prefers to assert rather than to demonstrate their usefulness, and he seems to labor under a radical delusion as to what Structuralism in particular is all about—it is certainly something very much more complex than the pathetic and banal definition that he provides ("the obsessive working out of insoluble contradictions"). I am, in fact, looking forward to the day when we have an English-speaking critic who really understands what Barthes is talking about and can fruitfully apply his methods to the study of film, thus exposing the sad travesties that currently masquerade as Structuralism in North American and British criticism today.

In effect, whatever titles he prefers to give them, Hess's alternatives come down to little more than an obsolete and dogmatic Marxism, for as he acknowledges, he considers that, with any film, "the examination of [its] social context becomes more important than the film itself. Social ills, maladjustments, and manipulations come to be seen as more important than their manifestation on celluloid." This proposition implies, and I am sure Hess intends it to, that the artist has no deeper insight into the nature of society or the human personality than the rest of us: it is not his degree of perception into social ills or his organization and resolution of the conflicts and images contained within his work that give it its significance; a concern with these "manifestations on celluloid" is mere "bourgeois formalism" when what matters is to interpret the work in such a way that it becomes a weapon for use in the class (or racial or sexual) struggle. A work of art therefore comes to be valued, not for its power to change our thinking, but according to the degree to which it confirms or denies the already existing social or political ideology. Works of art that are complex, subtle, or mysterious must logically be cast aside as decadent, or ruthlessly reinterpreted and pared down to serve their necessary function as tools; while simplicity, crudity, exaggeration, and dogmatism become not only moral but even artistic virtues.[2]

I take Joan Mellen's feminist analysis of Bergman's films in the Fall of 1973 *Film Quarterly* to be an example of the kind of criticism Hess is advocating, for it illustrates exactly this process at work. Starting from the basis of a body of dogma built up over the past half dozen years, Mellen distorts and simplifies Bergman's films, and especially *Cries and Whispers,* to the point of caricature in an attempt to prove that he is "sexist." One simplistic pattern is imposed on the films throughout; the total context is distorted or suppressed; elements of the formal organization that might contradict the critic's preconceptions are simply ignored; and the original premise is triumphantly rediscovered at the end of the analysis as though it had been inherent in the films all along instead of being forced on them by the critic. This grotesque distortion, not just of Bergman's art but also of his meaning, is presumably to be justified by the fact that women reading Mellen's article will have their sense of solidarity, their consciousness of their situation as women, strengthened and clarified by her misrepresentation to them of Bergman's attitude. And this in turn, according to Hess's definition of the function of art, is much more important than an attempt to discover the richness, intelligence, anguish, beauty, compassion, and humanity of the film *Cries and Whispers* that Bergman actually made.

The experience of watching a film is part of a process of communication between the viewer and whoever happened to make the film: this process is rendered useless if the recipient has decided in advance that he knows already what he wants the communicator to say and that he will filter out anything that happens to interfere with his preconception.[3] Like Hess, I value a work of art that makes us aware of, and indignant about, injustice and inhumanity; unlike him, I prefer to allow the artist to speak to me first before I decide what it is he is saying. This involves learning and responding to his language: we cannot decode a message unless we understand who is communicating it and under what circumstances: the text, "Mother ill. Come immediately," for example, means one thing when it is sent to you by your sister, and another when it is sent by a stranger who wants you out of the way so that she can murder your husband. Hence my original proposal that film critics pay more attention than they have in the past to finding out who it is that is speaking to us in any particular film; a procedure that remains essential whether we are talking about those relatively few films that are works of art, the greater number that are trash, or the middle ground that seems to belong uniquely to film, where trash and art are inextricably combined. —GRAHAM PETRIE

NOTES

1. " . . . the chief resistance to structuralism today seems to be of Marxist origin." Roland Barthes, "The Structuralist Activity," in *Critical Essays* (Northwestern University Press, 1972), p. 214.

2. Compare Barthes on this point, speaking for Struc-

turalists and Semiologists: " . . . the literary work has so much power to ask the world questions (undermining the assured meanings which ideologies, beliefs and common sense seem to possess), yet without ever answering them (there is no great work which is 'dogmatic') . . . " "What is Criticism?" in *Critical Essays,* p. 259. Film is not literature, but the general point still stands.
3. I would agree with Barthes that we have to begin by deciding which critical method best suits the particular work we are dealing with and that the attempt to apply one rigid method no matter what the circumstances is disastrously self-defeating: "We must always choose the most comprehensive criticism, the one which ingests the greatest possible quantity of its object." "Literature and Signification," in *Critical Essays,* p. 274.

SHALL WE DEPORT LEVI-STRAUSS?

In a recent article, "The English Cine-Structuralists," (*Film Comment,* May–June, 1973) I reviewed the work of a group of English critics whom I designated "auteur-structuralists," faulting some of them for what I considered an improper and unproductive application of the structural method of Lévi-Strauss to the study of directors. I also described Lévi-Strauss's method and discussed its application to other areas of film study (really my principal interest). My article was intended to be an informative survey of what had been done and a suggestive prolegomenon to what might be attempted. The article has now received attacks (considerate, but damaging) from Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Brian Henderson, both of whom point up what can only be called the assiduous naiveté of portions of my article.[1] Perhaps I shouldn't bother to respond, but I fear that if I don't, my article will continue to stand in opposition to their criticisms; and I would like to rise in my pew and acknowledge this Rosemary's Baby—after all, acceptance brought Mia Farrow some measure of peace.

My article was written at a moment when I was only half-emerged from a fetishistic attachment to Lévi-Strauss's method. My infatuation had no grounds in theory; it was merely idolatry, deriving from a long-standing interest in myth and ritual and my sense that Lévi-Strauss had provided the logico-mathematical tools by which they were henceforth and forever to be comprehended. Films were like myths, I reasoned, since they were communal in origin (Hollywood, or a given studio, could constitute a community—why not?); and directors might function as creators of myths (I adduced Renoir and others on the subject of the artist as myth-maker). But soon after the article was sent off I encountered Marvin Harris's destructive exposé of Lévi-Strauss's idealist premises in his *The Rise of Anthropological Theory.* Harris, a Marxist anthropologist, meets Lévi-Strauss on his own grounds and demonstrates that his almost exclusive concern with mental structures arose from his early grounding of kinship structure in the theory of reciprocal gift-giving. Lévi-Strauss reasoned that men exchange gifts (the most important being women) because of a universal psychological need arising from "certain fundamental structures of the human mind." But, Harris asks, Candide-like, " . . . if reciprocity is so fundamental to the human psyche, why do we have the ancient and contemporary condition of the opulent and powerful haves (possessing, among their valuables, more than their share of women) and the miserable have-nots?" In general, Harris argues, "Lévi-Strauss's picture of the human psychological landscape is . . . noteworthy for its disregard for the biopsychological, emotional, and affective drives and instincts. Hunger, sex, fear, love, are present, but they seem to be peripheral. More important for the French structuralist program is the basic propensity of the human mind to build logical categories by means of binary contrasts. For Lévi-Strauss such oppositions or dualities lie at the bottom of large portions if not the totality of sociocultural phenomena."[2] Harris's entire discussion, which surveys the history of idealism in French anthropology, should disabuse anyone of Lévi-Straussian hero-worship.

I still felt, however, that my article had value as a survey of a group of English *auteur* critics united by their use of structural method. But my unambitious history-of-ideas approach (Nowell-Smith begat Wollen begat Lovell) turns out to be inadequate because it is, as Nowell-Smith patiently demonstrates, "empiricist idealist"; because I was ignorant as to *why* this group of critics were attracted to structural method; and because my provincial Indiana situation led me to presume that English critics contacted each other's ideas (as I do) by reading criticism. But, Nowell-Smith informs us (in a passage as full of surprises as a piñata), the critics concerned were not attracted to structuralism because they wanted to import Lévi-Strauss into film study, but rather because they were seeking in the notion of structuralism "a materialist (or if you prefer objective) basis for the concept of authorship" redefined "as to take account both of the specifics of film production, which seem at first sight to deny the concept of the author/artist entirely, and of the equally specific authorial presence in the movie text." Equally surprising is Nowell-Smith's statement that some of the critics actually knew and talked to each other, apparently meeting at a sort of bar and grill called "London W.1." This is enough to send historians of ideas begging in the streets. And it has, of course, the deeper implications that a history of ideas is a helpless and false endeavor in the

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face of so diffuse a critical development. I only hope that my blind assumption that Lévi-Strauss was the "source" of their structuralist interests (which I based on Wollen's allusion) will stand corrected: it has already influenced Brian Henderson and exposed him to the same criticism I received. So, once and for all, there is no formal history of auteur-structuralism; and Nowell-Smith, Wollen, *et al.* were not attempting to employ Lévi-Strauss's method or to meet his standards.

This leaves standing the question of whether they should have been more demanding if they intended their structural analysis to be productive as well as corrective. I would still contend that the *Mythologiques* sets a standard for intelligence, subtlety, and conformity to its critical object (within its limited apprehension of its object) that bears comparison with the best of Barthes and Metz. It is because Lovell rather dabbles in structural analysis, for instance, that he is so exposed to Murray's disparagement of structuralist results.

But I may seem to be dragging Lévi-Strauss back through the transom after dismissing him through the door. Actually I am only attempting to bridge my way to the larger question of whether Lévi-Strauss's method has any future in film criticism. Brian Henderson masses a body of critics against structuralism itself in a long passage that cannot be easily summarized. I now substantially agree with what he says, having been educated by Harris and Julia Kristeva in particular,[3] but I would like to add my penny's worth on the kind of structuralism in which I am notoriously expert—Lévi-Strauss's.

The most fundamental question that one should ask, perhaps, is, "Are films Lévi-Straussian myths?" I think that Harris has indirectly answered this. The idea that any social group, even a tightly knit production team, could constitute a single entity bent upon "thinking" through a social dilemma, or projecting its universal mental structures into a film, or however one wants to put it, is a patent denial of the way men truly think, relate, and create. The gain to the critic of this idealist gambit is very real: it severs films from their existential roots, obviates the need for an abundance of facts, and makes the refining of concepts both easy and seemingly important.

A less simple issue is the status of Lévi-Straussian "dilemmas" of the sort that I isolated and discussed in my recent article on *Marked Woman* (*Film Quarterly*, Winter 1973–74). In the conclusion I stated that "The idealist tendency of structuralism does not, I believe, invalidate it for a specific role in an on-going materialist criticism: the description of transformational operations." I was forced into this pragmatism by an awareness of a methodological split that had developed in the process of writing the article. Beginning with an idealist structural analysis of *Marked Woman* I found that the transformations I was dealing with could only be *comprehended* through the Freudian operation of displacement, and *accounted for* by a recourse to the Marxist notion of class conflict and its censorship in ideology. Since both Freud and Marx are structuralist in the broadest sense of the term (they deal in polarities and their structured relationships), I reasoned that I was merely being eclectic in wedding them to Lévi-Strauss. Specifically, I argued that such shifts as that from class conflict to ethical dilemma could be described as both transformational *and* the results of repression or censorship. I thought of these operations as occurring in the minds of the writers and director (and for what they add in interpretation, the actors) with the censoring influences of the studio and class ideology ranked behind them. But clearly these operations cannot be idealist and materialist at the same time: minds cannot operate simultaneously divorced from their own history and psychology and engaged in them. Lévi-Strauss's description of the mental act whereby one attempts to resolve a dilemma by "transforming" it into another dilemma connotes a pure mental activity—the activity of what Husserl calls a "transcendental ego" exalted above, severed from, the contingencies of psychology, biology, and society (except in so far as one is *thinking* about a *social* dilemma).[4] The transformations I described, if the term is to retain its Lévi-Straussian connotations, are no such things. They *are* displacements produced by censoring influences. They occur because of complex personal and socially responsive acts of inhibition, assertion, obfuscation, and so forth. This amounts to more than a confession of methodological incest, however. It also, as Brian Henderson makes clear, argues a different theory for what a film text is, since it views it as a product rather than a "found object" analogous to a Lévi-Straussian myth.

All of this does not lead me to repudiate the insights of *Marked Woman:* one of them, that ethical dilemmas displace class conflicts, is, I discover, an independent corroboration of the *Cahiers* contention in its analysis of *Young Mr. Lincoln* that morality represses politics. But if one is to do more than penetrate the deeply symptomatic surface of *Marked Woman,* one must know more—all that there is to know—about the film's several creators, their working conditions and social situations.

Henderson ends by citing the *Cahiers* analysis as probably the best thing going in terms of an exemplary combination of film theory and analytic method. Adopting it, or a close variant of it, means that we will not only have to forego the welfare-state comforts of idealist analysis, but also perhaps the more recently purchased

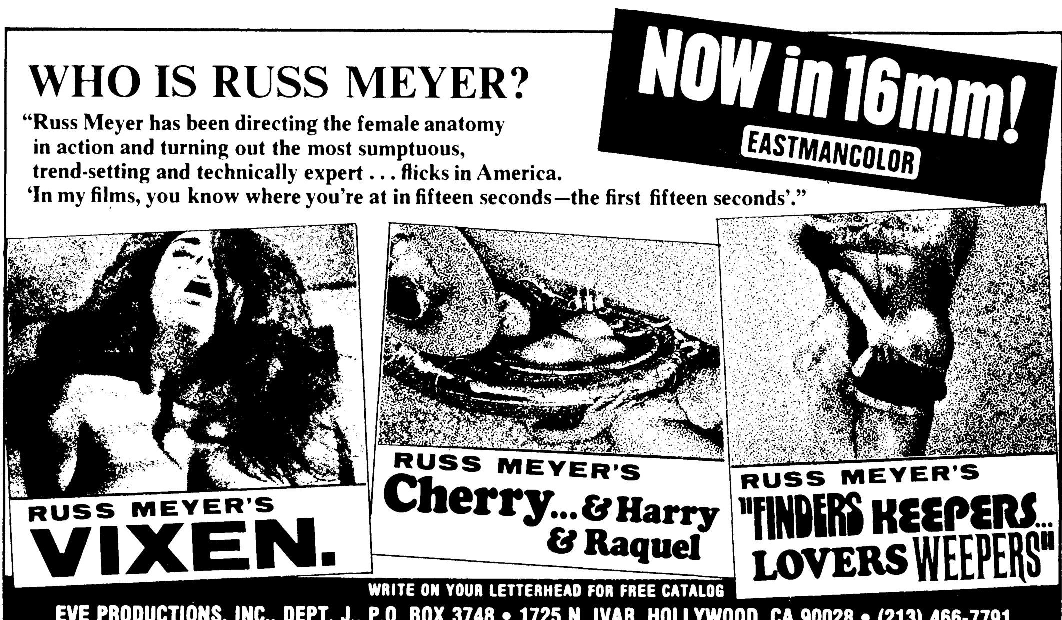
luxuries of structures, codes, sign-systems, Nowell-Smith's authorial "structure in dominance," and the rest, and chart a retrograde course back into the dense, existential humus in which films, like all cultural events, reside. It's a little like coming out of a theater and discovering that the messy, contingent world is still there.

But whether or not one adopts *Cahiers'* specific prototype—which is of course, a custom job for *Young Mr. Lincoln* and will have to be modified for every use—film study is becoming increasingly demanding, just in terms of the organization of one's work, since everything needs to be pursued at once, presented at once, theoretically validated as it is presented, and subjected to scrutiny in terms of one's motivations for establishing categories and arriving at solutions (which in turn, in the interest of truth, must be converted into problems of a new order). But maybe this is where film study is, since we are increasingly intolerant of self-serving narrowings of the field of inquiry ("I want to write about Delbert Mann") and expedient defenses for methods of study which "get results." In a sense this is less a choice between critical monism and holism than it is a growing conviction that monism won't work—a demand for a "totalizing" criticism, to use Frederic Jameson's term,[5] which has arisen with the disintegration of the whole formalist-idealist endeavor. At any rate, as my experience—and that of Graham Petrie at the hands of John Hess in the last issue of *Film Quarterly*—demonstrates, there is a stiff, cold wind blowing against partial, outmoded, or theoretically unsound forms of film criticism—and it just might blow many of them away.

CHARLES W. ECKERT

NOTES

1. Nowell-Smith, "I Was a Star-Struck Structuralist," *Screen* (Autumn, 1973), XIV, No. 3, 92–99; Henderson, "Critique of Cine-Structuralism I and II," *Film Quarterly* (Autumn, Winter, 1973–74), XVII, Nos. 1 and 2; 25–34, 37–46.
2. Harris, *Rise* (New York, 1968), pp. 492–93.
3. Kristeva, "The System and the Speaking Subject," *Times Literary Supplement* (Oct. 12, 1973), pp. 1249–50.
4. I am indebted here to Kristeva, *ibid.*
5. One should read the entirety of the final chapter of Jameson's *Marxism and Form* (Princeton, 1971), pp. 306–416.



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