FILM QUARTERLY

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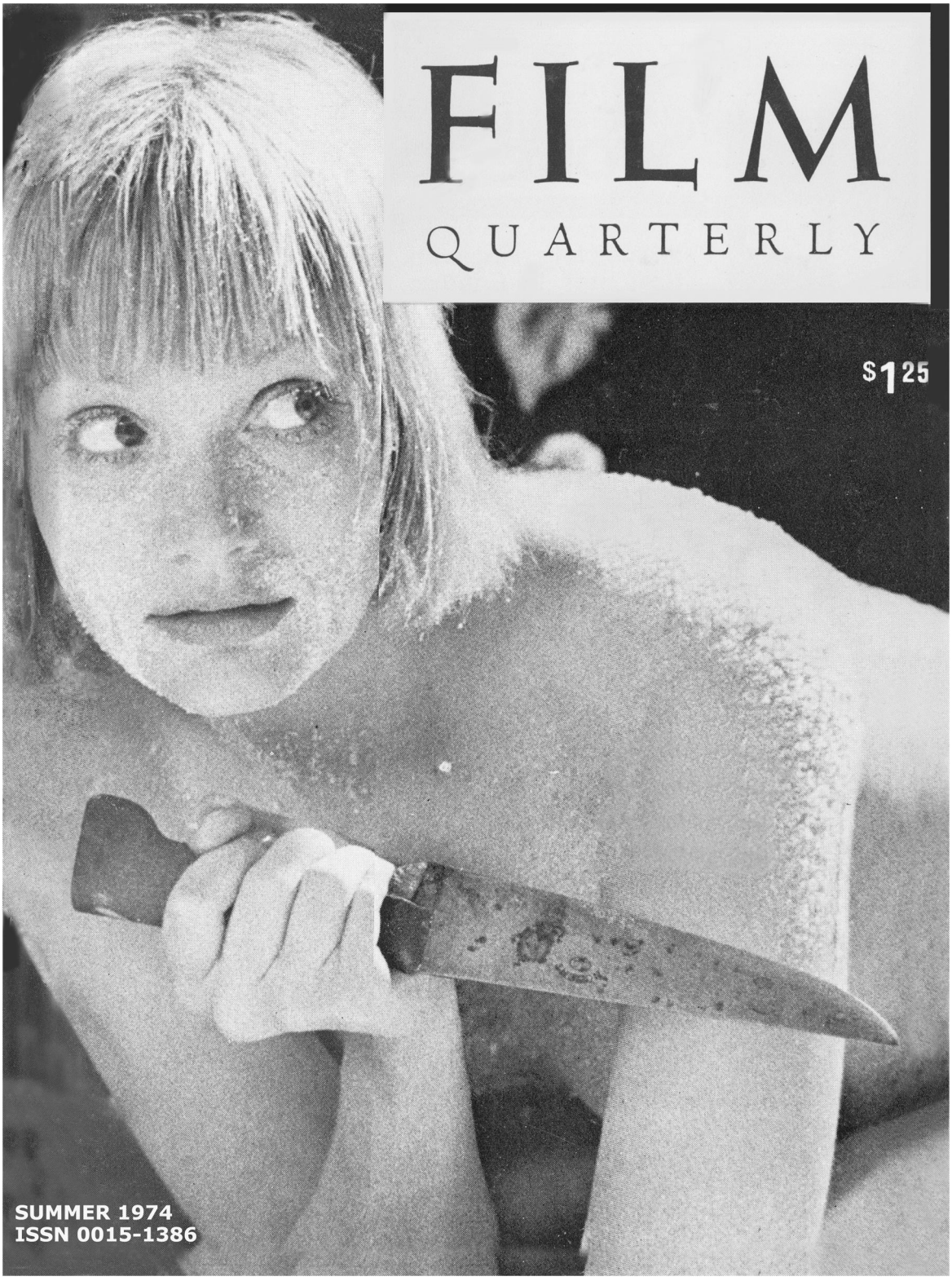

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VOL. XXVII, No. 4 Summer 1974

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Editor's Notebook

CONTRIBUTORS

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NEW PERIODICALS

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FILM STUDY

Persons interested in studying film theory and history in Paris, on either graduate or undergraduate level (proficiency in French is required) may obtain further information from: Mary Milton, Council on International Educational Exchange, 777 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017. Tel.: (212) 661-0310.

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MARSHA KINDER

The Return of the Outlaw Couple

The outlaw couple is on the comeback trail. Reaching the screen almost simultaneously, *Badlands, Thieves Like Us,* and *The Sugarland Express* have striking similarities. What kind of trend do they represent and why has it arisen at this particular time? Strongly influenced by *Bonnie and Clyde,* all three films focus on a pair of appealing young lovers who boldly break the law. Ultimately the young man is executed by lawmen, while the woman survives to take care of baby or record their adventures. All three films are set in rural America sometime in the past: *Sugarland* takes place in Texas in 1969 and is based on actual events; loosely adapting well known news stories, *Badlands* follows a westward journey from North Dakota to Montana in 1959; the plot of *Thieves* (a remake of *They Live by Night*) is set in Mississippi in the thirties. Outbursts of violence are juxtaposed with humor or nostalgia, creating a very distinctive tone. Despite all the vigorous action (robberies, prison breaks, killings, and chases), the special quality of each film is determined primarily by the rich visual surface. The world in which these characters move is defined by strange white houses and stylized furnishings, car lots and motor courts, desolate roads and idyllic landscapes.

These films seem to be reacting against trends that currently dominate Hollywood. As if to counter the forces of Gay Lib and the Women's Movement, commercial American films have recently been focusing on "love stories" between a couple of male friends (*Papillon, Bang the Drum Slowly, Scarecrow, Mean Streets, The Sting, Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid, Easy Rider, Midnight Cowboy, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,* and most blatantly *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot*). Of course, the heroes aren't really "fags," and to prove this the film will usually include a scene ridiculing homosexuals, yet at the same time indirectly suggesting the latent sexual dimension of the friendship. Women may be included, but they are always restricted to minor roles. In the fifties the male couple was mythologized in the highway romance of Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady, a prime source for sixties road movies like *Easy Rider* and *Two-Lane Blacktop.* Although they are "straight," most of these male heroes are lawbreakers or nonconformists, yet ironically the same pattern is popular in the "cop" films (e.g., *The French Connection, Electra Glide in Blue, The Laughing Policeman, Busting, Magnum Force*) where the "partners" develop their relationship within the close quarters of a cop car. Instead of overcoming the opposition of disapproving parents, they must struggle against a corrupt or misguided establishment, personified by a Captain or Inspector who tries to inhibit their actions or break up the pair. The film's homosexual is either the perverted killer (*The Laughing Policeman*), the pathetic outcast who deserves to be busted (*Busting*), or part of the corrupt police (*Magnum Force*); women are whores or victims.

Replacing the gangster and private-eye genres, the cop movies have made the hero a member of the establishment who still retains some characteristics of the outsider. He is individualized, ethnic, and sometimes even freaky (especially in *Serpico*). Basically honest, he is confronted with an impossible situation—how can he fight the dangerous killers, perverts, and dealers (who pose a real threat to society), and maintain his own integrity while he is a member of a corrupt institution? He can quit the force and join the indifferent public (as in *Serpico* and *Busting*), but then the dangerous criminals will continue to flourish; he can take the law into his own hands (as in *Dirty Harry*), but then he too becomes corrupted (and a sequel like *Magnum Force* has to be made as a corrective); or he can continue as a cop in this weak position, forced to accept minor successes (*The Laughing Policeman*), major defeats (*Kojak and the Marcus-Nelson Murders* and *The French Connection*), or even death (*Electra Glide in Blue*).

SUGARLAND EXPRESS: *Goldie Hawn*

This double-bind situation reflects our political realities. In the late sixties, we began to suspect that someone within the establishment might be more capable of exposing its corruption and breaking it down than outside radical forces. The antiwar movement shifted its focus from the draft resisters to the GI protestors—the enlisted men who refused to fight, the soldiers who revealed that they had witnessed or participated in grisly massacres, the wounded who exposed the horrors of the veteran hospitals. In the civilian ranks, we witnessed Daniel Ellsberg being transformed from an elite war strategist to a heroic outlaw exposing the lies and corruption at the highest levels of government. In the Watergate affair, John Dean underwent a simliar transformation, but the public was less certain whether to consider him hero or villain. We persistently wonder what is the effect of all this exposure—things go on as usual, Nixon still survives, and if he is finally thrown out of office, he will be replaced by someone just as bad. The internal forces fighting against corruption may turn out to be impotent after all.

The cop genre transfers these political issues to the safer context of law enforcement. The films that have dealt with them most successfully *(Serpico* and *The French Connection)* are based on actual events. Yet most of these films cop out and support the forces of fascism. Despite their claims to liberalism, all of them attack court rulings that protect the rights of the suspect and argue in favor of strengthening police power. In *Magnum Force,* for example, the distinction between "Dirty Harry" and the rightwing vigilantes he purges from the force is extremely fuzzy. The heroic vice-cops of *Busting,* a Jew and a Chicano no less, lament the injustice of the system; classy white whores and arrogant Italian racketeers with connections manage to get off while only outcast blacks and gays are killed or sentenced. The heroes' idea of justice is having *everyone* susceptible to their entrapment and deception, as they playfully enforce laws against victimless crimes.

In this context, *Badlands, Sugarland Express,* and *Thieves Like Us* attempt, not only to revive the heterosexual couple, but to move the romantic protagonists, however diminished their powers, back outside the law. Hence, these films look back, not to the saccharine *Love Story,* but to movies like *You Only Live Once* (1937), *They Live by Night* (1949), *Breathless* (1959), *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), and *The Honeymoon Killers* (1969), which deal with the way ordinary people confront frustration and impotence. The movement backward is reflected in the nostalgic settings of rural America, in contrast to the cop genre which produces "now" movies typically set in New York, Los Angeles, or San Francisco. *Badlands* and *Thieves* explore the present by considering its connection with earlier periods when people felt similarly powerless—most notably, during the thirties depression and the dormant fifties. It is no accident that these two periods have been chosen for a faddish revival in the seventies. Yet neither

Robert Altman nor Terrence Malick is cultivating nostalgia for its own sake or as a means of escape (the other choice led to extraordinary commercial success in *American Graffiti*); in fact, they comment on the revival through their visual style. While the outlaw films develop a highly sensuous visual texture (frequently referred to as a "feminine" style), the cop movies are fast-paced action films, with a lean, muscular structure (characteristics of the so-called "masculine" style). This stylistic masculinity seems to compensate for the final impotence of the protagonist; no matter which path he chooses, the cop is bound to lose, and usually he whines about it to whoever will listen (particularly in *Serpico*). In contrast, the outlaw movies stress the value of choosing your own path and accepting the consequences without any whining at all. In *Sugarland,* the young mother decides she wants her baby *now,* not when the authorities say it is all right, and she is willing to do anything it takes to fulfill that goal. The young bank robber in *Thieves* is equally bold, breaking into prison to free his accomplice. Ironically, even the man he is freeing can't understand how a simple country boy can pull off such a daring feat and jealously begrudges him his power. Lost in the desert, the young killer in *Badlands* throws a stick to decide which direction to follow. Then he changes his mind, declaring that if he's not good enough to decide for himself, then it doesn't matter what happens to him. He also chooses the precise moment of his capture, deliberately building a rock monument to commemorate the event. In contrast to the cops who are beset by conflicting loyalties, these outlaws commit themselves totally to a single goal of their own choice, which necessarily implies the sacrifice of other values. That is the source of their power. In all three films, it takes a whole army of police to subdue an individual with this kind of commitment.

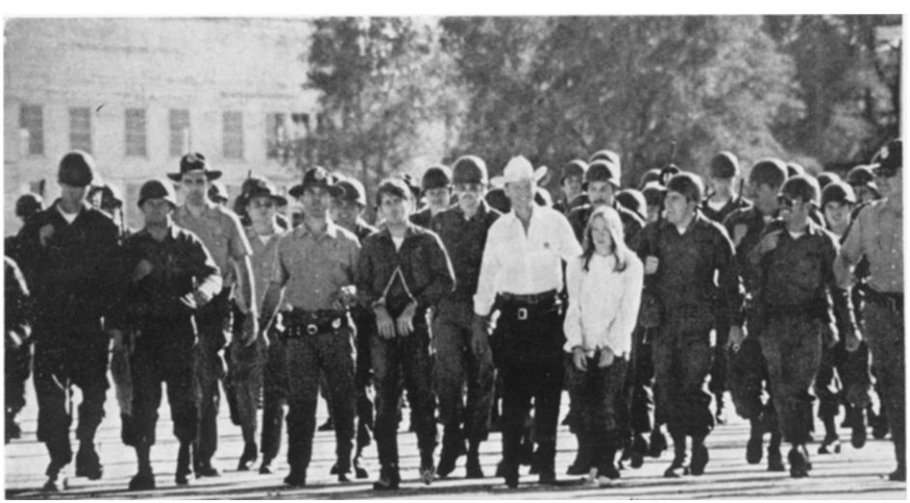
In some ways, *Walking Tall* combines the cop and outlaw genres. Set in a small Southern town but focusing on plot rather than visuals, the film presents a marine returning home after the Vietnam War and falling victim to the local vice rackets who are in league with the law, a corruption which extends all the way to the state capitol. Although he is a family man, our hero is a rugged individual—he talks softly but literally carries a big stick. Determined to destroy the Evil regardless of the consequences, he first acts as an outlaw taking personal revenge. Then he is elected sheriff and begins to reform the establishment. This superman has two weaker partners, who draw from his strength: a black man who becomes his deputy, and a timid wife who begs him to run away. Ultimately his innocent wife is murdered, but the Man, who is stronger in mind, body, and spirit, survives massive assaults and numerous assassination attempts. He succeeds in cleaning up the town and transforming the local citizens into a cooperative vigilante mob (perhaps reviving the KKK). This romanticized cop film offers a morality as simplistic and reactionary as the one in *The Exorcist*—but here the forces of Good are led by the local sheriff rather than the local priest. This is precisely the kind of power fantasy rejected by both the cop and outlaw movies.

All three outlaw films emphasize the high price paid for any power whatsoever. They include elements from the cop movies, which qualify the actions of the outlaws and soften the sharp contrast between the two genres. Unlike *Bonnie and Clyde,* these films do not present cops as malicious killers, but treat them almost sympathetically. Both cops and outlaws reflect the outer society. In *Sugarland* the humanized police are faced with the difficult problem of dealing with criminals who are harmless young kids trying to get back their own baby. Of course they sympathize, as do the people in the small towns along the road who treat the outlaws as heroes; yet the couple is willing to go to any extreme (kidnap, robbery, prison break) to get what they want. Somehow the cops must uphold the law. The officer in charge wants to prevent anyone from getting hurt and tries to make a deal with the couple, who are holding one of his men hostage. Yet the radical actions of the outlaws force him to reveal what lies beneath his liberal facade—he breaks his promise and arranges an ambush, resulting in the husband's death. The young hostage is even more likable than his chief. Befriending the couple, he helps to break down the barriers between them; yet, like his

superior officer, he is powerless to prevent the final killing. This impotence of the law is repeatedly emphasized by the long parade of police cars pursuing the two criminals; it suggests the kind of overkill that failed in Vietnam. As in that pathetic war, after the wasteful killing was over, the surviving underdog finally achieved the original goal. The film ends with a shot of the young cop, looking into a sparkling river, perhaps reflecting on what has happened and his own role in the absurd adventure.

In *Badlands,* since one of the outlaws is a mass murderer, the cops have no real conflicts—they simply have to hunt him down. The killer immediately establishes rapport with the young handsome officer who captures him, for they are both show-offs who long to be heroes. Most of the police are taken with his charm and find him very likable, yet this has no bearing on his fate. Their impersonality exactly parallels the killer's attitude toward his victims and that of the good soldier toward his enemy. In all three cases, the man may have nothing personal against his victim, whom he may even like; but he'll kill him in an instant if he thinks it is required by his moral code. The only difference is that the lone killer is operating by a set of personal rules (which reflect the larger society) whereas the cop and soldier follow institutional orders. During his adventures the killer is polite and neat, he quotes familiar aphorisms, he makes apologetic speeches that always stress the positive side (reminiscent of Nixon's performances at times of crisis); he would really like to be a police officer and, when he is finally captured, he is extremely cooperative and fits right into the military rituals. Although friendly and sociable, he is forced into alienation by his criminal path. Yet, like a Charles Whitman, Lee Harvey Oswald, or James Dean (his heroic model from the fifties), this rebel without a cause is only a pathetic reflection of a sick society. Even his individuality is a romantic illusion. He represents the banality of evil, personified by Nixon.

Cops play the least significant role in *Thieves.* They are ordinary people with families and funny quirks, just like the outlaws. Before being kidnapped, the prison warden has a leisurely dinner with his wife. Once aware of his situation, all he can think about is how bad this will make him look with his superiors; instead, he is murdered. Everyone in the film has problems; after all, the country is in the middle of a depression. In times of crisis, people have to stick together; that's what FDR tells America on his radio broadcasts. The idea of alienation or the question of which side of the law you're on is not taken seriously within the family. Rather, the issue is how narrowly or widely you define your allegiance. Do you restrict it to the nuclear family, or do you broaden it to an extended family, a gang, a class, a race, a nation, a species? It is especially crucial in times when we are beset by corrupt institutions, for then all rules are called into doubt and we tend to



BADLANDS

rely more heavily on personal loyalties.

Although focusing on the heterosexual romance, the outlaw films also present a competing male friendship. The conflict is central in *Thieves Like Us,* for the title refers, not to the couple, but to a gang of male bank robbers, one of whom is always rhapsodizing, "They'll never again get three like us together." When the young hero gets married, his wife wants him to quit the gang and settle down. He tries to maintain both sets of loyalties, but she interprets this as a betrayal. Later, he is betrayed by another woman who also restricts her loyalties to the nuclear family. After her brother-in-law is dead, she feels she owes nothing to his friends; so she sells out the young man, who still considers her family, in order to get her husband out of prison. After he has been shot down by the police, his pregnant wife again feels betrayed, not by the woman who set up the ambush, but by her dead husband, for he was killed as a result of allying himself with the gang. Only two of the robbers try to develop these double loyalties; both enjoy life and are gunned down by the police. The third is lonely, miserable, and jealous of the others; the only real killer in the group, ironically, he is the one who survives.

In *Sugarland* and *Badlands* both men are committed to their women, which they prove by breaking the law. In *Badlands,* Kit kills Holly's father when he tries to oppose their relationship. In order to fulfill his wife's desire of getting back their baby, the young husband in *Sugarland* escapes from prison even though he has only a few more months to serve. His good friend tries to stop him, but is foiled by the woman. Yet, the heroes of both films express the desire to be policemen, to join a militaristic male society that would separate them from women. The films almost seem to suggest that commitment to a woman is against the law. This idea is developed more fully in *Sugarland* through the friendship between the husband and the hostage cop. But every time there is a crisis, the young man reaffirms the priority of his loyalty to his wife. After his death, however, we wonder whether the young cop is not as deeply affected as she.

Although the woman has an important role in all three films, the nature of her strength is ambiguous. Undeniably, she is the one who survives and she demonstrates some form of creativity — in having a baby *(Sugarland* and *Thieves),* directing the action *(Sugarland),* or recording their story *(Badlands).* The woman is strongest in *Sugarland.* She provides the motivating force to free both of her men—to get her husband out of prison and her infant son out of the foster home. She may need her husband's help, but whenever he falters, she has the energy to take over the wheel or the gun, or even to slap him around till he does what she says. We are not used to seeing such power exerted by women in movies, and I must say I find it refreshing. Of course, she can also be seen as an irresponsible child, dominated by whims; her willfulness is expressed not only in getting back baby, but also in collecting trading stamps or choosing the most inconvenient moment to take a piss. When she wants something, she wants it *now*—regardless of the context or the consequences. She may be the manipulator who sets things in motion, but it's her husband who pays with his life, partly because she refuses to see practical realities. Yet she bravely succeeds in fighting the system and retrieving her baby.

In *Thieves Like Us,* the woman is not a rebellious outlaw, but a naive, lonely country girl who wants a conventional life with husband and baby. Despite the fact he's a killer, she nurses her young man back to health and gives him her loyalty because he's willing to marry her and he's the only beau she's ever had. She loves him while he's alive, but renounces him as a betrayer after his death. Letting fate dictate her destination (she does not share the self-determination of the male outlaws), she takes a train to Texas, where she hopes to raise her baby and deny the truth about his father. Although she demanded total loyalty from her husband, her closed-minded restrictiveness prevents her from remaining true to his memory. This country flower is contrasted with the blowzy beautician, who marries one of the other outlaws and reaps material rewards, and the strong sister-in-law, who runs the family while her husband is in prison but ultimately betrays the hero to the

cops. Whether passive or aggressive, frail or robust, women are portrayed as essentially timid creatures who cannot see beyond the narrow limits of the nuclear family. Motivated primarily by self-interest, they all survive; but so does the lone killer.

Badlands presents the most negative portrait of a woman. Unlike *Thieves,* here she is not morally inferior to her mate, but rather is the perfect companion for a pathological killer. Pretty, but unpopular because she has nothing to say, Holly feels very fortunate to have the affections of this young man who looks so much like James Dean and who has so many strong opinions. The main difference between them is that while he is a passionate romantic, she is incapable of feeling any emotion whatsoever—not for her lover or any of his victims, not even for her murdered father. Malick accentuates the flatness of her affect by making her the ironic narrator who tells this story of horror in passionless tones (an extremely effective device reminiscent of Ford Maddox Ford's *The Good Soldier*). Her passivity is as pathological as his aggression; they are equally callous to the murders. She evokes memories of the Genovese case where numbers of people watched a girl being murdered without doing anything about it. Like the silent majority of the sixties and seventies, she denies all responsibility for the killings performed by heroes or villains, even if she has some influence over their behavior. She is shrouded in the kind of ambiguity that surrounds Patricia Hearst—is she merely a passive victim who has been dragged along by her criminal captors, or has she been romantically transformed and infected by the outlaw mentality? After her lover is captured and finds his proper place among the military ranks of the police force, Holly retreats into middle-class respectability. She ends up marrying the son of the lawyer who defends her, realizing Kit's fantasy of joining the law. The final irony is that both of these "outlaws" really belong *within* society.

In describing this genre, one can exaggerate the similarities among the three films. Although they all grow out of *Bonnie and Clyde,* each emphasizes a separate line, which results in important differences in tone. *Sugarland* develops

THIEVES LIKE US

the farcical dimension, which stresses the comic resilience of the outlaws who always bounce back after each explosion of violence like characters in a cartoon (the most common form of cinematic farce). Combining aggression and humor, farce discharges anxiety and fear through laughter. *Bonnie and Clyde* is punctuated with hysterical outbursts in which characters are screaming in pain, howling with laughter, or shrieking in terror. After each dangerous battle, we are comically reassured by Keystone-cop chase sequences where harmless police cars roll over and nearly collide while the Barrow gang escapes across the state line to the joyful picking of Flatt and Scruggs. There are similar collisions in *Sugarland.* In fact, every time we see that long parade of police cars, we can't help but laugh and hope that everything will turn out all right for the young couple. From the opening shot where we see someone working futilely on a wrecked car at the side of a desolate country road, we can predict that automobiles will provide the setting for the actions (e.g., the shootout in the used-car lot and the final death scene) and will function as important characters (e.g., the twin darlings of the out-of-state patrolmen, which are totally demolished when they join the pursuit). In the final chase, some of the cop cars are almost personified (like inanimate objects in cartoons) as their front wheels helplessly dangle over the edge of a dirt ridge. The casting of Goldie Hawn as the young mother also gives the character a dimension of the cartoon caricature, with her stylized goofiness. In the sequence where she and her husband spend the night in a camper, they watch a Bugs Bunny cartoon. We see the couple in

huge close-ups as they giggle with delight while the reflections of animated violence are superimposed on their faces. Suddenly the husband stops laughing as he realizes that these farcical catastrophes foreshadow his own doom. She may be a cartoon character who can bounce back, but he is not. Both are so warm, vital, innocent, and childlike, that we want to believe in their survival. Yet after all, *The Sugarland Express* is not really a Road Runner cartoon, even though it uses many of the same conventions.

Making his directorial debut, Steven Spielberg also draws upon the conventions of the contemporary road picture, which reveals a small corner of American life with its own special rituals, jargon and style (e.g., *Five Easy Pieces, Two-Lane Blacktop, The Last American Hero, Payday;* interestingly, *Dead Head Miles,* which was written by Terrence Malick but never released, also belongs to this genre). Frequently slick, these films rely heavily on the visuals to define the special qualities of the world being explored. Vilmos Zsigmond (who has worked as cinematographer on earlier Altman films) does brilliantly, especially in handling the cars and in giving the strange white house (which is the death trap) exactly the right combination of the ominous and the ordinary. As a first film, *Sugarland* is impressive, but *Badlands* is remarkable.

Acknowledging Arthur Penn in his credits, Terrence Malick develops the mythic dimension of *Bonnie and Clyde,* but with significant alterations. The elements he adopts from Penn are all treated ironically, for the dominant mode of *Badlands* is satire; hence, it is pointless to attack the film for a lack of warmth (as many critics have done) since this is characteristic of most satire, which tends to be a highly controlled intellectual form. Malick wrote, directed, and produced the film and went through three cinematographers in order to get what he wanted. (After the frustrating experience with *Dead Head Miles,* he probably wasn't taking any chances.)

In *Bonnie and Clyde* the young lovers are mythical Robin Hoods, who inspire the poor with hope that they, too, can do something about their abject poverty. The strong bond between them is based on the mutual recognition of their specialness. Highly conscious of publicity, they frequently take PR photographs and follow their press in order to control their public image. Bonnie succeeds in publishing an idyllic ballad about their adventures, which restores Clyde's sexual potency. He joyfully exclaims: "You told my whole story, right there . . . you made me somebody they're goin' to remember." In the final ambush, the cops riddle their bodies with countless bullets because it isn't easy to kill a legend. Their death scene is undeniably romantic—with birds, togetherness, and slow-motion photography. Although Malick's romantic young hero yearns to live out this fantasy, he fails to make it appealing to his apathetic girl friend. After all, he is not an ex-con like Clyde, but an ex-garbage collector. Although he is more competent at sex, his Lady is still disappointed; she doesn't have Bonnie's hearty appetite for experience. After losing her virginity—an event which Kit would like to commemorate with a joint suicide, or at least a rock monument—Holly asks: "Is that all there is to it? Then what's all the fuss about?" It's as if all of Kit's romantic extremism, which ultimately leads to mass murder, is trying to compensate for the apathy, banality, and silence that dominate the land; but it brings no hope or comfort to anyone, not even to the woman he loves. In fact, we wonder whether he really loves her (especially since she is such a blank), or whether he is more enamored with the romantic idea of having such a passion. When they are pursued across the desolate Badlands by fast cars and whirlybirds, he once more asks his love to join him in a romantic death. Instead, she refuses to go any farther and breaks their alliance. We learn that he is executed, but we never witness a glorious death—only the vile murders he commits. Nevertheless, Kit tries to work on his public image. Anytime he has access to a tape recorder, he makes a statement for the public, stressing that he and Holly are making the best of it. He imitates the gestures and mannerisms of the irresistible James Dean; even the arresting officer notices his resemblance. He generously praises the courage of his captors and tosses me-

mentos to the press, assuming that he at last has achieved heroic stature. As in *Bonnie and Clyde,* it is the woman's account of the adventure that gets mass circulation. Instead of writing a laudatory ballad, Holly tells a passionless story; her unconsciously ironic perspective stresses the banality rather than the romance.

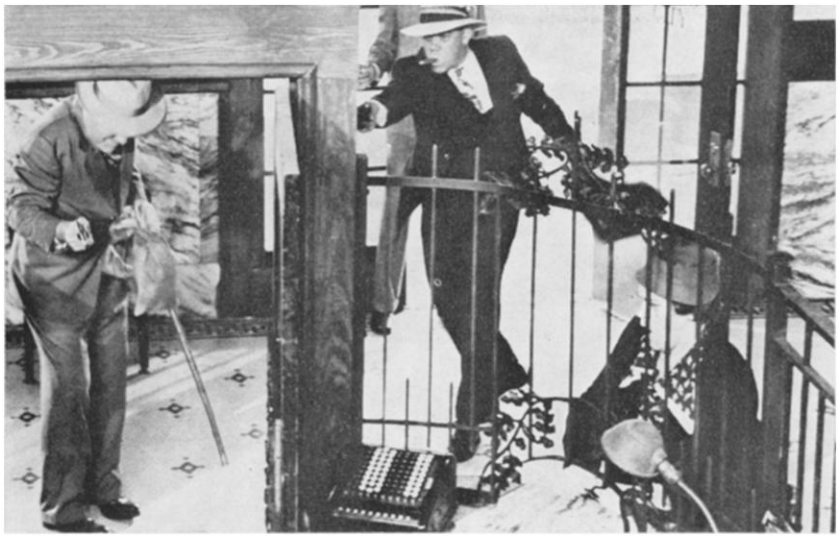
Despite the undercutting of the mythic dimension, it is the main source of the film's visual richness. *Badlands* is an *American Graffiti* turned gothic—à la Grant Woods. The studied selection of locations, architecture, details, and camera angles creates a strange tone—almost a witty surrealism. The first encounter between Kit and Holly's father (a painter) opens with a fairly close shot of the older man working outdoors on a painting. When the camera pulls back, it reveals that it is not a canvas as we assumed, but an outdoor advertising board in the middle of nowhere. In this scene the artistic father has been "popped"—a pun which Kit later uses when he shoots him, making it three layers deep. When Kit and Holly burn down her house after the murder of her father, the camera dwells lovingly on the fire, capturing its sensuousness and energy at the same time that the religious and mystical associations are mocked. We watch the destruction of dolls that look almost human and the antique furnishings and memorabilia (which would bring such a good price at a local swapmeet). The visuals encourage us to be fascinated with the spectacle, but at the same time we are aware that the nostalgia and ritual are slightly overdone, almost reaching an exaggerated expressionism. This taste for ritual and romance lies at the heart of Kit's violence; Malick's visuals show us that we are also susceptible to their charm. A similar combination is present in the jungle sequence, where the young outlaws build a tree house and play Tarzan and Jane in a lush green setting. Yet here, too, the idyllic primitive fantasy leads to vile murder. Malick seems to be exploring the dangers of these romantic myths, which glorify killers. He draws, not only from *Bonnie and Clyde,* but from many genres which embody these fantasies—westerns, jungle films, horror movies, cops and robbers, adventures of Marco Polo and other wanderers, American road

THIEVES LIKE US

movies, James Dean classics. Dominating movie screens throughout America, they provide the popular mythology of *Badlands.*

In contrast to Malick, Robert Altman uses the mythic dimension of *Bonnie and Clyde* positively, not to glorify killers, but to explore the values of family commitment. *Thieves Like Us* can be seen as a companion piece to *The Long Good-Bye,* another Altman remake which is also an exercise in nostalgia. The hero of this earlier film is the alienated Philip Marlowe, a private eye whose only companion is a cat who abandons him; when he acts on behalf of his sole friend, Marlowe is betrayed and ultimately kills the betrayer. He ends up as the lone survivor with no commitments whatsoever. In contrast, *Thieves* focuses on a character who seeks as many commitments as possible, but who is ultimately betrayed both by his gang and his wife. Even the stray dog he picks up on the road runs off with a redneck; he consoles himself with the thought, "He wasn't really *my* dog." As in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller,* although the hero does not succeed and ends up dying alone, the film seems to reaffirm the values of commitment for it is the one thing that distinguishes men from animals.

Conflicting loyalties between gang and family are also central to *Bonnie and Clyde.* The gang sticks together, but is beset by family problems. Bonnie must learn to overcome her hostility to Blanche because Blanche is Buck's wife and Buck is family. Running around with Clyde makes it dangerous for Bonnie to visit her mama, whom she longs to see. Ultimately the gang is betrayed by Blanche and by C. W.'s father. The ideal is to have both loyalties overlap as they do with the Barrow brothers and with Bonnie and Clyde. But this ideal is never achieved in *Thieves.* As the gang separates after



THIEVES
LIKE US

a job, one of them quips, "See ya at the family picnic." This line evokes the scene from *Bonnie and Clyde,* which most strongly influences Altman: the poignant family reunion where Bonnie sees her mother for the last time. It presents the lost community which she sacrifices for her commitment to Clyde and their life of crime. From this point on, he becomes her only family and they realize that they have no real destination. The nostalgia for this lost community is heightened by the visuals, which contrast with those of the rest of the film; the muted colors, the filters, the soft focus, the use of authentic locals rather than actors make the picnic scene look like an actual period photograph by someone like Dorothea Lange or Walker Evans. These are precisely the visual qualities that dominate Jean Boffety's cinematography in *Thieves.* Yet, instead of government-sponsored photography, the style evokes the popular art of the thirties—magazine advertising (particularly Coke ads), movies (like *You Only Live Once*), and radio shows (like *The Shadow* and political speeches by FDR and Father Coughlin). The casting, costuming, and art direction are brilliant in capturing the texture of authenticity down to the smallest detail. Even the lanky bodies and plain wholesome faces of the young lovers are very convincing. Yet, we are definitely seeing the thirties through a seventies filter—which is as obvious as the painted screens that frame so many of the shots; the radio static that dominates the sound track; and the mirror shot of the tap-dancing, which reflects the revival. The carefully chosen period furnishings don't look new, but old, as if they are already antiques. *Thieves* is a sophisticated version of an earlier naive form, a sentimental art (to use Schiller's term); yet *Bonnie and Clyde* was also sentimental for it was getting back to American gangster movies through the filter of the French new wave (particularly *Breathless*). It is not surprising that Altman recovers romantic elements from Penn's death scene: the young man with mythic power is gunned down in slow motion by an army of law men; his body is wrapped in his wife's family quilt, which her grandmother made with her own hands. Altman cultivates the thirties nostalgia, not purely for aesthetic delight, but because we in the seventies have something to learn from this period about commitment and survival.

Despite the range of individuality and experimentation in *Badlands, Sugarland,* and *Thieves,* these movies begin to form a definable genre that is highly self-reflexive and nostaglic. They allude to "real history," to past films, and to past films about "real history." The pattern is hopelessly circular: the past portends the present, and the present repeats the past; films reflect cultural norms, and cultural norms are shaped by films. While the cops are helplessly enmeshed in a web of conflicting moralities, the desperate, romantic outlaws try to cut themselves loose, to choose freely an individual course of action. Yet, even their rebellion is culturally determined; like the police, the outlaws merely reflect the society and its limitations.

LOUIS NORMAN

Rossellini's Case Histories for Moral Education

"Things are where they are, why bother to rearrange them?"

"But if one wishes to find truth, one must have a moral viewpoint. A critical judgment is a necessity. I cannot let myself go off aimlessly and, when I wish to go to Orly, wind up at Le Bourget."

—ROSSELLINI INTERVIEW, *Cahiers du Cinéma, 1963*

Since 1963, Roberto Rossellini has devoted his energies to producing historical films for educational television. The purpose of what he terms his "didactic films" is simple: to transmit the truth of the past to those who will make the future. "I do not seek personal glory, I wish only to be useful." But one should not imagine that Rossellini has abandoned his former concerns and methods. In fact he has merely carried into the past the passion for authenticity which distinguishes his best work. In his new undertaking he continues to use the real event to isolate and promote ethical values. In this respect all his films are didactic: *Open City* depends on the tension between *is* and *might be* quite as much as *Augustine of Hippo*. The television series builds up a complex picture of Western man: his strengths, his weaknesses, his important accomplishments, his problematic future. Certain of the films concentrate on periods and movements—*The Age of Iron, Man's Struggle for Survival, The Age of Cosimo de' Medici* —while others emphasize individual initiative and responsibility. Four of the latter group— *The Rise to Power of Louis XIV, Socrates, Blaise Pascal,* and *Augustine of Hippo*—provide not only a measure of Rossellini's latest achievement, but demonstrate his continuing preoccupation with the moral basis of cinema and the moral purpose of life.

Real events have always inspired Rossellini, as *Open City* and *Paisan* clearly indicate. But the same box-office obligations which eventually decided him to abandon commercial cinema make his early films overly dependent on narrative conventions. The foreignness of Italian life and speech so fascinated critics that they failed for a long time to realize that many early neorealist films, and particularly those of Rossellini, are basically melodramas. The characters of *Open City* and, to a lesser degree, of *Paisan,* are unmistakably stereotypic. We can almost see labels: heroic Resistance leader, sadistic Nazi, disillusioned Offizier, courageous Priest, and so on. Perhaps nowhere is the melodramatic quality more apparent than in the musical accompaniment which seeks to intensify our response to the action. Such emotional manipulation now seems excessive. Certainly this is one of the reasons for the musical restraint of the television films.

Rossellini characteristically orients his films in two directions. On the one hand he seeks to capture the essence of reality; on the other he strives to organize "things" into a coherent structure which not only states the problem, but suggests a solution. The desire to reconcile the contrary impulsions of realism and moral optimism early led him naturally to historical subjects which provide a reality already infused with ethical values. *Little Flowers of St. Francis* (1950) and *Viva l'Italia* (1960) foreshadow the dominant stylistic concerns of the television films: dedramatization and demythification. These complementary techniques aim at rediscovering the natural simplicity of truth: the one does to dramatic stylization what the other does to historical exaggeration. Dedramatization is, in some respects, a standard Rossellini technique. Partly an effect of using non-actors, it emphasizes content over form, spontaneity over reflection. In the treatment of historical subjects it

inevitably builds up so untraditional a picture that by itself it is a powerful means of demythification.

Little Flowers of St. Francis is the story of one man and a few followers who tried to eliminate hatred and division by insisting on love. The humility and self-imposed poverty of the Franciscans make the film perfect for nonprofessional actors. Francis appears as a simple, unprepossessing man of limited means but great faith. Organizing the story as a succession of anecdotes—*fioretti*—brings the film close to the narrative development of the television films. Unlike the later films, however, *Little Flowers of St. Francis* builds to an hilarious climax: in the tyrant's camp Brother Ginepro demonstrates, by converting the barbarians, the miraculous effect of love and humility on ordinary men. The film is intended not only to portray the saint, but to revitalize his teachings.

A different impulse animates *Viva l'Italia.* Made to commemorate the centenary of Garibaldi's conquest of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, the film exudes the joy of liberation. The surge of Garibaldi's volunteer army across Sicily and up toward Rome has the inherent dramatic appeal of a great military exploit. For sheer excitement nothing matches the colorful explosion of the battle of Calatafimi. The Pancinor zoom lens, so important in all the films after 1959, plays an essential part in conveying the battle's turmoil. The camera, slowly zooming in and out as it pans carefully over the terrain, seems to unroll the conflict in front of us in much the same way, no doubt, that the tapestry at Bayeux spread Hastings before visitors to the abbey. The movement of the camera encountering contrary movements by the groups of tiny soldiers leaves us with the impression of swirls of activity spreading across the face of an immense hill.

Using a well known professional actor to play Garibaldi would seem contrary to Rossellini's desire to demythify history. But the dramatic ease and restrained power which Renzo Ricci brings to his characterization allow a new insight into the nature of the man. Ricci's portrayal refuses the heroic view of Garibaldi as the hammer striking the enemy, and gives instead a more satisfying picture of Garibaldi as the fulcrum which enables a small force to dislodge a large weight. In a sense the film is a study of charisma. Whether fighting or planning or just conversing, Garibaldi commands attention and elicits admiration. He encourages his men, he steadies them, he inspires them. But it is their efforts, the work of the many, which accomplish his projects. Although Rossellini takes care to note Garibaldi's gout and his need for reading glasses, these details humanize the man without explaining or diminishing his hold over us. His modest appearance belies an inner power which finds objective expression in the success of the entire expedition.

Demythification is not solely a matter of actor selection. Ricci's dramatic skill keeps Garibaldi within human limits; Rossellini's direction emphasizes the traits which bring him into the line of men like Don Pietro, Manfredi, and Saint Francis. As in the television films, Rossellini achieves this new portrait by retaining the facts and shifting either the context or the point of view. Conventional staging looks backward from success to undertaking, presenting events as inevitable: Rossellini's looks forward. Restoring the temporal continuity of the past in this fashion helps combat the *post hoc* reasoning which restricts historical understanding. The depiction of Garibaldi's famous *"Qui si fa l'Italia o si muore"* ("Here we will unify Italy or die") at the battle of Calatafimi is an outstanding example of Rossellini's method. Garibaldi delivers the historic words as little more than an offhand remark as he and a group of soldiers prepare to move off toward the battle. This treatment runs counter to the heroic tradition, but such simplicity brings out Garibaldi's resolution and firmness in the face of uncertainty, and this is probably a truer picture of the moment than the smug bravado of the standard version. It is, after all, the winning battle which immortalizes the words, not the immortal words which win the battles.

In the television films, now relatively free of commercial obligations, Rossellini builds a style based on the primacy of the fact: he dedramatizes the action—and demythifies history—by factualizing it. Putting aside previous narrative

PASCAL

conventions, he concentrates on the short episode, the anecdote. As in the first important historical form, the chronicle, the didactic films deliver the past in regulated, almost self-contained parcels. In *The Rise to Power of Louis XIV,* dramatic use of the rivalry between Louis and Fouquet creates a greater resemblance to typical historical narrative than in the other films, but the film is still composed of moments placed next to each other: doctors visit Cardinal Mazarin, the King arises, the King speaks to his ministers, the King dines. Each scene is like a fragment from a mosaic: we cannot understand completely until all the pieces are in place.

The same moral impetus which insists on factual accuracy causes Rossellini to prefer non-professional actors. They are to reality what the fact is to history, and they provide the key to his didactic style. Beginning with *Open City,* where their use is associated with a desire for realism, non-actors have been an important feature of Rossellini's cinema. Precisely because they are unfamiliar to us, non-actors create an impression of reality which the professional actor cannot: like the faces we pass in the street, they appear once and then vanish. The added realism makes us more receptive to the message of the story. But Rossellini aims beyond realism. He seeks a cinema of authenticity and truth, one which establishes a symbiotic relation between film and reality. It is primarily because the actions of non-actors possess the weight and accuracy of personal experience that Rossellini prefers them. Their naturalness, however gauche, is more truthful than the studied expressiveness of the professional actor.

Although non-actors often pose serious dramatic problems (the failure to resolve such problems limits the effectiveness of many *cinéma-vérité* productions), Rossellini has always shown himself not only willing but delighted to take advantage of unforeseen occurrences or to draw on individual mannerisms in devising a scene. This spontaneity helps give his cinema the moral base of authenticity it requires. In the television films, the inexperience of the actors engenders a *mise-en-scène* so deliberate and so methodical it might more appropriately be termed *mise-en-place.* But under Rossellini's guidance this stolidity often achieves a stateliness which allows the past to unfold itself before us fresh and new. In *The Rise to Power of Louis XIV* the measured pace is a perfect vehicle to convey both the gloom of Mazarin's death and the implacability of the King's political will. By eliminating dramatic exaggeration Rossellini transfers emphasis from drama to fact, and creates works which appeal to the intellect rather than directly to the emotions. Simplifying and slowing down the *mise-en-scène* clarifies the action, giving the films an essentially Brechtian tone. Moreover the simple staging facilitates filming in long sequences, in which Rossellini's zoom technique combines emotional close-ups and temporal continuity. This union is most effective in *Blaise Pascal,* where the camera, zooming slowly in and out, isolates or integrates the individual: it is as if we were going over a

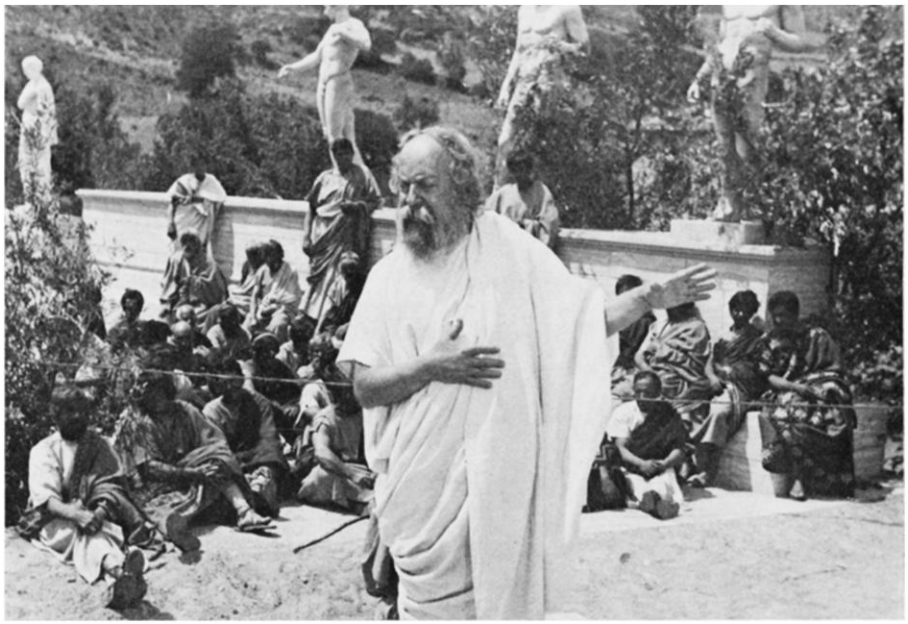
large painting with a magnifying glass. The telephoto close-ups add to the sensation of flatness and stasis.

These innovations seem motivated in part to guard against pre-judgments. Every historical character has a physical personality which exists quite apart from the tendentious views of traditional accounts. Demythification means not only reducing the great to human proportions, but restoring the maligned to human dignity. Rossellini takes great precautions to avoid both out-of-hand condemnation and hyperbolic praise. Even Xanthippe emerges rather well, considering the proverbial attitudes toward her.

Their flat, static narrative often makes the didactic films disappointing as drama, but paradoxically their dramatic weakness is their moral and educational strength. They seem to refuse our attention, and this refusal compels us to watch even more carefully. The restrained pace and factual precision encourage us to believe that Rossellini is merely *presenting* the material —in the best tradition of the objective, detached historian—and allowing us to learn for ourselves. In fact he puts nothing before us which is not related to the moral and historical lessons he wishes to communicate. In *Blaise Pascal* the treatment of the extraordinary vision which reconverted Pascal to Catholicism demonstrates perfectly his procedure. The camera pans about the room, slowly uncovering a disorder of details which suggest a recent struggle, as Pascal rereads, in a voice at the limit of physical endurance, the anguished summary (which was found sewn into the lining of his coat after his death) of his emotional state. Restaging the *recording* of the vision, instead of attempting to portray the vision itself, retains intact the sensory mystery of Pascal's experience while rendering the essence of its effect. But lacking knowledge of the full significance of the moment —the staging speaks completely only to those with prior awareness—we find ourselves wanting to know more. The film thus sends us to books, and the books will send us back to the film. By encouraging questions the film opens out into our own world. Rossellini forces us to *look*—and *see*—for ourselves. We cannot assimilate the words and images without taking an active part in the process. The didactic works make education our responsibility.

Although the use of real people and real places has naturally led critics to consider these films documentaries, they are better understood as slide-lectures, or pseudo-documentaries. It is true that Rossellini makes use of documentary techniques: he mixes notations of typical behavior with depictions of particular historical incidents and gives careful attention to including accurate models of significant artifacts of the period. A true documentary, however, can only show existing conditions or present relations. Rossellini cannot—and does not wish to —resuscitate an individual or a period. Even when he uses the actual historical sites, these "real" locations serve primarily a formal purpose. They suggest the historical environment just as the actors suggest the historical individual. What Rossellini wishes to impress upon us is the *pattern* of the conflict between an individual and an environment.

The Rise to Power of Louis XIV, Socrates, Blaise Pascal, and *Augustine of Hippo* are intended to function both as educational documents and as moral suggestions. In them the genial accomplishments of Louis XIV, Socrates, Pascal, and Augustine provide an indication of the possibilities of individual attainment. Still, it is not the *fact,* but the *manner* of their genius which recommends the four men as educational models. They all confronted moral problems which recur, in similar form, in each generation. For Rossellini the purpose of education is to provide man with information which will increase his ability to cope effectively with obstacles and enable him to arrive at a positive resolution of life's inescapable quandaries. By identifying each of his protagonists with a general and recurring moral dilemma, Rossellini applies to moral education the technique, widespread in medicine and psychology, of the case history. *Blaise Pascal,* for instance, may be viewed as the objective illustration of the continuing tension between the famous mathematician's scientific abilities and his spiritual wants. But Pascal's particular need to reconcile physical constraints with ideal goals is one which typifies Western European man. Again the example of



SOCRATES

the past becomes a source of inspiration for the present.

Similar oppositions underlie the other three films. Augustine embodies Christian faith and hope during the collapse of civil authority. Socrates has always stood for individual freedom and rational analysis against the intolerance of political conservatism. Louis represents not only the modern centralized state against feudal dispersion, but the energy of new ideas in a time of anarchy. The four films lack the insistent moral tone of the early works, but their moral conclusions have become more powerful by taking on the persuasive subtlety of historical tradition.

To declare that the discovery of truth requires a moral point of view means to establish a relative scale of moral values. This does not mean necessary division into good and bad, but implies at least a progression from good to better. One may dispute the validity of Rossellini's moral hierarchy, but one cannot question its existence. Whether he is recording the modest heroism of the working class or probing the historical exaggerations which misshape minds, Rossellini demonstrates time and again that his admiration goes to those who strive. Man is ennobled by his willingness and his capacity to struggle. Rossellini undoubtedly sees the world in Catholic terms; many of his subjects are Catholic in tone and inspiration. But the qualities he sanctions—energy, commitment, faith, intelligence —are universal. The Rossellini hero can come from any class, from any country. Near the end of *Augustine of Hippo,* Augustine speaks for all Rossellini's protagonists when he explains to his younger companion: "Life is like this road. We are free to do what we want while we walk along it, but we cannot change the direction of the road. To leave it is to fall into darkness. To turn back the same." Since there is no escape the best response is to press forward; all Rossellini's characters share this conviction. The flat narrative emphasizes the steady battle.

Characteristically the films do not cap the efforts of their protagonists with a personally rewarding "happy ending." Their achievements imprison them just as their genius dominates us. There is only death (Socrates, Pascal) or isolation accompanied by the intuition of death. Louis becomes the Sun King, the giver of life to all the nobility of France. But the final scene shows us the man, alone, closed up in his room pondering the effect of his victory. "Neither the sun nor death can be looked at fixedly." The close-up which concludes *Augustine of Hippo* shows Augustine standing in the pulpit, his arms and face raised toward God and the hope of salvation. If death were a defeat, they would all be failures. But death is not part of the problem; it is a given. As Don Pietro in *Open City* points out just before he is shot: "It is easy to

AGE OF THE MEDICIS

die well. What is difficult is to live well." The didactic films repeat that even though living well requires constant effort, it is a necessary exertion. The supreme immorality is to give up.

Although the films on genius are historically accurate, they are not intended to be exhaustive compilations. Rossellini leaves out important and interesting material: he never mentions Louis's religious intolerance (he revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685 and closed down the Jansenist convents in 1711, imprisoning members of the order) or Augustine's fervid persecution of the Donatists and the Aryans during his later years. But since it is the structure of a particular problem which takes his full interest, the selectivity of the films does not limit their significance. Rossellini emphasizes personal solutions in order to encourage understanding and imitation. For this reason the individual portrait, no matter how brightly colored with factual notations, is ideal in the sense that only one aspect of the person is considered. Louis XIV is a prime example. Two of his most remarkable traits in the film—the failure to consult with anyone and the absence of a smile—are historically inaccurate. But Rossellini merely emphasizes, by restricting his view of the king, the loneliness of responsibility, the strain of power and the single-minded force of the king's political consciousness. This sort of selectivity is obviously well-suited for creating an ideal image, but paradoxically, factual precision can contribute to an idealized portrait. Because Louis XIV was actually 5′ 4″ tall, Rossellini was careful to select a man the same height. The king's brother and Fouquet were chosen the same way. But since the other actors are modern men and taller on the average than Louis's contemporaries, the king appears short—which emphasizes in a physical way the obstacles he had to overcome to impose his will. Rossellini has made Louis larger than life by shrinking him.

In spite of their innovative style, the films are far from attaining uniform excellence. The questionable practice of dubbing—particularly in *Socrates,* which was filmed in Spain with French, Spanish, and Italian actors and then post-synchronized in Italian — creates a discrepancy between voice and face, between words and lip movements which often detracts from the action. *The Rise to Power of Louis XIV,* on the other hand, shows what can be done with real voices and real faces. The sound is so perfect that much of it seems to have been recorded direct. The films which deal with Classical times are somewhat marred by unconvincing sets, although this deficiency is probably not so marked when the films are presented on television.

The four films, like all in the series, require much from us and occasionally impose on our patience, not to mention our good will. Each film is a precisely detailed surface on which we see paraded not the fullness of real life, but the linear abstraction of successive, interrelated events. Deliberate staging and measured pace lead us inexorably to the moral lessons which Rossellini has contained within each film. Like the great fresco painters, Rossellini seeks to make the past not only coherent, but useful.

ALAN WILLIAMS

Structures of Narrativity in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*

This study will attempt a narrative analysis of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* using concepts developed by A.-G. Greimas, particularly those of his "Eléments d'une grammaire narrative" (Paris: Le Seuil, in *Du Sens*). Greimas's system of analysis posits three fundamentally distinct levels in any text: a "deep" structure of meaning (similar to Levi-Strauss's notion in myth analysis but based on a dynamic model of generation rather than a static set of paradigms), an anthropomorphic level (shifts generated by the model become "actions" performed by "characters"), and finally the level of inscription in which the narrative is presented in whatever matter of expression chosen (in this case the filmic text as "read"). Rather than explain in detail Greimas's theory and then proceed to Lang, we will begin the analysis of *Metropolis,* introducing theoretical points as they become relevant. To this end we will begin with a preliminary "reading" of the film in Greimasian terms (primarily at the "anthropomorphic" level), then proceed to an attempt at formalization of the narrative structure (the "deep" level), and finally place the text in other systems of discourse, the "texts" of culture and ideology (using mainly the level of the inscription).

Metropolis begins with a segment (a self-contained bit of expression read as a separate unit) which appears totally expository—having, however, a definite function in the narrative. Greimas points out, after Propp, that all narratives must begin with a *manque,* a lack of some sort. In many of Perrault's fairy tales this is a lack of food; in the Russian folk-tales analyzed by Propp it is the kidnapping of the king's daughter. Lang's film begins with a depiction of the totally alienated condition of the workers, their lack of control or even contact with their own conditions of existence. This lack marks the workers as the film's first "subject" or hero (as a collective unit), although their function as actant, as performer of a set of operations, changes in the course of the film, as we will see. (The lack posited by Greimas is, of course, similar to the "problem" considered as the root of narrative in texts on the short story or on scriptwriting. Greimas's notion has the advantage, however, of being more concrete from the point of view of analysis and comparison, if not of story-writing. It is easier to compare the lack of two specific objects than to compare two problems defined in different terms, giving a greater power of critical generalization.)

One of the other major devices of all narrative is also introduced in this first segment, but in a non-operative manner: the film is divided into various "spaces," making possible various transfers or disjunctions. The workers are seen descending from the machine rooms to their homes, using the giant elevators which form part of one of the film's ruling oppositions, movement by machine/self-movement, one aspect of the central opposition Machine/Human in the film's structure of meaning.

This notion of space is central to the most daring aspect of Greimas's theories of narrative, his definition of all narrative events as some sort of real or attempted *transfer* of an *object,* accompanied by or implying a spatial discontinuity. By this criterion the first narrative function in *Metropolis* occurs in the film's second autonomous segment. Maria, as "subject," takes the group of children (the object of value) from the worker city to the "pleasure garden" on the upper level. She is forced to leave, and the unit of narrative (and the segment) is ended by the failure of this attempted transfer. This narrative unit, isolated though it seems, does not remain unconnected with the narrative as a whole, by its creation of another hero, Freder, and its anticipation of the penultimate transfer of an

object in the film, which is the return of the children to the upper level (again to the "pleasure garden") by Maria, assisted by Freder and Joseph.

This second segment of the film also introduces a second lack, this time individual rather than collective. This *manque* produces Freder as a "hero" of the narrative, for he discovers his lack of *knowledge* of the workers, which institutes the next portion of the narrative in which he descends to the machine rooms to observe the workers and witnesses the accident at the central power room. This constitutes, however, only the first stage of his acquisition of the knowledge which will enable him to act as a hero or subject in the film. The end of this portion of the narrative (and the third autonomous segment of the film) is indicated by his leaving the space of conflict, the machine rooms, to return to the upper levels with his (still incomplete) knowledge.

When Freder returns to the upper city, the residence of the ruling class, he attempts to give his father, John Frederson, his understanding of the workers' condition. Frederson at this point is simultaneously the intended destination of the object of value, knowledge, and anti-subject (traitor) who prevents its transmission. With the introduction of Frederson at this point the narrative must be interpreted simultaneously on two levels, for as an actant Frederson is the "subject" of another "story," in which the object of desire is the control (later the elimination) of the workers. For the discovery of the maps in the dead workers' clothing reveals another lack, similar to Freder's: the ruler of Metropolis lacks knowledge of the meaning of the maps, of the workers' intentions. From this point until the segment of the film in the catacombs the objects of desire sought by both father and son will be types of knowledge, which will enable them to function as hero and traitor in the decisive later stages of the narrative. In each case the knowledge will be acquired in stages. Thus, following the interview in Frederson's office, Freder redescends to the machines and Frederson goes to the inventor Rotwang's house, each in search of more adequate knowledge. At the level of expression the film emphasizes this similarity by the use of parallel editing.

Their acquisition of knowledge, this stage of which is delineated by the spaces in which both hero and traitors remain, brings them both closer to the full knowledge necessary to the power to act. Freder discovers the grueling effects of time and repeated effort by taking charge of a machine deserted by a failing worker. Frederson is shown the Robot by Rotwang, who also partially deciphers the mystery of the maps, which are revealed to be guides to the catacombs below the worker city. Again parallels are established expressively between these acquisitions of knowledge by intercutting.

In the first segment in the catacombs (which we would number as seventh segment of the film) the acquisition of knowledge for both sides is completed. Freder, his father, and Rotwang observe Maria speaking to the workers. The initial lacks of knowledge are eliminated, but reveal in each case another lack: Frederson discovers that he lacks control over the workers and Freder discovers his responsibility as "mediator." The new object of desire for both Freder and his father (through Rotwang) will be Maria, although she is desired by both as a means of obtaining another object, the workers, for their elimination (father) or liberation (son). Although Maria is still a subject or hero in the film, at this point she also becomes an object of desire.

The next narrative function in the film is the abduction of Maria by Rotwang from the catacombs to his house—a typical narrative transfer complete with spatial discontinuity. In the implied confrontation in the inventor's house between Freder and Rotwang (in the segment which follows) the latter triumphs by using machinery, which serves as helping agent to the traitors throughout the film. Freder is thus denied access to Maria whose features are trans-

ferred, quite literally, to the Robot. This is done in order to deceive Freder and the workers, that is, to transmit to them a *false knowledge*. The deception of Freder, in his father's office, removes his power to act. The function of the acquisition of knowledge in narrative is the creation of an ability to act, a *power*. Transmission of false knowledge is the classic means of neutralizing this power.

The individual deception of Freder is followed by the collective deception of the workers in the catacombs; this deception does not merely neutralize their power but converts them temporarily into traitors, allies of Frederson and Rotwang. The Robot, contrary to the real Maria, convinces the workers to act by violence for themselves, not peacefully through others, a frequent distinction made in Western narratives between traitor and hero. The children left behind in the lower city will assume the workers' actantial function as hero, as metonymic representatives of the proletariat. In these deceptions, the Robot, though a machine, is an actant and fills the role of anti-subject or traitor.

The deception of the workers, however, is followed by the restoration of Freder's power to act, by his acquisition of the knowledge that the Robot is not Maria. The workers, as traitor, subdue him. Their object, the destruction of the machines, entails the destruction of their own children, who are the final object of value in the narration. The restoration of power to the heroes continues as Maria achieves her release from Rotwang's house and prevents the destruction of the children by moving them to the upper city with the help of Freder and Joseph. The restoration of power to Freder and Maria is followed by the undeceiving of the workers and their return to the status of hero. The knowledge given them by the foreman of the powerhouse frees them from the traitors' domination. With this new status they seize and destroy the Robot, who becomes simultaneously anti-subject and object, as Maria was previously subject and object.

The second abduction of Maria by Rotwang creates one final lack to be dealt with by the hero Freder who by killing Rotwang eliminates the last of the traitors—John Frederson being transformed from traitor to hero by his son's actions. It is Freder's having saved the children which saves his father from being killed by the workers. At the end of the film, therefore, the lacks (of the subjects, not the anti-subjects) are removed, the traitors destroyed, and the imbalance which set the narrative in motion eliminated.

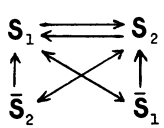
We should add parenthetically that some of the problems raised by the narrative structure of *Metropolis* stem from the fact that much of the original version of the film is missing from the copies currently available. Nonetheless the film as it exists has coherence and has been "read" easily enough by its audiences; thus our analysis has taken as its point of departure the text as we have it and not as it "should have been." In any case there is ample evidence that the original version has most of the inconsistencies which trouble the film in its current state. For a summary of these problems see Jensen, *The Cinema of Fritz Lang* (London: Zwemmer, 1969).

Despite the apparent complexity of our preliminary reading, *Metropolis* does not have an inordinately complicated narrative design. The major difficulties of analysis come from the division of the functions of hero and traitor among six principal actants, with two of these switching function in the course of the film. The heroes appear in what we have considered the film's first two autonomous segments: the workers, Freder, and Maria. The traitors appear in segments five and six (in the office and Rotwang's house): John Frederson, Rotwang, and the Robot. The distribution of actants and also their order of first appearance in the text is thus symmetrical—Frederson and the workers will at times be both subject (anti-subject) and object, and Freder and Rotwang will function unambiguously as hero and traitor. This tripling of hero and traitor is maintained through a tripartite division of objects of value: the knowledge

of the proletariat, the use of Maria, and finally the children of the workers, who metonymically represent the proletariat as social entity. These three objects function in the classic order of Western narratives: knowledge, power, action.

The final simplicity of the narrative structure of *Metropolis* comes principally from the central position (functionally and diegetically) of the abduction and release of Maria. It is as if the other major portions of the film's narrative structure had been grafted onto this double transfer, without which the story cannot function. The position of Maria as object follows the classic double transfer of Propp's tales (see his *Morphology of the Folktale,* The Hague: Mouton, 1968). The traitor abducts a woman, takes her to his own space, from which she is delivered by the hero and restored to the space of society (the hero who delivers Maria in *Metropolis* being Maria herself).

Propp, however, by retaining this series of events as fixed, produced a model only applicable to the specific body of texts which he studied. Greimas adopts a mathematical-logical model with a greater power of generalization, accounting for the Russian tales *and* other possible narratives. Based on a model originally developed for a theory of semantics (in *Sémantique structurale,* Paris: Larousse, 1966), it posits an "elementary structure of meaning" which may be schematized as follows:



In this diagram $\rightleftarrows$ indicates a relationship of contrareity, $\longleftrightarrow$ relation of contradiction, and $\rightarrow$ a relation of presupposition. In the structure of meaning constructed to account for the distinction Good/Evil, for example, S_1 = good, $\overline{S}_1$ = non-good, S_2 = evil, $\overline{S}_2$ = non-evil. The semantic aspects of this model will serve us here only as a point of departure. For Propp and for *Metropolis* what counts is the application of this model to narrativity.

If we take S_1 as the hero (subject) of a narrative and S_2 as the traitor (anti-subject) and consider that the object of value circulates in a structure of meaning defined by these terms, the object transfer of Maria, like the transfer of the king's daughter in the Russian tale, may be reduced to the following equation: $F(S_1 \rightarrow O \rightarrow \overline{S}_1) \rightarrow F(\overline{S}_1 \rightarrow S_2)$, then $F(S_2 \rightarrow O \rightarrow \overline{S}_2) \rightarrow F(\overline{S}_2 \rightarrow O \rightarrow S_1)$. That is, Maria, originally in the space of society (S_1), is kidnapped by Rotwang ($\overline{S}_1$) and taken to the space of the traitors (S_2), the inventor's house. From this space (S_2) the subject Maria takes the object Maria ($\overline{S}_2$) and returns to the space of society and the heroes (S_1).

One might reasonably demand at this point what purpose is served by this elaborate procedure; in a very real sense it "explains" nothing whatever. The object (of value, we might add) of the semiotic endeavor is not explanation, of course, but *description,* precise description with as high as possible a power of generalization. (Even highly refined sciences such as physics or biochemistry "explain" little, but rather provide more and more adequate models to describe particular objects). This description makes possible comparison and hierarchization of objects and processes studied. Greimas's model is thus superior to Propp's and to other descriptions of narrativity in that it is applicable to a greater body of texts and permits, for example, a comparison between narrative sequences within a particular text and between texts of different origins. Mathematically it may also be considered superior by the principle of elegance, for fewer and simpler terms are used to describe the same object.

These considerations lead us back to *Metropolis.* For using Greimas's model we may describe a curious feature of Lang's film. The circulation of Maria as object is accompanied and paralleled by that of the Robot, which moves as follows: $F(S_2 \rightarrow O \rightarrow \overline{S}_2) \rightarrow F(\overline{S}_2 \rightarrow O \rightarrow S_1)$, then $F(S_1 \rightarrow O \rightarrow \overline{S}_1) \rightarrow F(\overline{S}_1 \rightarrow O \rightarrow S_2)$. That is, the robot (a machine, S_2) is made to appear human ($\overline{S}_2$) and transferred to the space of society (S_1). The workers, discovering their deception, seize the robot and burn it ($\overline{S}_1$) whereupon it turns back into a machine (S_2). One may easily see that the transfer of the robot is negatively symmetrical to

that of Maria, that is, its starting point is shifted 180°. The transfer depends totally on the important opposition between being and seeming, *etre* and *paraitre;* a frequent distinction between hero and traitor in Western narrative is the latter's use of *deceit.* Because of this deceit, this non-conformity between being and seeming, the transfer of the Robot to the space of the workers is as "violent" an action as the abduction of the real Maria.

The transfer of the children to the upper city at the end of the film would appear an first consideration not to have the circular nature of the first transfer of the children as object in a structure of meaning in which the terms are lack and alienation and plenitude and control. In the transfer which opens the film they are taken by Maria from the worker city, characterized by non-plenitude, to the "pleasure garden" but are forced to return, giving the inverse of the double structure characteristic of the circular and stable narrative common to the Russian folktales. The alienated status of the proletariat, whom the children represent by metonomy, is affirmed. At the film's end, the children remain on the upper level, in the "pleasure garden." Yet their status is ambiguous, and their position at the close of the film gives *Metropolis* its subtle yet profoundly reactionary orientation. For although the children seem to remain in the state of plenitude they will, as a result of the accord reached between ruling class and workers, return yet again to their original space. The result of the narrative is only a relativization of its value system, its basic oppositions, which remain unchanged. Thus the film affirms the social structure presented at its beginning. The troubling experience created by Lang's film is thus in part explicable: what appears to be socially radical in the film's overt content is negated by the deeper structure set up by its circulation of values. The reactionary narrative is often one characterized by circularity, whereas more "revolutionary" stories, such as those of Perrault (compare "Little Tom Thumb," for example, with any of the Grimm tales), terminate with the objects of value in different positions in the structures of meaning implicit in the narrative.

The oppositions established between heroes and traitors in *Metropolis,* however, do not exist in an ideological vacuum. Lang's film is a profoundly mythic text, inscribing itself in several streams of cultural discourse. We will examine here two cultural contexts of the film and also its possible insertion into the psychoanalytic system of discourse. We might divide the cultural contexts of the film into two groups dealing with political and scientific distinctions on the axis human/mechanical and with cultural and religious distinctions on the axis Christian/mystical-alchemical, both groups being parallel to the division of actants in the text into heroes and traitors.

The montage which opens the film gives an exposition of the complex of meanings which we can label "mechanical." At the most evident level of meaning this is clear from the denotative content of the shots, most of which depict parts of stylized machines. The motion of these machines is of two sorts, circular and back-and-forth, which are like two themes structuring the montage. The heavily rhythmic element introduced by the lateral motion and the circularity of the turning wheels prepare the introduction in the montage of a clock face, its shape duplicating the circular composition of many of the preceding shots and the rhythmic jerking of its hands echoing the others. The montage concludes with a shot of a whistle blowing; a title identifies "The Day Shift" which is seen in the next shot entering the elevators to descend to the worker city. It is not merely machinery which is identified with the traitors and which oppresses the workers—it is also the concept of *time,* the necessary base of the cluster of meanings which we have designated as "mechanical." Time is the measure of the repetitive effort required of the proletariat. On the other hand the "pleasure garden" in which Freder initially plays with the dark-haired girl (as opposed to Maria's lightness) is characterized precisely by being out of time, as well as removed from all types of machinery.

The opposition between the mechanical and the human is present also in the nature of the film's protagonists. Of the three principal traitors in *Metropolis,* only John Frederson, who will be transformed into a hero at the film's end, is

wholly human. The robot is, obviously, a machine, but Rotwang is also in part, having lost his right hand and replaced it with a mechanical one during the robot's construction. Thus the inventor is an embodiment of this central tension: he is half human and half machine, on the metonymic level of the hands. It is, significantly, his right, mechanical hand which Frederson shakes after first seeing the robot in action. Shortly afterward, Frederson also shakes the robot's hand; his transformation to hero will be signalled at the end of the film by his shaking for the first time a fully human hand, that of the foreman.

This master opposition is also present in a less consistent manner in methods of transportation depicted in the film. When the workers, oppressed by the ruling class, go to and from work they use the elevators, helping agents for the traitors, whereas when they descend to the catacombs to hear Maria they do so on foot. When the workers go as traitor to destroy the machines, their position as actant is underlined by their use of the elevators—the very sort of machinery which they wish to eliminate. Freder, Maria, and Joseph take the children to the upper levels by purely "human" effort. These oppositions inscribe themselves in an almost Marxist discourse; they therefore contribute to the paradoxical nature of the film. The deep narrative structure, which we can justly characterize as reactionary, belies the contexts into which the production of this meaning is inserted.

A second sort of discourse alluded to in *Metropolis* is of a religious dimension. This is most evident in the names of the protagonists, Joh Frederson ("John" in the English titles does not suggest "Jehova" as well as the German), Maria, Joseph, and Freder, who is most often referred to simply as "the son" or "Joh Frederson's son." (Joseph, we might add, has a less important role than Maria, the Father, and the Son, as befits the Western religious tradition.)

But there is a consistent opposition present between the vague Christianity present in so much of the film and another tradition, mystical and alchemical, most evident in the connotations produced by the presentation of Rotwang. He is portrayed as a sort of medieval sorcerer (and his robot will be burned like a witch); compared to the archtypically Aryan appearances of Freder and Maria the inventor looks distinctly Semitic. On his door and above the robot in his laboratory is a five-pointed star. He lives alone in a curiously distorted, old-fashioned house, set apart from the rest of society. His "science" is occult and solitary.

The opposing, Christian tradition is most apparent in Maria and Freder. The latter, working at the curious circular machine during his second visit to the machine rooms, is quite clearly crucified on the hands of the clock face which appears behind the controls. Maria is clearly and uncomplicatedly associated with Christian teachings. In the catacombs, when she relates the tale of the Tower of Babel there emerges a curious juxtaposition of the Christian and mystic elements opposed in the text. Maria stands in front of numerous crucifixes, viewed reverently from below by the workers. As the shots appear which illustrate her story (differentiated from surrounding shots by a circular masking) it is apparent that the builders of the tower are visually and verbally equated with the tradition represented by Rotwang, that of the arrogant and occult "scholar." Even the clothing worn by the planners of the tower is similar to that of the inventor.

There is also a third manner in which the text, though less directly this time, may be viewed as inserting itself into larger contexts, into an "intertextual space." This aspect of *Metropolis* is composed of structures analyzable in psychoanalytic terms. We will mention here only Oedipal aspects of the film and the presence of elements suggesting a sort of "death wish." Through the cultural and political grids we have referred to above a three-membered "family" is created. Frederson, as leader of society and as a "Jehova" figure, becomes the Father. Freder, as the ruler's son, as representative of the workers, and as Christ, is the Son. Finally Maria, in her religious context and as spiritual creator of Freder and the workers—for it is she who reveals to them their respective *manques*, creating them as individual consciousnesses — is the Mother. Freder, to negate and assume the power of the Father, must have access to the Mother—

which is precisely what is prevented by the abduction of Maria. He will see the robot in Maria's image in the hands of his father, which of course produces his lack of power (castration). Thus the film portrays an individual and collective, Oedipal and primal revolt against the Father, for Maria is also Mother to the masses. The father is retained at the end of the film only in a partially castrated form (he *kneels* on the ground while his son fights Rotwang). That Frederson is not killed outright, but merely stripped of some of his power which is transmitted only to the Son and not to the workers indicates the repressed, compromised nature of the Oedipal conflict in *Metropolis*.

But the film, and indeed most of Lang's work, lends itself also to an analysis in terms of life and death instincts. The preservation of culture itself is at stake in the prevention of Frederson's projected destruction of the workers. There is a persistent identification in the film of the machines and hence the traitors with death, both of the individual and of the structure of society. This is further identified with the pagan/mystic tradition, as when Freder sees the accident in the central power room as a sacrifice to the god Moloch. In a curious way this death tendency is portrayed as belonging to nature as opposed to culture (this of course is perfectly consistent with Freud's thought). Thus when the central powerhouse is destroyed, it is the released *water* which threatens to kill the children. Culture is always dangerously near a breakdown under the forces of nature. The maintenance of culture is the responsibility of the heroes. In most of Lang's work, particularly in his German silent period, there exist powerful forces for the end of culture, individuals whose goal is total destruction: Mabuse in *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler* or Haghi in *Spione* are perhaps the clearest examples.

Whether one wishes to consider these cultural and psychoanalytic contexts of the inscription of narrativity in *Metropolis* as primary or secondary as compared to "deeper" structures of the text depends purely on the perspective chosen for the analysis. In this study we have attempted to give more or less equal weight to

the various levels of elaboration posited by Greimas. At the "deepest" level are the elementary structures of meaning which, anthropomorphized, produce the notions of "actions" and "characters" which with insertion into larger contexts are elaborated into the immediately accessible narration. In this analysis we have stopped short of considering the nature of the inscription of the film itself, how the text produces meaning from moment to moment: codes of lighting or representation of actions, the function of titles, methods of editing and composition, etc. This would be another aspect of the study of the text and an extremely interesting one. Hopefully, however, through this limited work on the profoundly resonant text of *Metropolis* we have suggested some of the levels of structuration involved in the analysis of the production of meaning through narration.

CAREL ROWE

ILLUMINATING LUCIFER

The title, L-U-C-I-F-E-R R-I-S-I-N-G, rises in vibrating fiery letters from the waves of the ocean. Throughout *Lucifer* neon calligraphy and animated symbols flash, sometimes simultaneously matted into the landscapes of ancient Egypt. Often these electrified talismans break into the material like signals from lost civilizations: picture-writing erupting through layers of history. *Lucifer's* universe is populated with signaling gods and alchemical symbols. The work, at this stage, is largely concerned with communication between Isis (Myriam Gibril) and Osiris (Donald Cammell), through the forces of nature; this communion of natural elements provokes meteorological reactions in preparation for Lucifer's arrival: lightning issues forth from the staffs and emblems of these radiant deities; nature replies with rosy dawns, whirlpools, and emissions of molten rock. The sun goes into eclipse. Intercut with an endless torchlight procession, Lilith (Marianne Faithfull) climbs the prehistoric stairway to a Celtic shrine where, as goddess of the moon, she supplicates the sun. The sun rises directly in the center of the solstice altar; its rays part to reveal a scarlet demon within the round hole of the rock: the blazing astrological symbol of Mercury (god of communication and ruler of magicians) appears. A magus (Kenneth Anger) stalks around his incandescent magic circle in invocation to the Bringer of Light (cf. Murnau's *Faust.)* Outside the smoking circle a Balinese fire demon (symbol of sacrifice) materializes, the magus bows before the idol, a globe of phosphorescent lightning shudders across the screen and Lucifer, resplendent in satin L-U-C-I-F-E-R jockey jacket, arises from within the circle. In response, nature throws a celebration of volcanic eruptions and avalanches of snow, and, ultimately, an electrical storm over Stonehenge. Isis and Osiris, the happy parents (of Lucifer-as-Horus) stride through the colonnade at Karnak to greet their offspring and a feldspar-colored saucer sails at us from behind the stone head of Ramses II.

After six years of self-imposed exile in London, Kenneth Anger is touring the US with a retrospective of his work and the première of the first third of his first feature, *Lucifer Rising.* This work-in-progress is a remake and continuation of the sabotaged "Love Vision" of *Lucifer* begun seven years ago in San Francisco. The original was to have been about "today's new tribes of teenagers, turned-on children—teenyboppers and adolescent hippies" and featured

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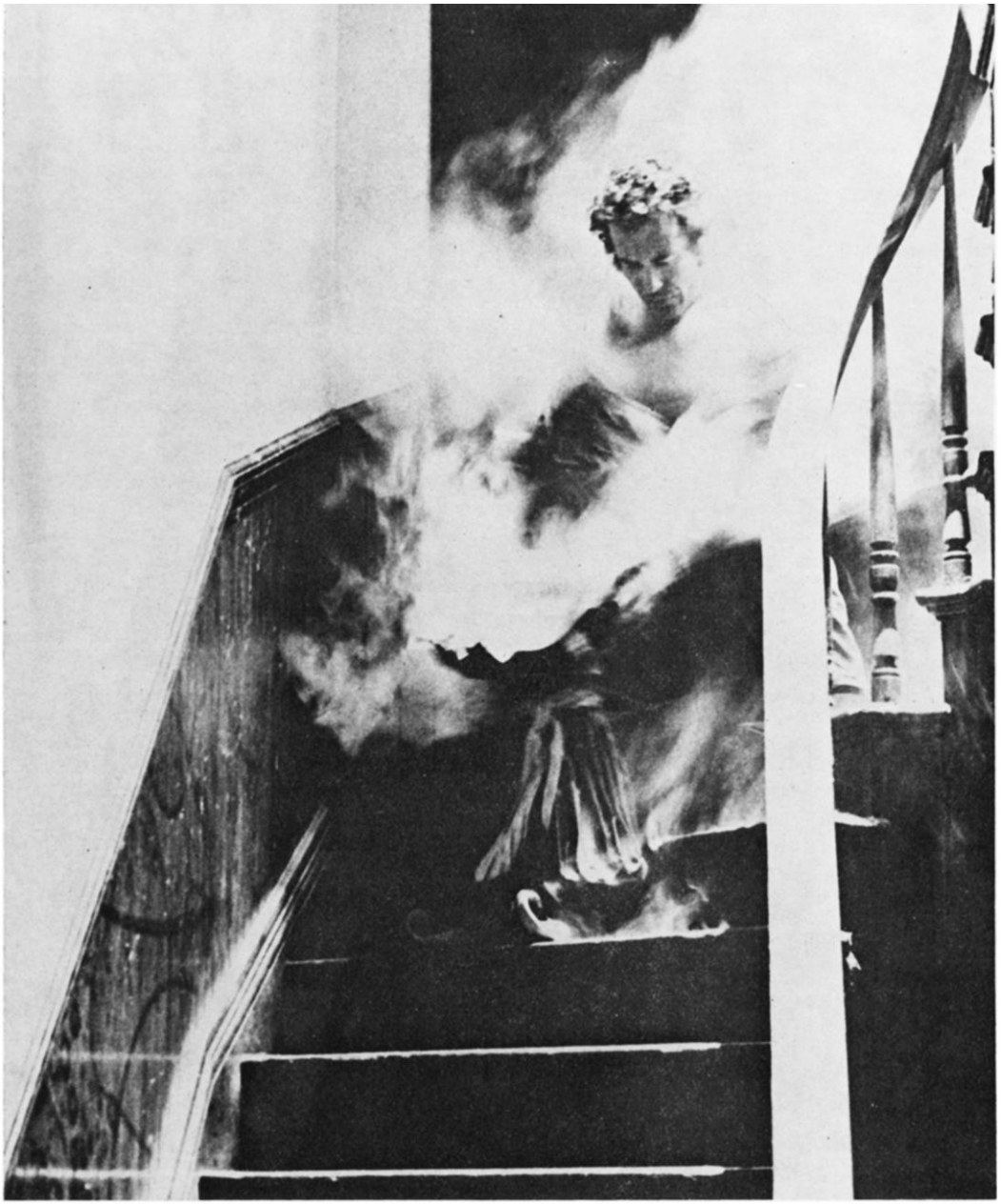

Kenneth Anger in INVOCATION TO MY DEMON BROTHER (1969)

a set of living Tarot tableaux. Today's version of *Lucifer* is as much a departure from its predecessor as it is from the major body of Anger's work. But his previous works can still be understood as pointing the way to this grander, more expansive vision which is less demonic, more divine.

Georges Sadoul speaks of Maya Deren and Kenneth Anger as the "two most important names in the development of the New American Cinema." Both were forerunners of a genera-

tion of visionary film-makers (Brakhage, Harrington, Markopoulos) who began their work in the mid-forties. Recent critical work attempting to draw parallels between the films of Deren and Anger through their mutual preoccupation with mystical ritual is misleading. Deren's interest in the occult as a system for depicting an interior state moved away from surrealist psychodrama and toward a fascination with combining the elements of a given ritual to structure the narrative material. Influenced by classical aesthetics, she experimented with trans-temporal continuities and discontinuities found in the cinematic structure. With Deren the narrative form orders the subconscious into a design; ritual is used to impose an ideal order on the arbitrary order of art and the chaotic order of the world. The interior event is presented as a matrix out of which a pattern is made, and this pattern of ritual elements is combined to form the overall structure. Historically, it is useful to view Deren as a forerunner of the works of Alain Resnais or the experimental structuralists of today, such as Frampton, Weiland, or Snow, rather than to see her work as simply a part of the "trance film" trend in the early American underground.

Anger's use of ritual is quite different, his narrative model is constructed through a comparative analysis of myths, religions, and rituals and their associations external to their respective systems. His two works which give greatest evidence of this are *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954-1966) and, as examined later in this survey, *Scorpio Rising* (1964).

Deren was concerned with occultism as a classicist, interested in recombing its ritual orders within a system. Anger, a romanticist, sees occultism as a source of hermetic knowledge. For Anger, "Making a movie is casting a spell." He claims "Magick" as his lifework and "the cinematograph" for his "Magick weapon." He dubs the collection of his works "The Magick Lantern Cycle," has adopted Aleister Crowley as his guru, sees his films to be "a search for light and enlightenment" and sees Lucifer not as the devil but as "Venus—the Morning Star." To date, all of his films have been evocations or invocations, attempting to conjure primal forces which, once visually released, are designed to have the effect of "casting a spell" on the audience. The Magick *in* the film is related to the Magickal effect of the film *on* the audience.

As a prestidigitator Anger somewhat parallels Méliès: a magician making transformations as well as reconstructions of reality. As a symbolist operating within the idealist tradition he has a turn-of-the-century fascination with ideal artificiality: in *Lucifer* he causes certain

INAUGURATION OF THE PLEASURE DOME (1954–1966)

landscapes to reveal themselves at their most magical by both capturing the moment and capitalizing upon it, showing a rare moment of nature, albeit enhanced through technical effects (such as the hand-tinting and the spellbinding "star machine" which was built at the Chicago Art Institute to play red and green pentagrams over the screen and audience at his most recent presentations of *Lucifer*). Not a surrealist who puts blind faith in his own dream images and trusts his dreams to convey an "uncommon unconscious," Anger works predominantly in archetypal symbols. As the magus, he is the juggler of these symbols, just as in the Tarot, where the Magician is represented by the Juggler and is given the attribution of Mercury, the messenger.

As a visionary Anger creates his own frame of reference which is an extension of the vision and teachings of Aleister Crowley. Crowley has been called "the Oscar Wilde of Magic" and called himself "The Beast 666." An English magus born in 1875, he was a contemporary and enemy of both Freud and Yeats (he quarreled with the latter over leadership in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn). Although he claimed, in critiquing Freud, "I cannot do evil that good may come. I abhor Jesuitry. I would rather lose than win by strategem,"[1] he is reputed to have jumped official rank in The Order, illegitimately claiming the title of Ipsissimus. "There was yet another order within the Great White Brotherhood, the top order; it bore the name of the Silver Star . . . (Astrum Argentinium). This contained the three exalted grades—Master of the Temple, Magus, and Ipsissimus—they lay on the other side of the Abyss."[2]

Entering unto this ultimate enlightenment as Master of the Temple and exiting as self-ordained god, Crowley and his discovery of supreme apotheosis of the self produced his "do as thou wilt" philosophy. In his *Book of the Law* (the means by which he bridged the Abyss to Masterhood) he proclaimed: "Bind Nothing. Let there be no difference made between any one thing and another . . . The word of Sin is Restriction . . . there is no law beyond 'Do What Thou Wilt'."

Crowley's self-deification is reflected in the "joyful humanism" of the Age of Horus or the Aquarian Age. The Cosmology of his *Book of the Law* introduces the Third Aeon: after Isis's aeon of matriarchy and Osiris's aeon of patriarchy follows the aeon of Horus, the Child or true self independent of priests or gods. In his *777—Book of Correspondences,* Crowley cross-indexes Greek, Egyptian, and Hindu mythologies. Venus is found in Isis and corresponding goddesses. Lucifer is the Roman name for the planet Venus which was worshipped as both Aurora (the morning star) and Vesper (the evening star). Until these myths were suppressed by the Catholic Church the Gnostics worshipped Aurora/Lucifer as the Herald of the Dawn, the light preceding the sun. The Crowleyan/Anger doctrine exchanges Lucifer with Horus as well: "It all began with a child playing with a chemistry set that exploded. An innocent, pure child prodigy, creating for the joy of it, just as Lucifer created his own light shows in heaven . . . Eventually he was expelled for playing the stereo too loud."[3]

Like Cervantes's *mas bello que Dios,* Lucifer's sin lies in out-doing God. He is seen not as a leader but as the totally independent, original rebel; the Luciferian spirit manifests itself in the spirit of the artist, not as a Hell's Angel. "He is also Puck [the name of Anger's production company], the spirit of mischief, mortals are the toys in his playpen, the world belongs to Lucifer."[4]

But Crowley's major contribution to Anger's vision was his invention of "magick," the performance of ritual which seeks to invoke the Holy Guardian Angel (the aspirant's higher self), an idea adapted from the medieval magus Abra-Melin.[5] The method of invocation relies on talismanic magic: the vitalization of talismans. Originally these were drawn vellum patterns, sort of a shadow-graph print of the demon one sought to "capture." Anger equates this with the photograph's ability to steal the soul of the subject. Medieval talismanic signatures were considered to be autographs by demons and Anger refers to them as "printed circuits" between physical and spiritual (or alternative) reality. He sees glyphs, heiroglyphs, sigils, pictographs, billboards, and especially tattoos as

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"magical marks on the wall." In *Lucifer* he uses the Abra-Melin "Keys" or trademarks of the basic elements as overlaid inscriptions which interact with the visual energies of earth, air, fire, and water so that the symbols "call forth" variations in their visual counterparts. Magickal insignias are an integral system at work in all of Anger's films. They are duly consecrated by optical isolation through special effects: the triangular "trademark" matted into a shot of Isis, the mirrored superimposition of magickal tattoos on Anger's arms in *Invocation to my Demon Brother* (1969), a door within Crowley's face which opens onto a superimposed zodiac in *The Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome,* the hand-tinted chartreuse fan ("the magickal weapon") in the otherwise blue-toned *Eaux d'Artifice* (1953), and, most recently, the addition of hand- tinting in *Lucifer* which unites the flying falcon-of-Horus and the live Kephra scarab with their respective carved hieroglyphs.

To conjure a successful transformation Anger-as-Magus-Artist mixes his palette according to Crowley's color system from the *Golden Dawn* (a Rosicrucian order), a codified alchemical scale wherein planets are related to colors, sacred alphabets, drugs, perfumes, jewels, plants, magical weapons, the elements, the Tarot, etc, etc. In the Royal Color Tables of *777—The Book of Correspondences* the "Princess Scale" denotes the "pure, pastel colors of idealism." This is the scale which Anger applies to his brief-but-beautiful *Kustom Kar Kommandos* (1965). In *KKK* he makes his invocation through his use of color, attempting the transposition of the sign of Cancer (seashell blue and pink) onto the Machine. The pastels of reflected flesh and the hard gleam of the dream buggy (every inch a Tom Wolfe "tangerine-flake baby," from the knight on the hood to the tires) are edited together to resemble the languid movements of a boa constrictor.

Dedicated to the Charioteer of the Tarot, the "dream lover" owner of the car, is Anger's "silver knight in shining armor." Like the car, he is a machine built for transmitting energy; the blond boy is seated in a mirrored chamber with velvet seats designed to resemble a vulva or giant twin lips, forming a red plush vertical smile. Anger feels that *KKK* closely resembles Dali's painting "Mae West's Living Room" in the portrayal of a material universe wherein power is a poetic extension of personality, "an accessible means of wish-fulfillment." The lyrics "I want a dream lover so I don't have to dream alone . . . " enrich the romanticism within the phallocentric vision of narcissistic-identification-as-virility. A dream lover is a double, a "demon brother" and mirror-reflection; *KKK* is an invocation of the ideal, not human elements, and is dedicated to an idealization of reality.

Romantic idealization, poetic irony, lush exoticism and the evolution of anti-classicist montage wherein the whole is subordinate to the parts all reflect Anger's affinity with *fin de siècle* French literature (in 1951 he attempted to film Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror*). His most profuse use of decadent symbolist imagery occurs in *The Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome.* But the development of a montage-syntax which closely resembles the elaborate syntactical constructions of Huysmans and the ambiguities of Ducassian mixed metaphor are nowhere more evident than in *Scorpio Rising.*

Scorpio Rising is an extension of self-gratification into self-immolation. The Machine (now a motorcycle) is totemized into a tool for power; the "charioteer" is Death (the ultimate "dream lover" by romantic standards). Violence replaces the poetic extension of personality and violent

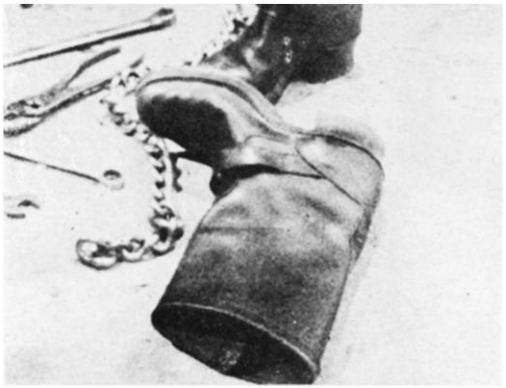
KUSTOM KAR KOMMANDOS (1965)

SCORPIO RISING (1965)

eroticism is combined with the tragic death of the highway hero ("the last cowboys"): *"Scorpio Rising* is a machine and Kenneth Anger keeps his spark plug burning on AC (Aleister Crowley) current . . . Guess which one I was in love with ten years ago? . . . Was it the chromium or was it the guy?"[6]

Sado-masochism, death and sensuality, sex and angst—*Scorpio* is America's buried collective adolescence manifested in the isolated pop-art visions of decayed dreams. It reflects the last gasp of the dying Age of Pisces (Christianity) as a motorcycle race roaring toward oblivion. The big butch bikers encase themselves in leather; slung with chains they move indolently, like huge cats. Scorpio and his brothers/lovers ("Taurus" and "Leo"—both ruled by Venus) worship their machines. But people as well as objects denote fetishism, are transformed through mass adulation into becoming idols. James Dean is shown as the Aquarian Rebel Son, Brando, Christ, Hitler, all are objects of worship, "humans idolized by idiots . . . The different degree of impact each had was dependent on the degree of advertising between pop stars and Christ."[7] A grade-C Christ film, *The Road to Jerusalem,* produced by Family Films, was delivered to Anger's doorstep by mistake while he was in the process of editing *Scorpio Rising;* he accepted it as "a gift from the gods," toned it blue and intercut it (as the second major montage element within the film) with the biker's Hallowe'en party. Christ is introduced walking with his disciples on Palm Sunday, two of the "theme songs" ("I Will Follow Him" and "He's a Rebel") link the Christ scenes to Brando and Dean; "Torture" (Gene MacDaniels) and "Wipeout" (The Surfaries) link Him to the biker's initiation and Hitler. The purpose of "following Him" is to race after the trophy, dying to be first, just as the sperm is racing toward oblivion in its desperate need to unite with the egg. The "egg" may well be the new aeon and the longed-for oblivion: the destruction necessitated by change. The new aeon is reached by moving from *Scorpio's* "night" toward *Lucifer's* "dawn." The skull-and-crossbones fluttering in superimposition over the cycle rally signifies the death of sensuality in much the same way as the death's head on the Masonic or Rosicrucian flags represents the philosophical death of man's sensuous personality—a transition considered essential in the process of liberating man's spiritual nature. The final shot of the film is the dead Scorpio's outstretched arm, lit by the red strobe of a patrol car, on it the tattoo "Blessed, Blessed Oblivion."

Anger's myths address mass-erotic-consciousness through a barrage of notorious symbols. These often war with one another in Reichian power-trips of rape, will-power, fascism, and

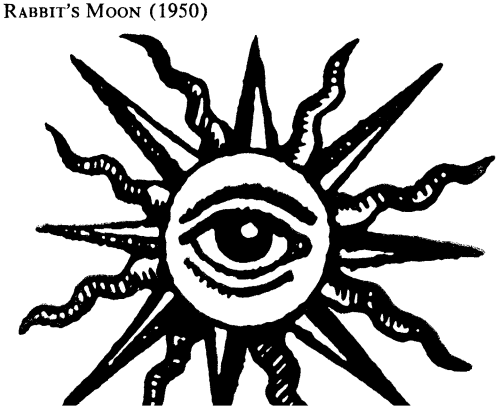


SCORPIO RISING

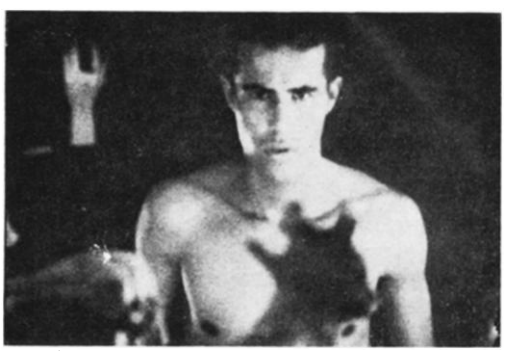
revolution. "I find ridiculous the idea of anyone being the leader," Anger has said. Pentagrams war with swastikas in *Invocation to my Demon Brother*. Brando tortures Christ in *Scorpio*, Shiva asserts absolute power over his guests in *Pleasure Dome*. Historical heroes are reduced to pop-idols and history is demythified by comic book codes. "When earths collide, gods die."

Considering that Anger takes an anti-nostalgia stance and deplores the fact that "yesterday's heroes are still with us" (Brando), it is ironic that at the time *Scorpio* was released it enjoyed popularity as a dirty Hallowe'en party or as a celebration of the contemporary decadence it displayed. But today the pop-*Leibestod* lyrics of the sixties ("He's a rebel and he'll never be free . . . ," or "I still can see blue velvet through my tears") have strong nostalgic resonances and, revived in the vacuous seventies, have audiences stomping and clapping to the very songs which originally served as a critique against idolatry and romanticism "turned in on itself and beginning to rot." The value of Anger's strategic use of pop songs transcends their being "structural units within a collage film";[8] they often act as a complicated running commentary

RABBIT'S MOON (1950)



in lyric form, performing a narrative as well as structural function. In *Rabbit's Moon, Puce Moment,* and *Kustom Kar Kommandos* the result is that the naive poetry of the song replaces the temporality of spoken dialogue in a timeless, mythic way. In *Rabbit's Moon* "There's a Moon Out Tonight" and "I Only Have Eyes for You" underscore the futility of "reaching for the moon"—a message visually expressed in the repetition of shots of a *commedia*-style Pierrot supplicating a Méliès-style moon which remains just out of reach. *Puce Moment* takes on a spicier meaning when "I'm a Hermit" and "Leaving My Old Life Behind" on the track are combined with the visuals of shimmering antique dresses and languishing Hollywood star. The obvious suggestion here is a renunciation of



FIREWORKS (1947)

drag-dressing, an escape from the fetishization of costume and a climb "out of the closet." Anger's most complex and intriguing use of music occurs in *Eaux d'Artifice,* where light, color, movement, and textures are combined in baroque counterpoint with Vivaldi. With *Invocation* and *Lucifer* he has begun to move toward an exclusive use of original musical scores.

Transubstantiation is one of Anger's favorite themes. Frequently this takes the form of a reverse Eucharist where essence is converted into substance, and this process can be discovered in *Fireworks* (1947—his first major film), *Puce Moment, Rabbit's Moon, Scorpio,* and now *Lucifer.* These films summon personifications of forces and spirits whose dynamic powers appear to "break through" and turn against the char-

acter and/or structure. *Scorpio's* iconoclasm is effected by the critique which the film conducts on itself, demythifying the very myths it propounds by interchanging them with one another and integrating them into a metamyth. Christ/Satan (religion), Brando/Dean (popular culture), and Hitler (political history) are reduced to sets of systems which destroy one another through internarrative montage - of - attraction. Thus, the film itself is the metamyth of the films which constitute it. Different dogmas are equalized (and subsumed by) their structural and ideological parallels. *Scorpio's* auto-destruction stems from the center, "core" invocation and triumph of Satan over Christ, Machine over Man, and Death over Life.

A somewhat less nihilistic subsumation of sub-

PUCE MOMENT *(Yvonne Marquis)* (1949)

stance by essence is the conventional Eucharist ritual performed in *Inauguration of The Pleasure Dome* and *Eaux d'Artifice*. In the former, Lord Shiva transforms his guests into spirits of pure energy which he absorbs and recycles into a frenzied, operatic orgy. The pyrotechnics of this celebration build to such visual intensity that *Pleasure Dome* "destroys" itself by growing too large for the very confines of the screen. In the original (pre-Sacred Mushroom Edition—1958) the screen grows Gance-like "wings," and, for the final 20 minutes, each panel of the tryptich is loaded with up to six simultaneous surfaces of superimposition (eighteen separate planes). The visual material seeks to transform itself into pure energy. In *Eaux d'Artifice* " . . . The Lady enters the 'nite-time labyrinth' of cascades, balustrades, grottoes and fountains and tries to lure out the monsters with her fan; she's trying to invoke the water gods . . . She fails, being weak and frivolous, and melts into the water (surrenders her identity) so that she can play on."[10] *Eaux* turns its hermaphrodite hero(ine) into a waterfall. Nature wins over artifice. Human confusion is subsumed by the larger order of things.

Lucifer Rising attempts to transcend the passive-active dialectics of power and the sexual preoccupations of adolescence, "the blue of eternal longing." Its theme (so far) is that of man's reunion with his lost gods: the dawning of a new morality. The cult of arrested adolescence is replaced by the fulfillment of its longing: reaffirmation of identity through spiritual communion between man, gods and nature. Fantasy and reality are no longer distinguished but are parts of a larger, more complete universe. Black Magick goes White, the hero is the "bringer of light," Lucifer, portrayed as a demon of great beauty. This "fire-light trip"[10] begins with the first frames of *Fireworks* (1947) (an invocation to Thor) when a firebrand is extinguished in water. At the film's outrageous finale a sailor's penis is lit and explodes as a roman candle; this is followed by a denouement where a wax candle atop a Christmas tree dips into a fireplace, igniting the scattered stills from the film's opening dream sequence. *Invocation* (resuscitated from the left-over out-takes of the original *Lucifer,* "A fragment made in fury . . . the last blast of Haight consciousness"[11]) opens with an albino demon brother kissing a glass wand; later Mick Jagger's black cat goes up in flames and the film culminates with Bobby Beausoleil short-circuiting into Lucifer. Anger calls *Invocation* "a burn."

There is more light and less fire in *Lucifer Rising* (what the neo-Platonists would refer to as the "spiritual lux"). Assertion-of-will has matured into communication between anthropomorphic gods; glamorous Egyptian Dieties within a universe which is established by an uncreated precondition for order—pagan spirits at play in a universe where God does not yet exist. These man-gods exist organically, as part of nature, they grow out of the shadow of cliffs and temples like living sculptures. We first see Isis

as long legs disembodied by stone-shadows. Isis and Osiris, glistening with health and confidence, authentically costumed, perform their nearly static ritual from the cliffs overlooking a space-like sea (Crowley's "vast abyss between man and god"). Where it was the nature of the stone water gods to overwhelm man in *Eaux,* the "new" gods in Lucifer embody the "best" in man: pure, free forces, calling on nature to aid mankind, summoning the elements in preparation for the Second Coming.

Lucifer is also a radical departure in visual form from Anger's previous works. No longer does the power of any given image depend on the

ritualistic repetition and recombination which essentially shapes the overall form of films like *Scorpio* or *Invocation. Invocation's* structure is jumbled and dissonant, "an attack on the sensorium" (Anger); the entire piece is edited for abrasiveness, any residual visual flow is destroyed by the spasms of electronic shockwaves from Jagger's sound track. *Scorpio's* structure works from the inside out: from image to montage to montage-of-attractions to the whole as one entire montage system. The whole is purely a system of inter-relationships and no attempt is made to impose an external order on this network. Image-layers mount in density, implications, and velocity toward the climactic "rebel rouser" sequence when Scorpio, performing a black sabbath, transforms himself into his own demon brother and casts his death hex on the cycle rally which, through the montage, seems a swirling continuation of his ceremony of destruction.[12] This use of montage-as-forcefield reappears in *Lucifer's* invocation sequence; the aggressive vitality of tracking camera racing with the sorcerer's movements as he widdershins around a magic circle. These shots are intercut with an exterior long-shot of baby gorilla and tiger cub chasing about the base of a tree, the movements of nature coinciding with the "unnatural" counter-sun-wise dance of the magus film-maker. But in this case the sequence is imbedded in a less frenetic organization which makes up the majority of the film.

In *Lucifer,* the camera at last liberates its subject matter from its usual medium-close-up iconography through a long-shot/long-take *mise en scène.* A series of landscapes, seascapes, skyscapes gain mythical proportions through long-take montage; the longshots establish the vastness of this universe. Lingering takes of the broken pharaoh faces of the Colossus of Memnon have a quality of temporal displacement; they exist outside time and distance as defined by motion by either camera or subject. The impassive statues assume an ancient decadence, exhausted idols compared to the flesh of the living gods. This static vastness which the long-take/long-shot montage effects operates around a vortex or "core" of the film: the invocation sequence which gradually and erratically builds to a spin-

LUCIFER RISING

ning forcefield of compressed energy. This disturbs and changes the natural universe of the film's structure: the exteriors are broken into by collage-inserts, then the external world reasserts itself with long, vertically dynamic takes and vertical wipes; nature rights herself and Lucifer is born.

The piece, as it stands, can either be seen as a complete work in itself or as a chapter with an appropriate ending to a forties science fiction serial. At this time Anger's originals for the remainder of *Lucifer* are tied up with his producer. A soundtrack is being prepared by Jimmy Page of the Led Zeppelin; at recent showings Anger plays a Pink Floyd symphony: *Atom Heart Mother* which syncs perfectly with the visual rythms. The fragment presents a whole vision in itself. With *Lucifer,* Anger breaks through his previous nihilism to a "happy ending" (the Crowleyan assertion of love and joy over sorrow and sin), dealing with larger, exterior concerns rather than dramas of occult exoticism and decadent ideology. The sun breaks through the clouds.

NOTES

1. *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography,* edited by John Symonds and Kenneth Grant. (New York: Bantam Books, 1971.)
2. *Ibid.*
3. Kenneth Anger at a presentation of his films, San Francisco Art Institute, April, 1974.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin, The Mage*—As Delivered by Abraham the Jew Unto His Son Lamech—a grimoire of the fifteenth century, translated by S. L. MacGregor-Mathews (former Secret Chief of the Golden Dawn and Head of the Second Order in the Great White Brotherhood, Rosicrucians), edited by L. W. de Laurence. (Chicago: The de Laurence Co., Inc.)
6. Anger at presentation of his films, Wheeler Auditorium, Berkeley, April 10, 1974.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Visionary Film,* P. Adams Sitney (New York: Oxford Press, 1974.)
9. *A Kenneth Anger Kompendium,* Tony Rayns, *Cinema* Magazine #4.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Interview with the author, April 25, 1974.
12. Raynes, *Ibid.*

BRIAN HENDERSON

Godard on Godard: Notes for a Reading

Godard on Godard[1] contains 116 pieces written or spoken by Godard between June 1950 and August 1967. Items 1–85 comprise Godard's output as a film critic through July 1959. In August–September 1959, Godard dropped regular criticism and shot *Breathless*. He wrote about films after this, but much less frequently. The book collects 31 of these occasional pieces under the heading "Marginal Notes While Filming"—memorials, statements on his own films, defenses of neglected films, a speech, a protest letter, contributions to a dictionary of American film-makers, and four interviews. Among the latter are two long *Cahiers* interviews edited and revised by Godard himself, dated December 1962 (*Breathless* to *Vivre Sa Vie*) and October 1965 (*Les Carabiniers* to *Pierrot le Fou*).

The following notes concern items 1-85, Godard's film criticism written before August 1959. The distribution of these pieces in time is interesting. Godard wrote 11 pieces between June 1950 and October 1952, then published nothing for almost four years. In August 1956 he returned to criticism and turned out 74 pieces in the three years before he made *Breathless*. His most productive period was the last six months, February–July 1959, in which he wrote 31 pieces.

"Defense and Illustration of Classical Construction" (#9) was written in 1952, when Godard was 21. It is his longest theoretical piece and arguably his most important. It is a direct attack upon the Bazinian position, itself in process of formation at this time but settled in its main outlines. The specific object of Godard's critique is Bazin's account of classical construction ("découpage") in cinema. According to Bazin, a standard mode of shot breakdown dominated world cinema during the 1930–1939 period. In the forties, the composition-in-depth technique of Welles and Wyler and Italian neorealism constituted a "revolution in expression." Their avoidance of editing effects and of frame manipulations was "a positive technique that produces better results than a classical breakdown of shots could ever have done." These styles showed "the event" in its physical unity, hence tended strongly toward the long take (temporal verisimilitude) and the long shot (spatial verisimilitude) rather than the arranged series of closer and shorter shots dictated by classical construction.

Godard rejects this analysis on all counts—historical, theoretical, and aesthetic. The historical point should be mentioned here, as it will help make Godard's argument clearer. Godard denies Bazin's suggestion that classical construction ended or suffered an aesthetic eclipse after 1939. Godard's favorite directors of this period—Preminger, Mankiewicz, Robson, and Hitchcock—all use classical construction in some form. A close reading of his critique will be useful. Godard begins by recalling Sartre's denunciation of Mauriac for playing God with his characters; that is, for failing to endow them with that freedom in which Sartre himself believes. Godard comments:

> But what vanity, too, to insist at all costs on crediting language with a certain metaphysical quality, when it could only rise to the level of the sublime in very special circumstances. Consider, rather, with Diderot, that morality and perspective are the two qualities essential to the artist . . . [2]

Godard is drawing a parallel between Sartre's criticism and Bazin's; both impose a metaphysical preconception upon art, praising works which fit the preconception, criticizing works which do not. This is vain because art has rarely to do with metaphysics. The workaday tools of the artist are morality and perspective; these should be the concern of the critic as well. Godard restates the argument pungently in the concluding paragraph of the article.

> I think I have said enough about the error of critics in falling under the influence of contemporary philosophy, in elevating certain figures of style into a

vision of the world, in investing some technical process or other with astrological pretensions it cannot possibly have. . . . [3]

The middle portions of the article develop the argument in several directions. Generally they attempt to clarify Godard's opting for morality and perspective as the proper concerns of film and his conception of classical construction as the formal expression of these concerns. First, he invokes the French eighteenth century in arguing that the polished speeches and precise *mise-en-scène* of the American cinema are not inconsistent with serious moral themes. His target here seems to be Bazin's discovery of a new seriousness of theme and subject in Welles and neorealism, "a renewal of subject-matter" in the postwar cinema, and Bazin's connecting this phenomenon integrally with realism and composition-in-depth, "a film like *Paisa* proves that the cinema was twenty years behind the contemporary novel."[4]

> Have we forgotten that this facility is nothing new, that the ease of the transatlantic film-makers once found its echo in our own admirable eighteenth century?
>
> Everyone wrote well in those days (consider the circumstances under which *La Religieuse* was written), yet serious events were taking place.
>
> My purpose is not paradox. I would like to note certain points common to the art of the eighteenth century and the *mise en scène* of recent years. Firstly, in the attitude of the artist to nature: he acknowledges nature as art's principal model. And then in the fact that it was not the cinema which inherited a narrative technique from the novel, but the novel which inherited an art of dialogue—lost, should one add, since Corneille?[5]

Godard's praise of theater and his comparison of cinema to theater throughout the article are partly a response to Bazin's equation of cinema with the novel at several places. The last sentence of Bazin's "The Evolution of Film Language" equates different stages of film history with different arts and makes novelistic cinema the object of a teleology. "The film-maker is no longer simply the competitor of the painter or the playwright; he is at last the equal of the novelist."[6]

The paragraphs that follow interweave several themes rather subtly or disconnectedly, depending upon how they are read. Godard leaps from Corneille to a fear that harmony, however beautiful, will not suffice this most virtuous of the arts. Cinema also needs truth—

> to correct—in Delacroix's fine phrase—the reality of that perspective in which the eye takes too much pleasure not to want to falsify it. By this I mean it will not be content with imitating a reality 'seized at random' (Jean Renoir). In fact, if the cinema were no more than the art of narration which some would make its proud boast, then instead of being bored, one would take pleasure in those interminable efforts which are concerned above all with exposing in meticulous detail the secret motivations of a murderer or a coquette. But there is a look, posed so afresh on things at each instant that it pierces rather than solicits them, that it seizes in them what abstraction lies in wait for.[7]

He takes an example from Renoir, who he says owes less to Impressionism than to Henri David.

> Renoir's *mise-en-scène* has the same quality of revealing detail without detaching it from its context. If Renoir uses a deep-focus style in *Madame Bovary*, it is to imitate the subtle way in which nature conceals the relationship between its effects; if he prepares events, it is not in order to make them connect better, for he is more concerned with the impact of emotions than with the contagion they create.[8]

The nature of dialectic in cinema is that one must live rather than last. It is pointless to kill one's feelings in order to live longer. American comedy (sound) is vastly important because it brings back "swiftness of action" and allows the moment to be savored to the full. Our mode of seeing films is important here also—when we concentrate on *plot* rather than on the manner of its exposition, we reduce complex and subtle gestures to dull signals.

What is Godard saying here? It seems to be that cinema, like theater, is a realm of *heightened* emotions. Its effectiveness depends upon rhythm, pacing, and intensity. This model opposes Bazin's model of cinema as novelistic, as the realist description of relationships existent elsewhere. No, the director *constructs* his film, dialogue, and *mise-en-scène*, at every point. Even Renoir, the trump card of Bazinism, is more like David than an Impressionist: a careful *arranger* who "prepares events," who may reproduce "the look" of things, but in doing so subjects them to

an abstraction or schema that he brings to them. He prepares events not novelistically so that they connect well, but *theatrically,* so as to obtain the desired effect or impact. Godard suggests that the relationship Renoir/nature is less important than the relationship Renoir/audience. The preparations, the emotional effects, the "living not lasting" which Godard values so highly—all depend upon the precise pacing of the decoupage, which is the necessary form of cinema as theater. Emotions and gestures are defined and sharpened, presented and analyzed, by decoupage. This heightening, which is necessarily quick-perishing, is the true nature of cinema. Novelistic cinema, with its long shots and long takes, *deadens* emotions and gestures in its misguided attempt to narrate and describe them in exhaustive detail and thereby to make them last longer than their nature permits.

Several additional passages give the flavor of Godard's admiration for decoupage and fill out a rudimentary inventory of its rhetorical figures, effects, and possibilities.

> I would like to contend with those who seek to lay down absolute rules. . . . All I mean to claim is that the *mise en scène* of *To Have and Have Not* is better suited than that of *The Best Years of Our Lives* to convey aberrations of heart and mind, that this is its purpose, whereas the object of the latter is rather the external relationships between people.[9]
>
> I would go so far as to defy anyone to capture in a medium long shot the extreme disquiet, the inner agitation, in a word, the confusion which the waist shot (*plan américain*) through its very inexpressiveness, conveys so powerfully . . .[10]
>
> Abandoning even the habit of placing one of the interlocutors in the foreground, the classical construction sticks even closer to psychological reality, by which I mean that of the emotions; there are, in effect, no spiritual storms, no troubles of the heart which remain unmarked by physical causes, a rush of blood to the brain, a nervous weakness, whose intensity would not be lessened by frequent comings and goings. If this manner is the most classical, it is also because rarely has such contempt been shown for photographing a world seized by accident, and because here language is only the reflection of passions, which they may therefore dominate.[11]
>
> From the art of *Only Angels Have Wings* to that of *His Girl Friday, The Big Sleep* and indeed, of *To Have and Have Not,* what does one see? An increasingly precise taste for analysis, a love for this artificial grandeur connected to movements of the eyes, to a way of walking, in short, a greater awareness than anyone else of what the cinema can glory in, and a refusal to profit from this (like Bresson and Welles) to create anti-cinema, but instead, through a more rigorous knowledge of its limits, fixing its basic laws.[12]

Godard moves from these points to a related one made frequently in his later essays—classical construction is not a system mechanically imposed upon a scene nor external to its content; camera and editing treatment derive in each case from the scene itself. Thus Bazin's argument that classical construction reached its peak in the thirties is doubly wrong, historically and theoretically. It ignores Preminger and many other directors of the present who continue to use it integrally to their art. Even worse, it suggests that classical construction was more or less the same for everyone. In Bazin's version, it merely "presents the event," neutrally and objectively. "The change in camera angles does not add anything, it simply presents reality in the most effective manner." Bazin reduces classical construction to a single format or style. Godard, on the contrary, sees in it a large area of choice and differentiation, within which many and varied styles may define themselves.

> Where Preminger uses a crane, Hawks is apt to use an axial cut: the means of expression change only because the subjects change, and the sign draws its signification not from itself but from what it represents, from the scene enacted. Nothing could be more wrong than to talk of classical construction as a language which had reached its peak of perfection before the Second World War with Lubitsch in America and Marcel Carné in France, and which would therefore be tantamount to an autonomous thought-process, applicable with equal success to any subject whatsoever. What I admire in Gance, Murnau, Dreyer or Eisenstein, is the gift these artists possess for seizing in reality what the cinema is best suited to glorify. Classical construction has long existed, and it would be insulting to Lubitsch to suggest that he was anxious to break with the theories of his elders. . . .[13]

One of the article's most interesting arguments is developed only in the final paragraph. Long-shot, long-take cinema—

> strip(s) classical psychology of that part of it which the cinema could make use of, render explicit, by not reducing man to 'the succession of appearances by which he is manifest' (Jean-Paul Sartre), and, paradoxically, by restoring to the monism of the phenomenon only the plurality of interpretation which it lacks.[14]

Godard's paradox is that long-take shooting does *not* after all preserve the ambiguity of a character or actress, as Bazin contended. It merely reduces her to a surface, it identifies her with her appearance. It thereby *flattens* that realm in which ambiguity might reside, the interior, or more precisely, that space, gap, or discrepancy *between* the interior and the appearance, the essence and the phenomenon. Godard has his intellectual coordinates right, he *is* reacting against phenomenology in the name of that classical (dualistic) psychology which phenomenology critiqued. He cleverly suggests, however, that classical psychology provides the more interesting model for cinema:

> The eye, since it can say everything, then deny everything because it is merely casual, is the key piece in the film actor's game. One looks what one feels, and what one does not wish to reveal as one's secret. Consider the method of Otto Preminger, the cunning and precise paraphrase this Viennese makes of reality, and you will soon notice that the use of shot and reaction shot, the preference for medium rather than long shots, reveals a desire to reduce the drama to the immobility of the face, for the face is not only part of the body, it is the prolongation of an idea which one must capture and reveal.[15]

and, the concluding lines of the essay:

> In the cinema, beauty is merely the avowal of personality, it offers us indications about an actress which are not in her performance. The cinema does not query the beauty of a woman, it only doubts her heart, records perfidy (it is an art, La Bruyère says, of the entire person to place a word or action so that it puts one off the scent), sees only her movements. Do not smile at such passion fired by logic; one can clearly see that what ensures its worth is that at each instant it is a question of loving or dying.[16]

Something should be said about the numerous references to the French eighteenth century in "Defense" and other early Godard essays. These constitute an extended metaphor, which the texts concerned have the integrity to take literally. As with any metaphor, the question is What is it being used to think?—for "the eighteenth century" means what any writer wants it to mean. A reading of these texts must answer this question. We will merely venture a few notes. There is first the historical point that eighteenth century aesthetics waged a gradually victorious battle against the rationalist aesthetics of the seventeenth century. The latter sought and found a priori rules in the realm of art as in other realms of knowledge. Critically, this was the age of neoclassicism, wherein tragedy was required to meet certain prescriptions such as the unities of space and time, etc. Eighteenth-century aestheticians brought empirical modes of thought to their discipline and sought to free art and criticism from a priori rules. Godard's running battle against Bazin also centers upon the charge of applying a priori standards to art, thereby stifling it and distorting it; Godard too most often proceeds by empirical analysis of works of art he experiences as effective. Godard's invocation of Diderot is likewise well-considered. His "the natural order corresponds to that of the heart and mind" is not far from Diderot's later aesthetic theories, wherein the beautiful is dependent upon certain *rapports* which inhere in the object and which must also be perceived as such by the contemplating mind. Diderot's theory is that the artist cannot hope to capture the existential reality of the external world. What he can do is convey to the spectator his own particular and unique way of seeing things. He is not a passive imitator of reality, he must be able to construct a whole universe which has its own laws of harmony paralleling those of external reality.

What the eighteenth century did *not* change in relation to its predesessors was the focus upon rules of discourse in all discussions of art and communication. The appropriate discipline for such studies was rhetoric, its concerns were the organization and the effects of various kinds of discourse. This is where Godard places his emphasis also; we have noted the tendency of "Defense" toward an inventory of rhetorical figures and effects in classical cinema. Of course, God-

ard's emphasis on discourse is very different from that of the eighteenth century. The interventions of romanticism, realism, phenomenology, and many other movements would define his position very differently even if it were formally identical to some eighteenth-century theory. *In context,* Godard's emphasis on discourse is a break with Bazinism, which resolutely denies or minimizes the organizational and audience-effect operations of discourse. It has far more in common with the semiological positions of Metz and others. If a teleology were being constructed (from the present backwards, of course), one would say that Godard "anticipated" Metz in some ways.*

There is also the consideration that the mythic empiricism, quasiatheism, and antisuperstition of the French eighteenth century provide a good foil to Bazin's religious, reverential approach to cinema. "Defense" sees in its favored directors "a reaction, maybe unconscious, against the religious tendency of the modern cinema." The chosen language of Godard's texts is perhaps a reaction against a comparable tendency of contemporary film criticism. An ideological analysis might suggest that Godard's texts, unwilling to speak the language of Marxism, yet unwilling to speak the language of revived religion or other current ideology, chose to retreat into a language of the past, in this case that of the safely removed progressivism of the Enlightenment.

Godard continued the attack on Bazin in several pieces subsequent to "Defense," but none of these is as comprehensive or systematic as the earlier text. There is a slight but distinct change of emphasis. Many of the later pieces elaborate a point developed in "Defense"—the responsiveness of form to content in classical cinema, particularly in the great directors like Hitchcock. "The means of expression change only because the subjects change." Godard uses this point, supported by many examples, to critique the Bazinian position, though he is also interested

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*Barthes defines discourse in relation to speech. "*Speech* [*parole*]: In contrast to the language, which is both institution and system, *speech* is essentially an individual act of selection and actualization; it is made in the first place of the 'combination thanks to which the speaking subject can use the code of the language with a view to expressing his personal thought' (this extended speech could be called *discourse*) . . . " (*Elements of Semiology* (1964; 1967; New York, Hill and Wang), pp. 14–15.)

Metz defines discourse in "Notes Toward a Phenomenology of the Narrative": "A closed sequence, a temporal sequence: Every narrative is, therefore, a discourse (the converse is not true; many discourses are not narratives—the lyric poem, the educational film, etc.).

"What distinguishes a discourse from the rest of the world, and by the same token contrasts it with the 'real' world, is the fact that a discourse must necessarily be made by someone (for discourse is not language), whereas one of the characteristics of the world is that it is uttered by no one.

"In Jakobsonian terms, one would say that a discourse, being a statement or sequence of statements, refers necessarily to a subject of the statement. But one should not hastily assume an author, for the notion of authorship is simply one of the forms, culturally bound and conditioned, of a far more universal process, which, for that reason, should be called the 'narrative process.'

"Narratives without authors, but not without narrators. The impression that *someone is speaking* is bound not to the empirical presence of a definite, known, or knowable speaker but to the listener's spontaneous perception of the linguistic nature of the object to which he is listening; because it is speech, someone must be speaking.

"Albert Laffay, in *Logique du cinéma,* has shown this to be true of film narrative. The spectator perceives images which have obviously been selected (they could have been other images) and arranged (their order could have been different). In a sense, he is leafing through an album of predetermined pictures, and it is not he who is turning the pages but some 'grand image-maker' *(grand imagier)* who . . . is first and foremost the film itself as a linguistic object (since the spectator always knows that what he is seeing is a film), or more precisely a sort of 'potential linguistic focus' *(foyer linguistique virtue)* situated somewhere behind the film, and representing the basis that makes the film possible. That is the filmic form of the narrative instance, which is necessarily present, and is necessarily perceived, in any narrative." (*Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema,* translated by Michael Taylor (1974: New York, Oxford), p. 20–21.)

in exploring this cinema for its own sake.

"What Is Cinema?" (#10) and "Montage My Fine Care" (#14) are generalized critiques in this mode, tending to repeat "Defense." From the former:

> [Contemporary art] has rejected what for centuries was the pride of the great masters, and indeed of humbler craftsmen: the portrait of the individual . . .
>
> Metaphysical pretensions are the rage in the salons. This is the fashion . . . This absurd opposition between the artist and nature is the more absurd, the more vain, in that nothing, neither Manet nor Schumann nor Dostoievsky, prefigured it. . . .
>
> Yet the fact that a landscape may be a state of mind does not necessarily mean that poetry is only captured by chance, as our too clever documentarists would have us believe, but that the natural order corresponds to that of the heart and mind. Flaherty's genius, after all, is not so far removed from that of Hitchcock—Nanook hunting his prey is like a killer stalking his victims—and lies in identifying time with the desire which consumes it, guilt with suffering, fear and remorse with pleasure, and in making of space the tangible terrain of one's uneasiness. Art attracts us only by what it reveals of our most secret self. This is the sort of depth I mean. Obviously it assumes an idea of man which is hardly revolutionary, and which the great film-makers from Griffith to Renoir were too conservative to dare to deny. So, to the question 'What is Cinema?', I would reply: the expression of lofty sentiments.[17]

This essay affirms Godard's human-centered cinema—"the portrait of the individual," "art attracts by what it reveals of our most secret self." This opposes Bazin's nature-centered cinema. The second paragraph implies a man/nature opposition at the center of Bazin; without it, the urged self-effacement of the director before reality makes no sense.

"Montage My Fine Care" is clearer and crisper than "Classical Construction," but whether it adds much to the earlier piece is doubtful. It argues in favor of montage, and hence at least implicitly against Bazin; it also says that editing and *mise-en-scène* are correlative and interdependent. "Talking of *mise-en-scène* automatically implies montage. When montage effects surpass those of *mise-en-scène* in efficacity, the beauty of the latter is doubled."[18] As in the earlier piece, Godard associates montage with "making the look a key piece in the game":

> Cutting on a look is almost the definition of montage, its supreme ambition as well as its submission to *mise-en-scène*. It is, in effect, to bring out the soul under the spirit, the passion behind the intrigue, to make the heart prevail over the intelligence by destroying the notion of space in favor of that of time.[19]

In a passage suggesting his later film work, Godard says that one invents and improvises in front of the moviola just as much as on the set. And: Cutting a camera movement in four may prove more effective than keeping it as shot. An exchange of glances can only be expressed with sufficient force, when necessary, by editing. Godard concludes: to say that a director should supervise the editing of his film comes to the same thing as saying that the editor should move to the set and himself direct. The operations are so interwoven and equal in importance that no sort of subordination is possible between them.

Hitchcock's films exist in a mixed stylistic realm, they contain both long takes and montage sequences, both long shots and close-ups. Godard's recurring point about Hitchcock is that he always makes style dependent upon subject matter: different scenes call for different camera treatments. Hitchcock is not really "classical construction," but Godard nevertheless uses him against Bazin because the responsiveness of his camera to subject matter at any particular moment effectively denies the superiority of any one camera treatment for all subjects. Thus Godard's anti-Bazin polemic continues, but his arguments are now somewhat different and therefore his theoretical position also. Classical construction gives way to form-content relativism. In the early *Strangers on a Train* piece (#8), he says: "I find in [Hitchcock and Griffith] the same admirable ease in the use of figures of speech or technical processes; in other words they make the best use of the means available to their art form."[20] "The point is simply that all the freshness and invention of American films springs from the fact that they make the subject the motive for the *mise-en-scène*."[21]

The piece on *The Man Who Knew Too Much*

(#13) does not return to this issue, but that on *The Wrong Man* (#19) is Godard's most thorough critical treatment of the theme.

> Throughout his entire career, Hitchcock has never used an unnecessary shot. Even the most anodyne of them invariably serve the plot, which they enrich, rather as the "touch" beloved of the Impressionists enriched their paintings. They acquire their particular meaning only when seen in the context of the whole.[22]
>
> Even more than a moral lesson, *The Wrong Man* is a lesson in *mise-en-scène* every foot of the way. In the example I have just cited, Hitchcock was able to assemble the equivalent of several close-ups in a single shot, giving them a force they would not have had individually. Above all—and this is the important thing—he did it deliberately and at precisely the right moment. When necessary, he will also do the reverse, using a series of rapid close-ups as the equivalent of a master shot.[23]
>
> Hitch never repeats a device without being perfectly aware of cause and effect. Today he uses his great discoveries as aesthetic conclusion rather than postulate. Thus, the treatment of a scene in a single shot has never been better justified* than during the second imprisonment when Manny, seen from the back, enters his cell . . . [24]
>
> Hitchcock shows us that a technical discovery is pointless unless it is accompanied by a formal conquest in whose crucible it can shape the mold which is called "style." To the question 'What is art?', Malraux has already given a precise reply: 'that by which forms become style.'[25]

Godard occasionally makes this point again, as in the piece on Vadim following that on *The Wrong Man:* "Once the characters' motivations are clearly established, *mise-en-scène* becomes a simple matter of logic. Vadim will become a great director because his scenes are never occasioned by a purely abstract or theoretical idea for a shot; rather it is the *idea of a scene,* in other words a dramatic idea, which occasions the *idea of a shot.*"[26] By and large, however, *The Wrong Man* piece seems to have exhausted this point or line of argument for Godard. There he made the case conclusively, or at least at length.

The Wrong Man and *Sait-on jamais?* (Vadim) pieces take Godard through the first year of his return to criticism. They seem to have exhausted not only the subject-treatment point, but Godard's anti-Bazin impulse also. This central theme of the early criticism drops from Godard's criticism following *Sait-on jamais?* (#20). Oddly, Godard's concern with this issue was not affected by his lapses from critical activity. After four years away from criticism, he picked it up again almost immediately, "Montage My Fine Care" reformulating the earlier "Classical Construction" in clearer and simpler terms. This issue occupied Godard's critical activity spanning five years, from the *Strangers on a Train* piece (#8) in March 1952 to the *Sait-on jamais?* piece in July 1957, suggesting that its resolution was logical not chronological.

In the year that follows, July 1957 to June 1958, Godard's critical work (16 pieces) does not reveal a central theme or focus. Godard pursues a number of critical interests, among them Frank Tashlin, Nicholas Ray, and Kenji Mizoguchi; but he seems to deal with each on different grounds. An exception is his praising both Tashlin and Ray for developing modern cinematic styles, a point we consider below.

It was in Godard's third, highly active year of writing criticism that he produced the bulk of his critical texts, 49 pieces between July 1958 and July 1959. Located here are a second and third group of themes or ideas which we wish to explore. The second group, unlike the first, exhibits changes and significant development. This group requires especially close attention to the texts concerned.

In "Bergmanorama" (#37), Godard argues that Ingmar Bergman is the most original filmmaker of the European cinema. He proposes a comparison between Bergman and Visconti.

> But when talent comes so close to genius that the result is *Summer Interlude* or *White Nights,* is there any point in endlessly arguing as to which is ultimately greater than the other, the complete *auteur* or the pure *metteur en scène?* Maybe there is, because to do so is to analyze two conceptions of cinema, one of which may be more valid than the other.
>
> Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of filmmakers. Those who walk along the streets with their

*Long takes, like other shots, must be justified contextually, *not* in the apriori Bazin manner.

> heads down, and those who walk with their heads up. In order to see what is going on around them, the former are obliged to raise their heads suddenly and often, turning to the left and then the right, embracing the field of vision in a series of glances. They *see.* The latter see nothing, they *look,* fixing their attention on the precise point which interests them. When the former are shooting a film, their framing is roomy and fluid (Rossellini), whereas with the latter is it narrowed down to the last millimetre (Hitchcock). With the former (Welles), one finds a script construction which may be loose but is remarkably open to the temptations of chance; with the latter (Lang), camera movements not only of incredible precision in the set but possessing their own abstract value as movements in space. Bergman, on the whole, belongs to the first group; Visconti to the second, the cinema of rigor. Personally I prefer *Summer With Monika* to *Senso,* and the *politique des auteurs* to the *politique des metteurs en scène.*[27]
>
> No one would deny that *The Seventh Seal* is less skilfully directed than *White Nights,* its compositions less precise, its angles less rigorous; but—and herein lies the essential difference—for a man so enormously talented as Visconti, making a very good film is ultimately a matter of very good taste. He is sure of making no mistakes, and to a certain extent it is easy. . . . [But] For an artist, to know oneself too well is to yield a little to facility.
>
> What is difficult, on the other hand, is to advance into unknown lands, to be aware of the danger, to take risks, to be afraid.[28]

Godard shares certain of his critical terms with his contemporaries — *auteur* vs. *metteur-en-scène, politique des auteurs* vs. *politique de metteur-en-scène.* But Godard conjoins these to other oppositions: looseness vs. precision of direction, spontaneity vs. planning, etc. He seems more interested in the latter concepts than in the former, though this essay persistently overlays the two. This conjunction itself does not seem to hold up. Why can't a roomy and fluid *mise-en-scène* define a *metteur-en-scène* as well as a precise one? Why can't a genuine *auteur* have a narrowed rather than fluid visual style? The logic of Godard's conjunction would disqualify Hitchcock and Lang as *auteurs.* Their visual rigor characterizes the *metteur-en-scène.* Of course Godard does not accept the consequences of this logic, though in this article Hitchcock and Lang constitute somewhat negative examples. Godard seems to be seeking a model or paradigm of cinema or of direction. He continues the search in several other articles of this period.

Godard's preference, in "Bergmanorama," for chance and spontaneity over rigor and precision seems to mark an important change in his work as a whole. We recall his extolling in "Defense" a cinema of "artificial grandeur" in which "nothing is left to chance." This change is confirmed by the other articles of this period. To what degree does Godard break with his former position? Does his new praise of chance constitute in any way a capitulation to the Bazinian system formerly criticized?

A reversal of values is evident in *The Quiet American* piece (#39), in which Godard reconsiders his admiration for Mankiewicz. He still admires the wit and precision of the latter's scripts, but sees Mankiewicz as perhaps too perfect a writer to be a perfect director as well. What is missing from *The Quiet American* is cinema. Despite brilliant acting and sparkling dialogue, the result on the screen is slightly academic in shooting and editing.

The Pajama Game (#42) provided Godard with the opportunity to work out his ideas of spontaneity vs. planning, chance vs. precision, in relation to dance. Whereas classical dance fails to get across the screen footlights, "modern ballet is as happy there as a fish in water because it is a stylization of real everyday movements."[29] Classical dance seeks the immobility in movement, which is by definition the opposite of cinema. Rather than a goal, repose in the cinema is on the contrary the starting point for movement. This is even more true of the musical, which is in a way the idealization of cinema: a balustrade is no longer something to lean on but an obstacle to clear—everything becomes simply a pretext for the "lines which displace movement":

> So hooray for Robert Fosse and Stanley Donen, who have managed to push this aesthetic almost to its furthest limits in *The Pajama Game.* The arabesques of their dance movements reveal an unfamiliar grace, that of actuality, which is completely absent from, for example, the purely mathematical choreography of Michael Kidd.[30]

The originality of this style might be defined by saying that when the actor dances, he is no longer transformed into a dancer doing his act, nor is he a dancer playing a role; he still remains in character, but suddenly feels the need to dance.

In a slightly earlier essay, on *L'Eau Vive* (#38), Godard discusses a related but quite distinct idea. His subject is the director's ability "to give to romance the lure of reality, as is right and proper in any shotgun marriage between fiction and reality."[31] "Here fiction rejoins the reality which had overtaken it . . . The art of the film-maker is, precisely, to be able to seize this artificial beauty, giving the impression that it is entirely natural."[31] The critical tendency of these pieces (from "Bergmanorama" forward) remains consistent, but there is an important conceptual shift here. In the first three articles discussed, spontaneity and chance are opposed to planning and design, imprecision to precision, joy to perfection. Here the opposing terms are reality and fiction. Spontaneity vs. planning, etc. enter in, but now in a different way. The director uses or simulates spontaneity in order to naturalize the artifact, to make the fiction *seem* natural and real. Godard's use of the concept of spontaneity in the earlier three essays *can* be read as naturalism not naturalization, that is, as a genuine contact of cinema with the real, with life, with "what is going on around," with "the temptations of chance," etc. In short, Bazinism: some notion of the ontological transfer of living things or objects onto the filmic image. In *L'Eau Vive,* spontaneity is no longer celebrated simply and directly as a thing or quality existing in the world, which is seized or copied by cinema. It is no longer the natural. Godard now situates spontaneity decisively within discourse. This utterly changes it. No longer of the real, it is an effect of discourse, a trick of rhetoric, a quality achieved by the skillful director in order to naturalize his discourse, i.e., make it more effective. It is an event, change, or effect occurring entirely within discourse—and therein and thereafter on audiences.

This transition — from a naturalism of the image, from reality itself *caught* by cinema to a specifiable operation within discourse, leading to a certain effect—is of great theoretical importance. The notes that follow trace this idea in its new form, i.e., this new concept, through several subsequent Godard texts.

A long piece on a festival of short films, "Take Your Own Tours" (#56—February 1959) contains this note:

> *Blue Jeans* belongs to a category of short film which is false in principle, being half-way between documentary and narrative fiction. Art is difficult here, for as we have seen, one must on the one hand introduce a plot to lend it the suspense natural to the full-length film, while on the other one has not enough time to develop this plot with the necessary care. Therefore, since one *must* tell a story, one must take only the beginning and the end—in other words, schematize—which involves the aesthetic risk of making something seem theoretic when one is trying to make it seem living. So one must make sure that the dramatic structure constitutes a simple emotion, simple enough to allow one time to analyze it in depth, and also strong enough to justify the enterprise.[32]
>
> Rozier has staked everything on lucidity within improvisation . . . Here the truth of the document makes common cause with the grace of the narration.[33]

A piece on *Les Rendez-vous du Diable* (#64—March 1959) makes clear what the passages quoted suggest, that Godard was reconsidering certain of Bazin's ideas during this period.

> What is remarkable, therefore, is this overweening desire to record, this fierce purpose which Tazieff shares with a Cartier-Bresson or the Sucksdorff of *The Great Adventure,* this deep inner need which forces them to try, against all odds, to authenticate fiction through the reality of the photographic image. Let us now replace the word fiction by fantasy. One then comes back to one of André Bazin's key thoughts in the first chapter of *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?,* thoughts concerning the "Ontology of the photographic image," and of which one is constantly reminded in analysing any shot from *Les Rendez-vous du Diable.* Haroun Tazieff does not know, but proves that Bazin did know, that "the camera alone possesses a sesame for this universe where supreme beauty is identified at one and the same time with nature and with chance."[34]

In a piece on *La Ligne de Mire* (#66—March 1959), Godard says:

> Pollet allows his actors complete freedom. Taking

advantage of a carefully worked out scenario, he allows them in effect to improvise their scenes almost entirely. Again, *why?* Quite simply, once again, to upset Diderot's theory [that the actor is more effective when distanced from his role] and turn the paradox of the actor into the more cinematographic, and therefore more moving, one of the character. For faced by this world large or small vibrating before him, Pollet is content to be, at the viewfinder, on the lookout for poetry.[35]

There is a major statement on these questions in April 1959, "Africa Speaks of the End and the Means" (#72), a piece on *Moi, un Noir* by Jean Rouch. Godard first mentions Rouch in two notes written in December 1958 (#51, #53). In one he calls Rouch's *Treichville* the greatest French film since the Liberation, in the other he says of *Moi, un Noir:* "Everything, in effect is completely new . . . script, shooting and sound recording."[36] *"Moi, un Noir* is a paving stone in the marsh of French cinema, as *Rome, Open City* in its day was in world cinema."[37]

Godard published a short piece on *Moi, un Noir* in *Arts* in March 1959 (#68), then the longer one in *Cahiers* in April 1959 (#72).

Rouch's originality lies in having made characters out of his actors—who are actors in the simplest sense of the term, moreover, being filmed *in action,* while Rouch contents himself with filming this action after having, as far as possible, organized it logically in the manner of Rossellini.[38]

For, after all, there are no half-measures. Either it is reality or it is fiction. Either one stages something or one does reportage. Either one opts completely for art or for chance. For construction or for actuality. Why is this so? Because in choosing one, you automatically come round to the other.

To be more precise. You make *Alexander Nevsky* or *India '58.* You have an aesthetic obligation to film one, a moral obligation to film the other. But you have no right to film, say, *Nanook of the North,* as though you were filming *Sunrise.* [Malraux's mistake in *L'Espoir* lay in not committing himself fully to one direction or the other.] In other words, his *mise en scène* yields a priori to actuality, and his actuality yields to *mise en scène.* I repeat, a priori. For it is here that one feels a certain awkwardness, as one never does with Flaherty, but which one finds in *Lost Continent.*[39]

Once again let us dot a few i's. All great fiction films tend towards documentary, just as all great documentaries tend toward fiction. *Ivan the Terrible* tends toward *Que Viva Mexico!,* and vice versa; *Mr. Arkadin* towards *It's All True,* and conversely. One must choose between ethic and aesthetic. That is understood. But it is no less understood that each word implies a part of the other. And he who opts wholeheartedly for one, necessarily finds the other at the end of his journey.[40]

(Moi, un Noir) contains the answer, the answer to the great question: can art be consonant with chance? Yes, Rouch shows, more and more clearly (or getting better and better) . . . All is now clear. To trust to chance is to ***hear voices.*** Like Jeanne d'Arc of old, our friend Jean set out with a camera to save, if not France, French cinema at least. A door opens on a new cinema, says the poster for *Moi, un Noir.* How right it is. . . . Of course, *Moi, un Noir* is still far from rivalling ***India '58.*** There is a jokey side to Rouch which sometimes undermines his purpose. Not that the inhabitants of Treichville haven't the right to poke fun at everything, but there is a certain facility about his acceptance of it. A joker can get to the bottom of things as well as another, but this should not prevent him from self-discipline.[41]

In April 1959 and June 1959, Godard published an interview (#75) and a brief note (#83) on Rossellini's *India 58.*

India runs counter to all normal cinema: the image merely complements the idea which provokes it. *India* is a film of absolute logic, more Socratic than Socrates. Each image is beautiful, not because it is beautiful in itself, like a shot from *Que Viva Mexico!,* but because it has the splendor of the true, and Rossellini starts from truth. He has already gone on from the point which others may perhaps reach in twenty years time. India embraces the cinema of the whole world, as the theories of Riemann and Planck embraced geometry and classical physics. In a future issue, I shall show why *India* is the creation of the world.[42]

Godard's theorizing about the relations between fiction and documentary continue into his film-making period. The December 1962 *Cahiers* interview (#93) contains a good deal of discussion on this point, now from the perspective of Godard's first four feature films. The October 1965 (#171) interview has some also, though less. Even in looking back upon his own experience, Godard is unable to define or re-

solve the question with any more precision than he had brought to bear as critic. That he continued to talk about this problem in the same terms itself suggests that he did not resolve it.

The passages quoted make clear that the conceptual displacement analyzed above is not as firm and clear-cut as suggested. Godard's earlier vacillations resolved themselves into a concept of cinema as permanently, inherently divided between two poles, fiction and reality. That is, a vacillation became a paradox, which is something quite different. Moving between two alternative solutions to a problem is not at all the same thing as recognizing a bipolarity as itself the solution. The latter involves a positive acquisition of knowledge, the former involves a lack of knowledge. A paradox may well be a superior form of knowledge to what preceded it. Still, it is perhaps inherently unsatisfactory.

Once he had attained this paradox, Godard did not retreat from it into a fallacious simplicity of explanation. Rather, he explored film theory and various particular films through the paradox itself, by inflecting its two terms and their relations within the narrow maneuver space permitted by the model. Thus, the citation of Bazin and a few remarks suggesting a naturalism do not deny or dissolve the fiction or discursive pole of the model. Rather they assume it and venture forth in attempted explanation only by virtue of its anchoring force. (The reverse may be true as well.)

Here too there is an important parallel with Metz. For the latter, films are made up of non-articulated or analogue materials (footage), which are then articulated into a discourse (digitalized) by operation of laws or rules whose study is Metz's principal work. Thus, in Metz too (as perhaps in most theories of film to date), film is described by a biopolar model. The difference between Godard and Metz is that Godard arrived at his model at the end of his explorations, whereas Metz takes it as a point of departure and works from there. Also, Godard put his model in the form of a paradox, i.e., in a form in which it was unsolvable. Metz's analysis is not paradoxical.

There is a third complex of ideas in *Godard on Godard* which is worthy of examination. This is Godard's nascent concept of the metafilm, the film made out of knowledge of film history and/or the film about film. It is less conspicuous than the other complexes of ideas discussed: it is only touched upon in a few essays. It is also far less developed theoretically than the other two, indeed little more than broached in one essay and not returned to again.

In February 1959, Godard published an essay on *Man of the West* by Anthony Mann (#57). He calls the film a superWestern, in the sense that *Shane* and *High Noon* are; but does not find this to be the defect that it is in those films. After *The Tin Star,* Mann's art seemed to be evolving toward "a purely theoretic schematism of *mise-en-scène,* directly opposed to that of *The Naked Spur, The Far Country, The Last Frontier,* or even *The Man From Laramie,*" Mann's classical Westerns employing classical *mise-en-scène.*

> If one looks again at *The Man From Laramie, The Tin Star* and *Man of the West* in sequence, it may perhaps be that this extreme simplification is an endeavor, and the systematically more and more linear dramatic construction is a search: in which case the endeavor and the search would in themselves be, as *Man of the West* now reveals, a step forward . . .
>
> But a step forward in what direction? Towards a Western style which will remind some of Conrad, others of Simenon, but reminds me of nothing whatsoever, for I have seen nothing so completely new since—why not?—Griffith. Just as the director of *Birth of a Nation* gave one the impression that he was inventing the cinema with every shot, each shot of *Man of the West* gives one the impression that Anthony Mann is reinventing the Western . . . It is, moreover, more than an impression. *He does reinvent.* I repeat, reinvent; in other words, he both shows and demonstrates, innovates and copies, criticizes and creates. *Man of the West,* in short, is both course and discourse, or both beautiful landscapes and the explanation of this beauty, both the mystery of firearms and the secret of this mystery, both art and theory of art . . . of the Western, the most cinematographic genre in the cinema, if I may so put it. The result is that *Man of the West* is quite simply an admirable lesson in cinema—in modern cinema.[48]

The reference to Griffith is perhaps a passkey to exploring Godard's thinking here. Griffith's

name comes up a few times in this period of Godard's writings, and in each case it is used to suggest a return to origins and a re-beginning, or, in other words, a meta-reflection on film. Godard wrote in his piece on the short film:

> Today a short film must be intelligent in that it can no longer afford to be naive like, for instance, Griffith's *The New York Hat* or Chaplin's *The Fireman*. By this I mean that in Sennett's day, cinematographic invention was based on spontaneity; this was, so to speak, the starting-point of all aesthetic effort, whereas today it is the end. Growing more elaborate as the footage increased, it has become less and less natural and more and more deliberate. So much so that, looking at it from an historical point of view, I conclude this: to make a short film today is in a way to return to the cinema's beginnings . . . For this instinctive spontaneity can now be replaced only by its opposite, purposeful intelligence. And it is because this inner contradiction is also its sole aesthetic trump that the short film has for long and by definition been a false genre. To make short films has become synonymous with attempting the impossible.
>
> Let us suppose that you are commissioned to make a film about railways. Now, as we have just seen, at the time of *L'Arrivée en gare de la Ciotat* a train was a subject for a film: the proof, I would almost add, is that Lumière made the film. But today a train, as such, is no longer an original film subject, but simply a theme which can be exploited. So you will be faced by the extraordinarily difficult task of having to shoot, not a subject, but the reverse or shadow of this subject; and of attempting to create cinema while knowing beforehand that you are venturing into anti-cinema.[44]

He says in "A Time to Love and a Time to Die" (#73—April 1959), "I think one should mention Griffith in all articles about the cinema: everyone agrees, but everyone forgets none the less. Griffith, therefore, and André Bazin too, for the same reasons; and now that is done, I can get back to my . . . "[45]

In the December 1962 *Cahiers* interview (#93), Godard says: "A young author writing today knows that Molière and Shakespeare exist. We were the first directors to know that Griffith exists." If Griffith equals the mythic origins of cinema, the founding of narrative film conventions and the narrative film tradition, then making films with knowledge of Griffith leads to a new kind of film, a film that is a reflection on itself, on what narrative film is, as well as itself a narrative. "I have seen nothing so completely new since Griffith."

Godard suggests other meta-filmic possibilities also. In both his pieces on *Moi, un Noir*, Godard mentions a crane shot taken by Rouch which is formally identical to an Anthony Mann crane shot, except that it is hand-held by Rouch. The shots are parallel because their relationship to the subject is identical, hence their meaning and emotional effect is the same. *Scale* here means nothing. In a sense, to know this, and to make films in this knowledge—to remake the great films or subjects with hand-held camera—is to make a meta-film. The fact that a film-maker can paraphrase an action or camera movement by shooting it hand-held and thereby obtaining the same formal relations perhaps makes it impossible to make naive or traditional films again, as Godard suggests in the piece on short films. Does this make meta-filming possible? Inevitable?

Godard's few passages on what we (not he) call the meta-film are ambivalent. He is optimistic in the Mann piece—"I've seen nothing so new since Griffith"—and jubilant in welcoming Rouch as bringer of a new cinema, but the paragraph on the impossibility of the short film is pessimistic. He speaks of "the extraordinarily difficult task of having to shoot, not a subject, but the reverse or shadow of this subject" and of "venturing into anti-cinema." He suggests a certain defeatism in attempting to make films now. Cinema has suddenly become problematic to itself. (Cf. Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero.*)

In eight years, Godard's texts go from a celebration of classical construction, in which nothing is left to chance, through the celebration of chance filming in "Bergmanorama" to the necessity of documentary and fiction in every film and from there to modernism. In eight years, Godard goes from naive confidence in a classical cinema to discovery of a new cinema which alters the balance and relations between fiction and documentary to the problematics of filming anything at all, wherein the impulse to create is displaced into negativity or anticinema. It is tempting to make out of these facts an itinerary,

indeed a teleology, such that Godard progresses from one stage to the next, each absorbing the one before, ultimately arriving at the last, whereupon he is fully prepared to make *Breathless*, acquiring his theoretical baggage just in time to make his rendezvous with history.

Teleologies are inadmissible in principle. Besides, it appears that the three groups of theoretical work we have isolated did not absorb each other. Traces of all three may be located in Godard's later statements and perhaps in his films, at least until May 1968.

These notes are not designed to answer questions but to raise them, and hopefully to put this book on the agenda for serious consideration. Our dividing Godard's writings into three groups according to theme is no more than a working construct. Of couse it is possible to divide the book up in any number of other ways.

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7. *Godard,* p. 27.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 28–29.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 29–30.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 48–49.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
32. *Ibid.*, p .114.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 132–133.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 116–117.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Reviews

THE MOTHER AND THE WHORE

Director: Jean Eustache. Producer: Pierre Cottrell. Script: Eustache. Photography: Pierre Lhomme. Editing: Eustache and Denise de Casabianca. New Yorker Films.

Despite the bad reviews it received when first shown in New York, *The Mother and the Whore* seems to me the finest European film to reach us since *The Salamander*. But its achievements are deceptive. The film is about love, at least on the surface; and you can take it as another French essay on the ironies and imperfections thereof. But there is something more than usually unnerving and desolating about Eustache's treatment of these matters. He is willing to pick up far more on the dark side of love than a director like De Broca. His people hurt each other until they cry, and then a little more; and through this, somehow, they know each other and survive. In Eustache's contemporary Paris the old social certainties have vanished. Charming youths steal wheelchairs from cripples. Infidelity is no longer a subcategory of bourgeois marriage, capable of absorption into some larger stable order at the film's end; it is merely a brutal psychological event, and the jealousy and anguish that follow are unassuagable. Eustache is willing to chronicle pain without trying to resolve it through some kind of dramatic machinery; he is a sort of documentarist of emotion.

Stylistically, *The Mother and the Whore* is mercilessly simplified. Fade in, the characters

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Stylistically, *The Mother and the Whore* is mercilessly simplified. Fade in, the characters

speak to each other, fade out; fade in on a telephone conversation, the character hangs up, fade out. This goes on for three and a half hours; and yet the film is almost unbearably fascinating. The normal shots are the medium-close-up and the two-shot. If we see somebody's legs, or a group of three people in one shot, it can be startling. It is a little like what we call television style, except Eustache abjures the hyped-up action interludes TV uses to make sure our adrenalin keeps flowing. Natural, existing light is used for the most part, boosted a little; the settings are either public places or an obviously well-lived-in apartment. The effect is thus of documentary reality, though an occasional shot takes on a strange accidental beauty.

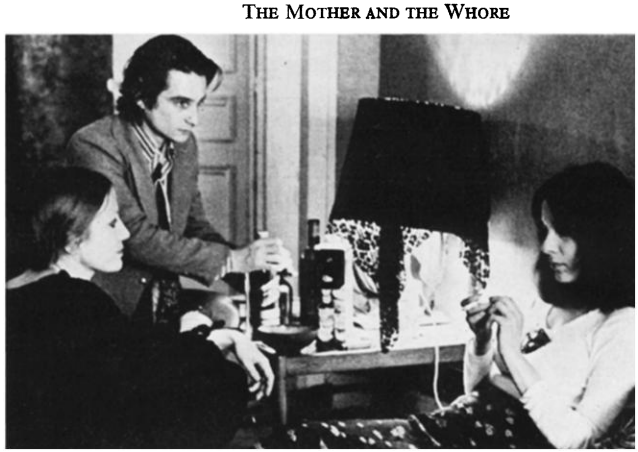
In short, every aspect of the style is calculated by Eustache to throw our attention utterly and intently upon the psychological events he is showing us. Thus he manages to be even more reticent than the old Hollywood style, which after all practiced a standard rhetoric of long-shot, medium-shot, close-up, over-the-shoulder, etc. Eustache mainly just quietly puts his camera down near the characters and listens to them talk; sometimes the camera becomes one of them —so that, in the long tour de force monologues which are embedded here and there in the film like great painful swellings, the performers address us directly. There are no camera flourishes, no bravura shots, no editorial comments insinuated by camera placement or angle. The characters are left to present themselves.

This daring modesty of style gives the film much of its power, because it sets off the harrowing events of the story so strongly. *The Mother and the Whore* is a film everyone should see, so I won't describe what happens in any detail. It concerns the complicated relationships among three people: Alexandre, a drop-out Left Bank journalist who spends most of his time in the cafés—love seems to be his real profession; Marie, whom he lives off—she runs a boutique, tolerates his amours; and Veronika, a nurse he picks up in the street, begins to sleep with while Marie is away, and possibly gets pregnant. (Eustache's characters are evidently not *always* truthful, though they cause themselves and each other much agony by the attempt to be open about their sexual feelings and acts. Nor do they, any better than we, always perceive what they are up to emotionally, despite Alexandre's obsessive attempts to rationalize and justify his attitudes and experiences.)

The events of the film span perhaps two weeks, and the film's steady fade-in-fade-out rhythm makes this seem an indeterminate time. Unimpressed critics have referred to *The Mother and the Whore* as soap opera. I find the analogy àpropos but in a positive sense: there is no particular reason why Eustache could not have gone on and made a five-hour film, or indeed a serial running an hour a week for a year. Once you begin to pay really close attention to a set of lives, there is no clear point at which to say Stop, The End. Alexandre may or may not mean it when he proposes to Veronika; she, drunk out of her mind, may not mean it when she hysterically accepts. In any event Marie would hardly disappear from their lives. And so on. I myself wished on first viewing that the film lasted maybe another half-hour. On second viewing, not having to work so hard at the French or the plot events, I could have taken five hours.

Part of its fascination is that the film is almost ethnographic in its chronicling of current *mores:* Alexandre's technique of telephoning girls, his arranging of rendez-vous, his endless verbal seductiveness and self-justification, his ways of coping after emotional disaster has struck; the women's guarded skepticism, curiosity, demands, or rage. (It is not always Alexandre who proposes and the women who dispose; the time

THE MOTHER AND THE WHORE



is now, and it is the women who support themselves while Alexandre is economically dependent, not to mention emotionally.) The environment is, to be sure, petty bourgeois; Eustache focuses on a very special kind of people who have the leisure to indulge their feelings. But he also shows that they earn this leisure; the film is not critical of their social roles. Eustache probably believes that all people should have the right to live their feelings if they want to.

Like Rohmer's, Eustache's characters talk a blue streak, and the film has been called theatrical or literary by people who have not digested Bazin's argument on this question. Besides, the film is about human relating, a process which often involves plenty of words, as well as nonverbal exchanges. The acting in *The Mother and the Whore* is unusually subtle on both levels. Though the dialogue often seems improvised, it was entirely prescripted—and its lengthy monologues put the performers to severe tests. The parallel language of gesture and expression sems to me also impressively complex: I think, for instance, of the little argument over dishwashing (one of the few scenes in the film where Eustache could be accused of anything complicated enough in staging and camerawork to be called *mise-en-scène*). The characters are beautifuly developed. Léaud as Alexandre is more complex than any other director has made him; asshole though he is (as Veronika correctly calls him), he comes through as genuinely troubled, striving by his own lights to live honestly, willing to take desperate chances. Bernadette Lafont's Marie has a touching kind of strength and humor; and she can be now tired and baffled, now radiant and lovely. Françoise Lebrun's Veronika sits behind her great pale eyes, watching and waiting, taking the measure of what is about to happen, and of her own promiscuity and drinking; Lebrun carries through, near the end, an enormously long drunken monologue about love, whoredom, and sexuality which is overwhelmingly affecting. Only Isabelle Weingarten as Gilberte, Alexandre's former love, seems wooden — and she is supposed to be, since she is trying to fend him off.

There are not many film-makers who are willing, or able, to stare at people going through such anguish and despair. Cocteau did it, but lightly and stylishly, in *Les Parents Terribles*. Bergman has done it a lot, working as he does on the brink of madness, in both his early films about marriage and late films like *The Silence, Persona,* and *Cries and Whispers*. Truffaut did some of it in *Jules and Jim,* but softened it with the Delerue score and his encompassing narration. (Eustache has music only when his characters put Piaf or Mozart's *Requiem* on their phonograph.) In such films, as in life, human relations are beyond the redemption of any happy (or even unhappy) ending that might be provided by the usual kind of plot. No one person can ever totally satisfy anybody else. We search for fulfillment or wither; we pay the price of the search in jealousy, pain, and rage. Sometimes we win, more often and longer we seem to lose; we are fickle, we are brave; but somehow we keep on, and in Eustache's eyes there is a certain grave beauty in it.

I know absolutely nothing about Eustache's life, but it seems unlikely that such an emotionally close-worked film is not somewhat autobiographical; it may, indeed, be some kind of exorcism, as *Last Tango* clearly was for Bertolucci. One of the things being exorcised, if this is so, is evidently our old familiar demon, Romantic Love. The loves in *Mother and the Whore* are unpredictable, dangerous to the lover and the beloved alike; they spring from dark recesses of personality and are inexplicable to the characters, despite their volubility.

It is a view of human beings which gives so great an emphasis to their purely personal relating that they seem totally isolated from society. This makes for an overwhelming psychological impact on us. Yet ultimately it will not do. Our loves and hates are embedded in social processes, indeed caused by them, or at least heavily shaped by them. Everybody in *The Mother and the Whore* has illusions, and if Eustache does too, they would probably center on exorcism being possible on this purely personal level—whereas we can only escape social pathologies like Romantic Love collectively (if at all . . .). Still, Eustache has been astonishingly attentive and brave; and *The Mother*

and the Whore does so much so well that it is no detraction from his achievement to remember that a film, like a person, cannot do everything for us. I will be waiting for the sequel.

—ERNEST CALLENBACH

ZARDOZ

Written, produced and directed by John Boorman. Photography: Geoffrey Unsworth. Music: David Munrow. Twentieth.

Now consider, take it on faith: a crystal is a receiving apparatus to draw in messages, because it's a form, man, a crystal is the most acute kind of form and forms are receptors of that which is less formed because that which is less formed looks to define itself by getting fucked by a form. You hip? That's why beauty stands still and lets a piece of ass come to it. Cause beauty is a high form. It is a crystal. It is the frustrated impulse of a general desire to improve the creation. So it is fixed, man.

—Norman Mailer, WHY ARE WE IN VIET NAM?

This is Revelation and Prophecy of what I can pick up without FM *on my 1920 crystal set with antennae of jissom . . . Gentle reader, we see God through our assholes in the flashbulb of orgasm. . . . Through these orifices transmute your body. . . . The way* OUT *is the way* IN . . .

—William Burroughs, NAKED LUNCH

Zardoz is a film of paradox. Like *Naked Lunch* and *Why Are We in Viet Nam?,* it is liberated and experimental in form, yet fascist and sexist in content. Like Jodorowsky's *El Topo* and *The Holy Mountain,* despite its stylistic originality, it incorporates and parodies themes and conventions from other works and self-reflexively calls attention to its medium. Although it creates its own myth, the materials are drawn from the pool of cultural archetypes; reflections of Jesus Christ, *The Wizard of Oz, Gulliver's Travels,* and *2001* are fused and transformed. Although the film is presented in the first person, the relationships among Arthur Frane the magician/narrator, Zardoz the stone godhead, Zed the brutish protagonist, and John Boorman the filmmaker are unclear; their ego boundaries are not sharply defined. We *do* get inside their heads, yet their imaginative fantasies and projections provide a satirical vision of external society. As Arthur tells us in the prologue, the story is "rich in irony and most satirical." The focus is simultaneously inward and outward. "The way OUT is the way IN."

The film's central conflict is between an individual and a society. Zed, a brutish mortal, invades a highly refined culture of immortals who have mastered art and science and banished aggression and death. In this nonrepressive, nonsexist world, life is unfortunately sterile and dull. Zed brings sexual potency and death, the ability to give life and take it away. Thus, paradoxically, although he appears to be a lower form than these divine Eternals, he conquers them and becomes their god. He absorbs their knowledge and destroys their civilization. He arouses sexual desire in the most coldly beautiful woman and takes her for his wife, re-establishing the nuclear family as the basic unit of society. And who is better equipped to perform this fascist coup than Sean Connery, Agent 007, veteran of the James Bond series? This quaint *deus ex machina* has been programmed by Arthur Frane, an artist-magician who is discontent with his boring world. Like Frankenstein, he loses control over his "monster" but willingly risks the destruction of his civilization because he longs for death, which he sees as the source of creative vitality. The film reaffirms one of the basic assumptions of the Eternals: the unity of opposites is the fundamental law of nature. Life/death, male/female, love/violence, joy/suffering are merely different facets of the same experience; each side is essential to the other.

Zardoz uses the crystal image to reconcile these opposites. As in the epigraphs from *Naked Lunch* and *Why Are We in Viet Nam?,* the crystal, being both a receiver and a transmitter, is a medium of communication between the inner and the outer, the individual and his culture, the body and the mind, nature and art. It is a thing of beauty (but not necessarily a joy forever), a perfect form incapable of change. While aware of the fascism and misogyny implicit in their fantasies, Burroughs, Mailer, and Boorman create works of violence whose magic is based

and the Whore does so much so well that it is no detraction from his achievement to remember that a film, like a person, cannot do everything for us. I will be waiting for the sequel.

—ERNEST CALLENBACH

ZARDOZ

Written, produced and directed by John Boorman. Photography: Geoffrey Unsworth. Music: David Munrow. Twentieth.

Now consider, take it on faith: a crystal is a receiving apparatus to draw in messages, because it's a form, man, a crystal is the most acute kind of form and forms are receptors of that which is less formed because that which is less formed looks to define itself by getting fucked by a form. You hip? That's why beauty stands still and lets a piece of ass come to it. Cause beauty is a high form. It is a crystal. It is the frustrated impulse of a general desire to improve the creation. So it is fixed, man.

—Norman Mailer, WHY ARE WE IN VIET NAM?

This is Revelation and Prophecy of what I can pick up without FM *on my 1920 crystal set with antennae of jissom . . . Gentle reader, we see God through our assholes in the flashbulb of orgasm. . . . Through these orifices transmute your body. . . . The way* OUT *is the way* IN . . .

—William Burroughs, NAKED LUNCH

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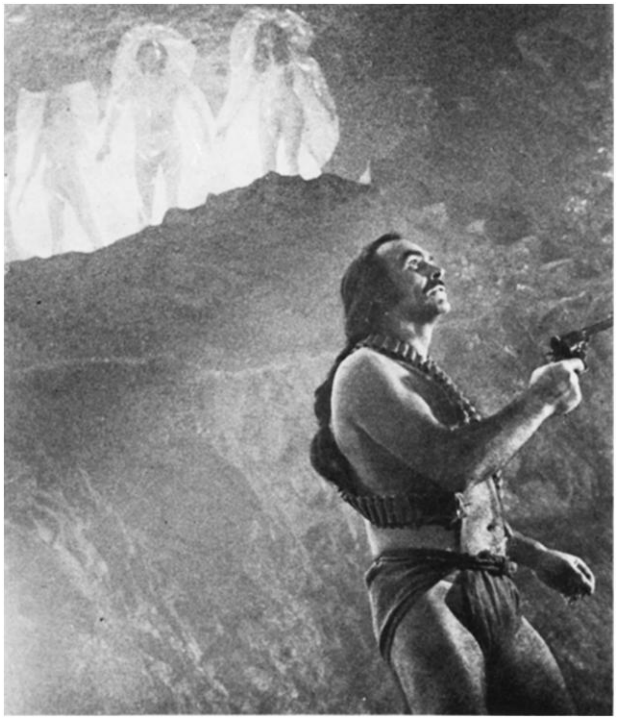
on machismo; yet the crystal is the means of controlling the chaos unleashed by this force. Burroughs's fluid "word horde" overflows the boundaries of sentence, paragraph, chapter, book; in his works, crystallization means distortion. As soon as experience is captured in language, it loses its energy and dies. Although such distortion and death are inevitable, his word magic fights back.

> This book spill off the page in all directions, kaleidoscope of vistas, medley of tunes and street noises, farts and riot yipes and the slamming steel shutters of commerce, screams of pain and pathos and screams plain pathic, copulating cats and outraged squawk of the displaced bull head, prophetic mutterings of brujo in nutmeg trances, snapping necks and screaming mandrakes, sigh of orgasm, heroic silent as dawn in the thirsty cells, Radio Cairo screaming like a beserk tobacco auction, and flues of Ramadan fanning the sick junky like a gentle lush worker in the grey subway dawn feeling with delicate fingers for the green folding crackle.

Nevertheless, Burroughs concedes that *Naked Lunch* is only "a frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork." Mailer adopts this idea from Burroughs and develops the crystal as the embodiment of frustrated impulse. Instead of acting out his aggression in war, his hero can choose to make a piece of art that crystallizes those feelings—he can write a mock-epic novel that purges himself and his society of those destructive impulses. Mailer's formal experimentation is less fluid than Burroughs's, for he believes crystallization clarifies experience with telepathic sensitivity. It is associated with passivity and beauty, qualities he values so highly in women: the crystal is a flower or form waiting to be approached. Yet, it does the forming and the fucking. It's both the supple feminine frame that receives, and the vigorous masculine actions being incorporated—the sports, the hunts, the killings. Without these actions, the form is lifeless. So, hot damn, Viet Nam!

Like Mailer, Boorman has an ambivalent attitude toward the crystal, yet he uses it to reconcile the conflict between the individual and the society, and all the polarities implicit in the struggle. He goes much further in placing it thematically and stylistically at the center of his work. On the one hand, the crystal represents the utopian society—it is the concrete embodiment of all the humanistic values and the means of transmitting them to others. As it informs Zed, "I am the sum of these people." It is a decorative ring on their fingers, yet it also functions as television, radio, telephone, teaching machine, ballot box, and computer. As object and place of worship, it is a classical form of permanence, reflecting lines into infinity. Zed is told by the Eterna's: "The crystal shall join us each to each and all to the Tabernacle." Yet since it insures that all members of society are on the same wavelength, it is also a source of conformity and sterility, inhibiting dynamic change. The crystal, like the society, is waiting to be entered and violated. Zed enters the Vortex (as sexual an entry as we find in *Alice in Wonderland*) and also "penetrates" the crystal ball. When Arthur drops the crystal into the palm of Zed's hand, he gives him the key to power and survival; and, as in other Boorman movies (such as *Point Blank* and *Deliverance*), these are primary issues. Zed is ready to destroy the Tabernacle only when he is able to see in the crystal the myriad reflections of himself and others. Once inside, he destroys his own image, breaks down his ego boundaries, and becomes the crystal, an omnipotent reincarnation. As a ring of eternity, the crystal unites all opposites, including Zed and the society.

But the question remains, who is really getting inside of whose head? Who is the ultimate Maker? These issues are immediately brought to our attention in the comical prologue, where we see a face (with theatrical mustache) floating through space, gradually getting larger; he introduces himself as Zardoz and Arthur Frane, magician and puppet master. Although he brags about his ability to manipulate his characters, he admits that he, too, is invented (as his name implies, he is Boorman's authorial frame) and then mockingly asks us, "And you poor creatures, who conjured you out of the clay? Is God in showbusiness, too?" The next head we see (in a second prologue) is also floating through space; but this time it's a stone spaceship flying over brutish worshippers who wear matching leonine masks. After giving the Word



Sean Connery in ZARDOZ

to his "chosen people," to "go forth and kill," the godhead flies away, leaving the camera to focus on a huge close-up of Zed's face. He shoots his gun directly at the camera, the screen turns to flames, and then fades. With the titles in the background, we see the stone godhead moving effortlessly through space to the strains of Beethoven's Seventh, evoking the first image of the spaceship from *2001*. Following the path charted by Arthur's head, the spaceship moves forward and gradually takes over the entire screen. Thus, the prologue reveals that Zardoz (like a crystal) has multiple faces—an artistic rendering of the divine trinity with Father Magician, Actor Son, and Holy Spiritual Mask.

The next sequence presents the three godheads in action. Riding inside the Zardoz spaceship (presumably created by Arthur), Zed raises his gun out of the grain pile and shoots the Eternal who supervised his genetic origin. As he flies out the godhead, Arthur screams at the mutinous mutant: "You foolish . . . without me, you are nothing." Having accidentally killed his own god, Zed must depend on his own resources, but, as we later learn, he is mentally and physically superior to the Eternals and capable of *anything*. Of course, Arthur doesn't really die; he is merely reconstructed and is still willing to use Zed to bring about his own end (and that of the Vortex). However, once Zed has reached full power, Arthur can't help chiding "this slave who could kill his master": "It was I who led you to the Wizard of Oz, I created you." Having studied the Holy Book quite well, Zed succeeds (like Dorothy and her friends) in looking behind the mask with its frightening loud voice and finding a funny little man. Confidently he replies to Arthur, "But I looked into the force that put the idea into your head, we're all head and led." On his deathbed, the scientist who discovered immortality identifies that force as Nature: "The Vortex is an offense against nature; she had to find a way to destroy this, so she made you. We forced the hand of evolution." Zed has been *chosen* by Art, God, and Nature—another creative trinity.

Zed's violent sexuality is an important source of creativity. He is the demon who reactivates the latent forces within a dead civilization. Like the gangster in *Performance,* he is a killer who enters a bisexual world of stars who are stuck. They get inside his head and expand his consciousness, while he teaches them about his gun and its powers of sex and death. Both sides are transformed and become the other. Zed functions as Friend's *Shadow* and Consuela's *Animus*. At first Friend is contemptuous of Zed—mocking his "obscenely decaying flesh," using him to draw his carriage, beating him to find out what happened to Arthur. But as a prelude to his own rebellion, he says of Zed: "The monster is a mirror and when we look at him we look at our own hidden faces." After being declared a Renegade, Friend drops his crystal ring and lays his head down on a mirrored table, and we see a huge close-up of his face and its reflection. Later, after he has acquired the knowledge of the crystal, there is a parallel shot of Zed. When they finally join forces in the rebellion, Zed is brought to Friend in bridal drag, foreshadowing his union with Consuela. At first she is the Eternal who most actively seeks his destruction. Attracted by the force of opposites, he is sexually turned on by her coldness, and his desire arouses hers. She admits, "In hunting you, I

have become you." Finally, they are fused within a nuclear family. On the psychological level, the crystal society is a collective being, totally dominated by consciousness. Arthur, the most creative member of the personality, mediates with the Outlands or primitive unconscious. He dreams up Zed, a demon with libidinous energy who transforms the self and re-establishes the Ego.

In five parallel sequences, the Eternals (led by May, the top scientist) probe the brute's head. The visuals obscure the distinction between inner and outer bundaries, and the actions reveal shifting power relationships, explicitly linking knowledge with sexual power. In the first sequence the screen is totally dominated by images of rape and murder as we hear Zed's narration, before cutting to the frame situation; Zed is lying spread-eagle on a table in a pyramid room while his memories of past deeds are being flashed on one wall. The other two walls are fluid and contain floating bodies of reconstructed Eternals. Within the room, Eternals watch this "terribly exciting" footage, but with aesthetic distance. One viewer observes, "You can't equate their feelings with ours, it's just entertainment." In contrast, Zed watches his own images with complete involvement and actually re-experiences his adventures: "I love to see the memory, I love the moment of their death, when I am one with Zardoz." Presumably, Boorman hopes we in the outer theater will respond like Zed and become one with Boorman.

The second sequence takes place in the same environment, but this time the live brute stands in front of the screen, watching the pornographic images that are supposed to arouse him while Consuela lectures on penile erection in a coolly rational tone. The pale aesthetes learn that Zed is turned on, not by art, but by Consuela in the flesh. In the third sequence, May leads Zed inside a pyramid where his internal genetic structure is projected on the walls that enclose them. Discovering his superiority and capacity for destruction, she paradoxically forces him to obey her commands. Zed seeks out May in the fourth sequence, penetrating the flimsy material that encapsulates her as she meditates. Once he enters her space, she encloses him and probes his mind, demanding to see how Arthur led him to a loss of innocence, resulting in knowledge and murder. His desire for revenge sexually arouses her, but they are observed by Consuela who accuses them of bestiality. Immediately turned on, Zed tries to rape the voyeur; frustrated and jealous, May blinds him and Consuela vows to hunt him down. This power struggle with the two women mirrors Zed's conflict with Arthur in the flashback. Finally, in the fifth sequence Zed trades his sexual seed for all the knowledge stored within the crystal. Images of paintings, words, numbers, symbols are projected onto parts of the body (mainly close-ups of heads), creating a visual collage; words, songs, music construct an analogous effect in sound. As the camera moves across a chain of images (like the kissing chain in the scene where Zed is nearly raped by the awakening Apathetics, who have been turned on by a drop of his sweat), the pace accelerates until it reaches a sexual climax. As in the Bible, "knowing" has a sexual meaning. Zed is told, "Now you know all that we know." Zed's first "loss of innocence" came with knowledge of the Holy Book of Oz; now he's been gang-banged by the entire culture.

Perhaps we also are being raped. Just as the crystal is implanted in everyone's brain and activated by a laser beam of coherent light, the film itself is a crystal, which allows us to see into the mind of John Boorman. Yet it is also a means by which he projects his fantasies into our consciousness through the medium of light. This process, of course, has been dramatized in the scene where the Eternals watch Zed's memories, which look very much like westerns, war movies, and other popular adventure films. Here, Boorman is identified with his potent hero and we with the passive audience waiting to be turned on and ravished by art.

The idea that the film is a crystal is reinforced by many formal aspects of Boorman's style. The structure is kaleidoscopic rather than linear, providing us with a multifaceted view of reality. Many of the sequences (as we have seen) reflect each other; many shots contain photographic images projected on other surfaces, splintering the light in various planes and creat-

ing a feeling of density and simultaneity. We understand the whole by going back and forth among the parts, as each is illuminated. This splintering effect is intensified once the Eternals begin to hunt down Zed, mirroring his behavior. The film cuts abruptly among a variety of brief scenes, whose time connections are unclear. For example, we see the Eternals (led by Consuela) trying to break into a plastic bubble that encloses Zed. The camera cuts back and forth between interior and exterior views, then in slow motion reveals Zed breaking out of the capsule. Similarly, the continuity of space and time is broken as we cut to Zed signalling his men. Later when the film cuts back to the attack, we don't know whether it has been suspended or whether the action has continued while we were gone. The scene where liberated Renegades, Apathetics, and Eternals smash statues is interrupted by Zed's encounter with the crystal; when we cut back to the destruction, we see the action in reverse as vases are restored. Then Zed leads his friends out of the Vortex and the violence resumes a forward motion.

The structure makes it very difficult to tell where the film begins and ends. The prologue is out of context, a head suspended in space. When we cut to a long-shot of a landscape, with the date 2293 superimposed, we think this must be the opening. But then we see the titles and realize this is another prologue, and we have no way of knowing how much time elapses before the next scene where Zed kills Arthur. The film provides earlier flashbacks beyond Zed's entry into the Vortex—the begetting of the mutants (is that Zed we see, or his ancestor?), and the founding of the Vortex. The ambiguity over the beginning is, of course, related to the confusion over who is the ultimate Maker. Similarly, it is hard to tell where the film ends. From the final massacre, the film cuts abruptly forward to Consuela giving birth as Zed looks on, and then further telescopes time in a montage of family portraits. In contrast to the rich visuals of the earlier sequences, this final scene is simplified, almost abstract—the figures dressed modestly in natural green, posed against the blank walls of an empty cave. Like the editing techniques, the changes within the scene create a pattern of condensation. The son matures and leaves his parents. The couple ages and is reduced to hand-holding skeletons, then cobwebs, and finally handprints on the wall. Are there more subtle signs of disintegration that we are unable to see (as in the ending of *The Incredible Shrinking Man*)? Is this the origin of primitive cave paintings? Like the opening prologue, this final sequence is out of context both in time and space. The future leads into the past; the crystal allows us to see lines of infinity moving in both directions.

This fusion of past and future is also reflected in the costumes and settings. When Zed enters Arthur's quaint dwelling, we see a sign on the wall that reads: "In this secret room from the past, I seek the future." Zed comes from a culture that is living in a new dark age; the environment looks medieval with a few modern touches (e.g., abandoned automobiles). His appearance (braided ponytail, mustache, boots, red bikini, crossed ammunition belts, and Zardoz mask) is primitive, yet it could easily be the costume for a modern guerrilla with a theatrical flair. The advanced society of the Eternals has a similar mixture. The decor juxtaposes classical statuary, impressionist paintings, contemporary boutique fabrics, Renaissance architecture, and plastic bubbles. The Eternals wear unisex costumes comprised of Egyptian headdress, chic low-cut midriffs, wrap-around skirts, and loose trousers of varying lengths, all becoming to the fashionably slender. The Zardoz spacecraft (a Sphinxlike head) is whimsically comical, offering an earlier conception of science fantasy in the mode of *Flash Gordon* serials and *Barbarella:* the combination of primitive art and space flight also evokes *Chariot of the Gods,* which similarly tries to unify our experience in a new mythology.

Perhaps most important is the film's allusiveness, which transforms it into a crystal—a storehouse of imagery and ideas from our literary and cinematic past. As he is about to give Zed the crystal ball, Arthur quotes T. S. Eliot, the twentieth-century poet who has relied most heavily on allusions to provide a unifying framework for our fragmented experience. In fact, the passage quoted from "The Love Song of J.

Alfred Prufrock" builds on lines from Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," where a pair of lovers (like Zed and Consuela) use violent sexuality to fight against Death and Time.

> Let us roll all our strength and all
> Our sweetness up into one ball.

Eliot's version is even more immediately relevant to the situation in *Zardoz*.

Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
To say, "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,

Arthur asks Zed to quote the next line, as if testing his knowledge.

Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all."

Returned from the dead, Arthur refuses to tell Zed the secrets of the Tabernacle unless he can see into the crystal ball. When he squeezes it in his hand, Zed penetrates the crystal and is transformed. In all three contexts (Marvell, Eliot, and Boorman), the unifying image is the ball—a condensed form or microcosm that fights off death and meaninglessness by crystallizing experience. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot articulates the aesthetic used by Boorman in this film.

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. . . . You must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. . . . What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. Whoever has approved this idea of order . . . will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.

The basic situation in *Zardoz* is adopted from Book 3 of *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift. (Other film-makers have already succeeded with material from Book 4 in *The Planet of the Apes* and its sequels, and Burroughs has also drawn heavily from Swift.) The most anti-utopian of the four voyages, Book 3 attacks three temporal visions of human perfection: a visit to the modern academy ridicules the Moderns' attempt to exalt the present through scientific experimentation (here Swift mocks the Royal Society, which was trying to establish Bacon's "New Atlantis"); conversation with spirits from the past reveals that humans have degenerated rather than progressed and that all historical knowledge has been hopelessly distorted; an encounter with the immortal Struldbruggs destroys all illusions about a future without death. Recognized by a black spot on their forehead (rather than an implanted crystal), Swift's immortals are the mutants rather than their visitor. When Gulliver hears of them, he naively has great expectations. Swift's satire always moves inward against Gulliver his narrator, as well as outward toward the society he encounters. Despite the fact that he has just encountered direct evidence of human degeneracy, Gulliver muses that if he were to become a Struldbrugg, "I should be a living treasury of knowledge and wisdom, and certainly become the oracle of the nation." But the catch is age—the immortals must suffer "a perpetual life under all the usual disadvantages which old age brings along with it." Although Boorman grants his immortals Gulliver's fantasy, he uses age as the medium of punishment within his utopia. Swift's description of the pathetic Struldbruggs applies perfectly to the Renegades in *Zardoz* who have been condemned to decrepitude: "They were not only opinionative, peevish, covetous, morose, vain, talkative; but incapable of friendship, and dead to all natural affection. . . . Envy and impotent desires, are their prevailing passions. But those objects against which their envy seems principally directed, are the vices of the younger sort, and the deaths of the old." The Eternals who retain their youth are still miserable because of boredom, the same reason suggested by Samuel Johnson in *Rasselas,* another eighteenth-century anti-utopia. This form is well established in English literature as a sub-genre combining satire and science fiction (e.g., *Erehwon, 1984, Brave New World*), but it is Swift who is most sensitively aware that when one rejects all utopian ideals, one runs the risk of an equally dangerous extreme. After Gulliver has been disillusioned, he despairs and

becomes susceptible to death at the hands of a fascist: "I grew heartily ashamed of the pleasing visions I had formed; and thought no tyrant could invent a death, into which I would not run with pleasure from such a life." Boorman makes this tyrant the hero and this pleasurable death the climax of his film.

Zardoz is also based, as we explicitly learn from Arthur Frane, on *The Wizard of Oz*. The leonine godhead is a transformation of the cowardly lion, who ultimately proves courageous and becomes the model for Boorman's killers. Arthur, the Wizard behind the mask, leads his courageous brute along the yellow brick road to power. This source is also very important because, unlike *Gulliver,* it doubles as a literary and a movie classic, and this verbal-visual fusion is precisely what Boorman is attempting. He is trying to use the medium in its broadest sense, exploiting its potential for incorporating other art forms. Thus the allusion to the source is both visual (in the godhead) and verbal (in the name); both dimensions are present in the concrete image of the Holy Book, hovering in space like the stonehead, which leads Zed, our red bullet-crossed knight, into his mission. His quest is to enter the Vortex and destroy the Tabernacle (a form of holy grail), which will restore death and fertility to the Wasteland (another connection with Eliot).

The film allusions are more subtle but more extensive. *Zardoz* presents a panoramic history of the cinema, with special emphasis on science fiction. The opening image of Arthur's floating head evokes Georges Méliès, the magician who first explored the medium's potential for visual illusion and who launched the science fiction genre with *A Trip to the Moon* (1902). As the spaceship reminds us of *Flash Gordon* and *Barbarella,* the masks suggest *Judex*. The lion's head is also associated with the scene from *El Topo* where the brutish hero challenges the Second Master. Playful and effeminate like Arthur, and identified with the lion chained beside him, this Master, like the others, is indifferent to death. He tries to give El Topo the secret to his power by showing him a pyramid made out of toothpicks, which (like the crystal) combines delicacy and strength. Ironically, El Topo, who is inferior in consciousness, defeats the superior Masters. But in killing them, he incorporates them as Zed incorporates the crystal.

Several key scenes in *Zardoz* seem to be variations of key sequences from other movies. The sex scenes in the pyramid are reminiscent of the comical sequence from *WR: The Mysteries of the Organism* where the image of a young couple joyfully screwing is splintered in a crystal as a narrator lectures on the political advantages of fucking for the revolution; there, too, sexual anarchy is contrasted with sterile ideologies, both left and right. When the brute is attacked by the aged with impotent rage, we recall the scene from *A Clockwork Orange* where Alex is beaten up by the vengeful old derelicts. Both films see the future as a conflict between sterile socialism and brutal fascism and seem to prefer the latter. When Zed enters the crystal and is confronted with multiple reflections, culminating in the shooting of his own image, we remember the dazzling shootout in Welles's *Lady From Shanghai.* There, too, a vital young man is drawn into an adventure by a manipulative old man named Arthur. Someone tries to arrange his own murder, but the plot backfires. Nevertheless, the young rogue (played by Welles) helps to destroy the old man and his corrupt circle of friends.

The most extensive network of allusions are to Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The conversation with the crystal ball and the entry into the Tabernacle suggest the scene where Bowman gets inside of Hal, the computer, in order to disconnect his power and take over his functions. The extraordinary visual flashes that occur within the crystal are reminiscent of the Stargate corridor sequence, where we begin to get a simultaneous exploration of inner and outer space. Like Boorman's stone godhead, Kubrick's mysterious black monolith functions as a spaceship from an advanced race and elicits a primitive response. Both films end with the birth of a new child, marking the beginning of a new society. Both films explore the idea of whether man, in a stage of advanced technology, has really progressed psychologically. Both develop this polarity by combining the strange and the familiar, the new and the old, in decor,

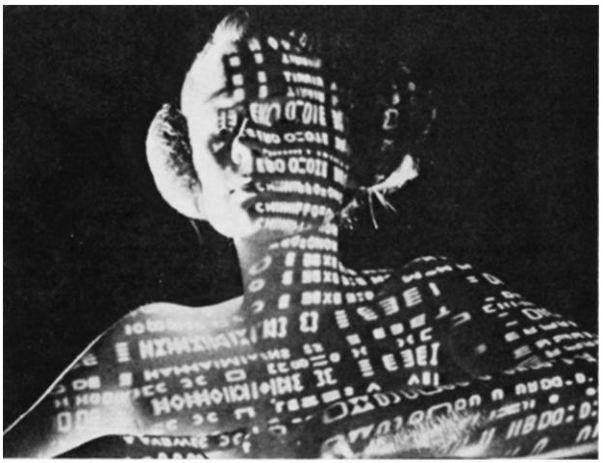
costumes, and music. Both juxtapose man's animal origins with his future. But whereas Kubrick keeps the brutes and the astronauts in distinct sections, Boorman fuses them in combat. Both films self-reflexively offer an analogue for man's development in their style, which surveys cinematic history. Kubrick moves from still photography to the techniques of silent movies in the "Dawn of Man" sequence, then plays with conventions from science fiction talkies in part two, before plunging into the experimental opticals of underground cinema in part three. Boorman mixes these techniques together, but significantly ends with family portraits; his final form is as reactionary as his message.

Zardoz affirms that film is a medium of light, and thus has an important capacity for teaching. Light is the source of all knowledge (the truth with which the Bible begins), and knowledge is a source of sexual power (a basic assumption in *Zardoz*). But before we get too enchanted with Boorman's artistic wizardry, let's take a closer look at what his crystal is implanting in our minds. For all its allusive richness, the film does not really make a breakthrough toward expanded consciousness (as in truly radical films like *El Topo* and *Performance*) for it lacks the transformational power; rather, it accumulates its sources almost mechanically, lining up conservative heavyweights like Swift and Eliot, as if building a case for a return to the past. The rejection of the utopian society is unconvincing. We believe it is sterile and depressing only because the characters tell us so, not because we experience it that way. Boorman is attacking a utopia like Skinner's *Walden Two,* which, in trying to control behavior and minimize risk and pain, actually eliminates the possibilities for growth and intensity. In forming an elite society totally cut off from the misery and violence experienced by the masses, the Eternals harden their hearts and lose their humanity; since their egalitarian society is based on the enslavement of others, they are bound to reap the consequences. There is much truth in this judgment, but is this limitation necessarily applicable to all movements toward social change? The Eternals live in a nonsexist, classless, communal society; why should these characteristics necessarily be associated with sterility and a loss of humanity? Only because Boorman imposes the connection. Significantly, when Friend releases the monster within him and rebels against the utopia, he shouts: "The Vortex is an obscenity, I hate all women." Suddenly we realize that the Vortex is an image associated with female sexuality and that the women seem to be in control. One suspects Friend's outburst may reflect Boorman's own attitudes. This film places him in a tradition of formidable misogynists (Swift, Mailer, Burroughs, Jodorowsky, Kubrick, Peckinpah) and in opposition to Plato, whose utopian Republic rejected the nuclear family and granted women equality as potential Philosopher Kings. In some ways, *Zardoz* is a polemical answer to the arguments of the Women's Movement, particularly as articulated by Susan Sontag in "The Third World of Women" (*Partisan Review,* vol. 2, 1973):

> To create a nonrepressive relation between women and men means to erase as far as possible the conventional demarcation lines that have been set up between the two sexes, to reduce the tension between women and men that arises from 'otherness'. . . . As 'otherness' is reduced, some of the energy of sexual attraction between the sexes will decline. Women and men will certainly continue to make love and to pair off in couples. But women and men will no longer *primarily* define each other as potential sexual partners. In a nonrepressive nonsexist society, sexuality will in one sense have a more important role than it has today—because it will be more diffused. Homosexual choices will be as valid and respectable as heterosexual choices; both will grow out of a genuine bisexuality. (Exclusive homosexuality—which, like exclusive heterosexuality, is learned—would be much less common in a nonsexist society than it is at present.) But in such a society, sexuality will in another sense be less important than it is now—because sexual relations will no longer by hysterically craved as a substitute for genuine freedom and for so many other pleasures (intimacy, intensity, feeling of belonging, blasphemy) which this society frustrates.

The forces of fascism and machismo, the "natural" attraction of opposites, and the institution of the nuclear family, which Boorman uses to destroy his utopia, are identified by Sontag as the primary sources of sexism in our society.

Boorman's argument for violent sexuality is impotent. He is incapable of turning us on in spite of ourselves, as Peckinpah was able to do



ZARDOZ

in *Straw Dogs,* demonstrating that these impulses are deeply ingrained in our nature; nor are his sadistic fantasies wildly imaginative or outrageously funny, as they sometimes are in the works of Mailer, Burroughs, and Jodorowsky. Rather, his sexual images are mechanical and mundane; our response is as apathetic as Zed's when he is confronted with pornography. The most extreme obscenity is the final massacre, which fails to convince us that death is liberating. Set on an elegant lawn, the orgiastic killings are paradoxical: as the bloody victims die happily, the pathetic exterminators mournfully call for their missing leader. (Zed is already preoccupied with his new followers—his wife Consuela and the son she is delivering.) This sequence is a failure, for we are enraged and sickened by the whole bloody mess and especially by the aesthetic pretentiousness with which it is presented. Although it evokes the theatrical lawn party massacre in *The Devils,* at least there Russell assigns the pleasure to the power-lovers. Unlike the final massacres in *The Wild Bunch, El Topo,* and *If,* this purgation does not convince us emotionally that it is essential for creating the new society. And unlike the final killings in *Performance* and *Steppenwolf,* these murders cannot be experienced as acts of love, leading to a merging of identities. They remain gratuitous acts of violence.

My response to *Zardoz* is paradoxical. I admire the visual artistry but reject the fascist vision. The crystal image, with its futuristic connections to lasers and its potential for infinite variety, is actually used to crystallize repression.

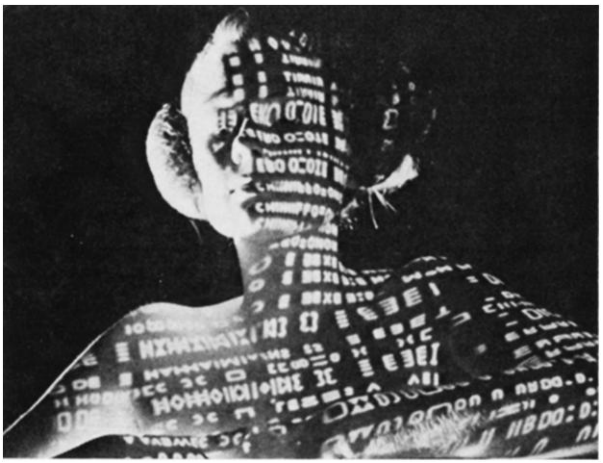
—MARSHA KINDER

PHANTOM INDIA

A film by Louis Malle. New Yorker Films.

As bewildered radicals, lacking in political (or any other) faith in the Nixon era, cast about for ways of understanding the world that promise to transcend or at least evade intolerable reality, it is natural that we once again encounter the East. Perhaps it began with the romance with the Vietnamese revolutionaries that is so hard to avoid when one has been in contact with them: What do they have that we don't? How explain their tenacity as against our impatience, their calmness under fire as against our paranoia, their optimism as against our despair? But the new journeys to the East have deeper roots than a passing political alignment; they flow from the revolt against materialism and technological reason, and from the communal—even spiritual—urges that once found a home in the movement and are now looking for more viable and less fratricidal places to rest. Increasingly what remains of the movement of the sixties divides between those for whom the East is Red (China is near and getting nearer all the time) and those for whom the East is God or Void, the "bou-oum" of the Malabar Caves come home to roost. In any case, passages to India these days are as common as trips to inner space; indeed they sometimes feel like *Drang nach Osten.* And they are just as complex, just as subjective, just as burdened by the personal and social past.

Louis Malle's *Phantom India* is a documentary in seven parts, lasting a total of almost six hours; it has been shown both on television and in theaters, and it comes to this country at a good time. Malle's passage began, he says, as a flight, a diversion; it became a quest. The classic *Bildungsroman;* and if Malle's ideas are finally inadequate to the camera, as the camera is finally inadequate to the material it seeks to record, he has still given us a useful first approximation to an honest Westerner's India. He refuses to let us have our simple Indias: he confronts the mystic with human wretchedness and exploitation, and the Marxist with undeniable spirituality. As long as the film can sustain this negative capability, this juxtaposition of the up-



ZARDOZ

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lifting and depressing, it is a useful antidote to easy attitudes.

Malle begins, like a good French intellectual, with his self-consciousness. The first 50-minute segment is called, appropriately, "The Impossible Camera," and it examines the nature of film as James Agee explored the nature of writing in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.* A peasant woman says the camera is an evil eye; Malle is embarrassed, but goes on filming. "To them we are men from Mars. . . . Our camera is a weapon and so they are afraid of us." Of others, he says, "They dance, I film, that's all there is to it." He denies he is selecting material; he is "just following the camera." Apparently it is not hard, in India, to blunder into the bizarre and the unspeakably sad. Workmen make 150 bricks for one rupee. There is a long, exquisitely disgusting segment of vultures feeding on the carcass of a water buffalo: a metaphor, communicated from the very steadiness of the camera, for the otherness of Indian reality. This in itself is a nice departure from the usual nervousness of the documentary camera. "When I look at the scene today," Malle says in his narration, "I realize we reacted according to our culture. For us it was tragedy, but for the Hindu it was only an everyday occurrence . . . a metaphor for life and death." Shortly after this ugliness—by using the word I reveal my culture; so be it—Malle shows us the ugliness of petty capitalism: "the old old story of exploitation." But there is clearly something extraordinary in this Indian material: of the Indians Malle says, "They live in the present, without past or future." Whether Malle means this in the laudatory sense of the counterculture is not clear, but he is at least intrigued. "So, here's your film," he concludes. "On the one hand, my little dream world; on the other, the harsh economic facts. Almost always the harsh reality comes out on top."

Malle seems aware of the risk he is taking, steering between total acceptance and his Cartesian skepticism. A risk is best illustrated with foils, and these Malle finds. Two French hippies have come to India in pursuit of holy mystery—and hashish. Two weeks later he meets them again. They can't cope with the climate, they have headaches and are constantly throwing up. They have decided to go back to France; their parents sent them the air fare; they didn't want to be treated in an Indian hospital. And then there is the Italian hippie who came to India to find what was missing in his intellectual life. He was looking for Gandhi, "but Gandhi and Gandhi's ideas are gone."

The first segment of *Phantom India* is the most successful precisely because it acknowledges that the camera is "impossible." Not being willing or able to penetrate the Indian consciousness, and not being satisfied with travelogue, Malle uses his own consciousness as the foil for Indian reality. The tension between his consciousness and the filmed material is what makes the film interesting; the narrative intervenes to avert travelogue whenever it rears its head, whenever the camera becomes too naive. Since his short sojourn prevents the kind of tension between opposed consciousnesses that animates a novel like *A Passage to India,* Malle resorts to another order of tension; this immediately sets his film apart from such superficial travelogues as Antonioni's TV film on China. But Malle's choice imposes a great burden on his own consciousness; should his ideas solidify and lose their suppleness, the film degenerates into a futile interplay between static images and stale ideas. This is ultimately what happens. India's demands on Malle's sensibility become too much for him, and he resorts to self-contradictory cliché. We can admire the audacity of his attempt and at the same time recognize that he was defeated. Susan Sontag and Mary McCarthy have written astonishing books on North Vietnam precisely because the Vietnamese reality opens them like wounds: opens them to the limits and costs of their own exquisitely Western consciousness. Malle opens himself just so far and then slams the door.

In segments two through seven, Malle repeatedly falls back on his subjectivity, but now that we are alerted to the fact that he insists on his subjectivity, it proves less interesting. He finds himself in a Madras crowd celebrating a temple. His fear melts into ecstasy. "For a time I forgot who I was." Rationally he knows this is the opium of the masses, "but for five hours I lived by instinct, not reason. Time vanished." This

tells us more about Malle than about the meaning and configuration of the ritual, but not much about either: for might he not lose himself in a political demonstration as well, let's say, or a Catholic mass? Finally, he says, "we were intruders in a world to which we could never belong," but by then the point is obvious. In this manner his consciousness disengages from India. He becomes a shower and teller, no longer a film essayist—and, granted this is a difficult form, rarely achieved—he is reduced to pure *vérité*. At the beginning of segment four he tells us he spent whole days without shooting: "It was no longer important." What had become important, presumably, was the journey of Malle's psyche; but he does not let us in. (A similar thing seems to have happened to Allen Ginsberg in his *Indian Journals;* but Ginsberg has a vocabulary and method for defining his subjectivity, so the book becomes interesting as a representation of Ginsberg. But Malle withdraws his psyche from our view, leaving us with prettified images.)

With the disappearance of Malle's tension with his images there appears Malle the commentator, the producer of opinions. He does not play his sensibility off his images, but presents his attitudes, mostly political. Some of these are interesting and some are execrable, some I happen to agree with and others I happen not to. The worth of his attitudes—and I will get to them in a moment—is somewhat beside the point. The point is that the attitudes are no longer grounded in Malle's journey and become a way of extricating himself from it. I do not mean this too harshly: it may be that the reality of India for a basically rationalist Westerner is so bizarre and imponderable that it would throw anyone back on attitudes. But this lessens the film, reduces it from that very difficult film essay to a travelogue with superimposed opinions. The camera has become all too possible.

One consequence of the creeping possibility of the camera—perhaps the film-maker's bane—is that India is oddly despiritualized. The very clarity of images, the separateness of shape and color, is at odds with what F. S. C. Northrop calls the "undifferentiated aesthetic continuum"

PHANTOM INDIA

of the East. (In her essay on North Vietnam Mary McCarthy also wrote very convincingly about the Western novelist's consciousness, which makes much of differences between people, places, situations, moods, appearances, and the Vietnamese "collectivist"—but also Buddhist—insistence on underlying unities.) To show the odd contortions of a Yogi is not to enter into the consciousness of the Yogi. Without being able to enter, Malle falls back on mere opinions. Presumably he is very skeptical of the ashram's claims to be ushering in world peace, as he has every right to be; but this is to short-change the Yogi, who has, perhaps, his own definition. To dispute the definition is one thing, and permissible, but it is all the more compelling to do so when the consciousness can be entered into on its own terms—if only to extricate oneself from it. When E. M. Forster, at the end of *A Passage to India,* tells us that the Indian and the Englishman must go their own separate ways, this is credible and meaningful precisely because we have entered the skulls of both men. Malle's judgments about the political future of India are easily discounted because he does not ground them in his own human experience.

A major exception to this lack in Malle's approach is the fifth segment, "A Look at the Castes." He *shows* us, with images, precisely what he found objectionable about the caste system, and uses narration to extrapolate from images. Thus the untouchable children, who are not allowed to eat food in the village school, *look* unhappy. The caste system emerges as the foundation of Indian spirituality, or at least a system logically inseparable from the fabric of

Indian religious ideas; Malle could have said more about the basis of Hinduism in the belief in inescapable *karma,* which logically justifies caste. This segment ends with Malle's most pointed political critique of Indian "democracy." He shows us a village meeting which looks, at first, impeccably democratic. The villagers in attendance seem involved. "At first," says Malle, "I was much impressed. I was seeing direct democracy in action." But he observes that untouchables and women are not present. The meeting turns to consider an important matter: the village headman has been accused of embezzlement. The inquiry gets nowhere. It turns out that the local civil servant, in charge of such matters, is a friend of the headman. "I gradually perceive that beneath the cloak of democracy is an institution that belongs to rich farmers." The observation is grounded in—though not wholly determined by—the observed images; the tension between narrative and image returns.

The next segment, "On the Fringes of Indian Society," reveals the fragility, even the repulsiveness, of some of Malle's ideas. A group of intermarrying Jews is called "decadent" because they sequester themselves from the rest of Indian society—an odd word, to say the least, considering that some 1800 caste divisions also sequester themselves and are not called decadent for that reason. After a short visit to the ashram of rich Western devotees who believe themselves saviors of the world—"Maybe they're right," says Malle in the depths of his confusion—he takes us to what he calls an "ideal society of villagers." They have no wars, no laws, no weapons. The eight hundred of them have resisted missionaries, the English, tourists—and film-makers. They have, Malle says, "sexual freedom." The women are sexually "initiated" by "experienced" men at age thirteen—he does not say how the men are "initiated." Women are apparently common property, and are given to kissing the feet of men—but not vice versa. Malle does not comment on this inequity in what he calls a "perfect society": he merely nostalgically observes that the villagers will soon be evicted, as their land has been taken for turpentine cultivation. Later on, he interviews a Western-trained economist and refers to her, condescendingly, as "this very pretty young woman." With such images of "the ideal society" versus "decadence," it is fair to say that Malle should not allow himself to indulge his attitudes.

The last segment deals with Bombay, but too briefly. "The dire poverty of India you can never get used to," but Malle shows us little of it, and his color camera prettifies even those who sleep on the pavement. In his *Calcutta,* made from footage shot on the same trip, we of course see plenty of poverty, but in *Phantom India* Malle pays little attention to the Indian millions who live and suffer in cities. Having finally penetrated Bombay, he is already preparing to wrap up the film. And here the thinness of his attitudes, already severely stretched, breaks apart. The masses are wretched. Rightwing demagogues thrive. The Communists, rigidly trained by the British party, hopelessly middle-class and splintered, are out of touch with Indian culture: "They need a Mao Tse-tung."

What is left to say? The traditional society, Malle sums up, is doomed by inevitable industrialization, "which brings with it the exploitation of man by his fellow man." He has just observed that the new bourgeoisie is "comfortable enough to feel nostalgia," yet here is Malle indulging in the same. To argue that it is industrialization that brings exploitation is to forget his own earlier observations on the horrors of the caste system, on the exploitation of peasants, the poverty and starvation that everywhere leer at the Western optimist. Pressed to produce a moral, a message, Malle falls back on the classical mistake: if the new is bad, the old must be good. The wistfulness of his call for an Indian Mao dissolves in a soup of back-glancing. This is an understandable response to the sheer horror of the Indian present, but it does not clarify Indian possibilities. It is no wonder that American middle-class viewers talk afterwards in the lobby about how nice it would be to visit India.

Perhaps, as a friend of mine says, all political films fail—fail to generate action, or even understanding, in accord with the desires of the film-maker. But they should at least clarify choices, help us to understand the stakes and the risks of each choice, and if ambivalence is the final feeling, then let the audience make the

most of it. Such ambivalence must be fertile, rich, and clear. Malle's too often is not. The medium has lent itself to travelogue, which has overwhelmed whatever the message was supposed to be. And yet the travelogue of faces and settings is itself untrue to the spirit of India, except insofar as it points to the otherness of the phantom. Malle therefore ends up with neither his own consciousness nor India's. The images are too clear for the reality, and the ideas not clear enough. To the extent that Malle's vantage point is explicit, it is stale with nostalgia for an ideal which is either impossibly vague or tendentious. After six hours of film, Malle's conclusions remain vague and flabby.

The difficulty is perhaps with the form Malle has adopted. Documentary without point of view must rest, for its force, on the capacity of consciousness to distill sharp conclusions from the material. Granted that this is difficult when the camera is invading an alien reality: indeed, a reality which does not claim even to be "real." Malle is at his best in extracting meaning, or meaninglessness (another form of meaning), from detail. Here his consciousness is interesting enough to make his reactions plausible, to take us into them. We may then, if prohibited from entering into Indian reality, still enter into Malle's consciousness, identifying with the agonies of the film-maker who tries to make sense of the ineffable. Perhaps it is not only the camera that is impossible, it is conclusion itself. If that is so, Malle should have had the courage of his lack of conviction. Instead of grasping at straws, he should have thrown up his hands.

—TODD GITLIN

THE EXORCIST

Director: William Friedkin. Producer and scriptwriter: William Peter Blatty. Photography: Owen Roizman. Warners.

The Exorcist is the trash bombshell of 1973, the aesthetic equivalent of being run over by a truck. Evidently a lot of people think that great art is supposed to be like this; if it shocks them, it must be brilliant. The movie is shocking all right—the press has been full of stories about fainting, vomiting, fleeing viewers—but you'd have to be a block of wood not to be shocked by the spectacle of a child systematically turned into a yellow-eyed, slime-spewing, head-swivelling monster. Despite their pontificating about Greek tragedy, the mystery of faith, and Good vs. Evil, director William Friedkin and writer-producer William Peter Blatty have actually made a gloating, ugly exploitation picture, a costlier cousin of those ghoulish cheapies released to drive-ins and fleapits almost weekly in major American cities.

The movie is said to be based on a case that occurred in 1949, during which a Catholic priest supposedly cast out an evil spirit from an afflicted boy (shrewdly changed to a girl on screen). There are plenty of similar cases on record, and even clergymen tend to be very cautious about calling them demonic possession. But Friedkin and Blatty aren't about to undercut their meal ticket with doubts; except for one nonsensical red herring (her parents' divorce), they laboriously discredit all other explanations for the girl's condition. The neglectful actress-mother? No—we get scenes of her and daughter Regan being affectionate towards each other. The wild parties? Hardly—they're too sedate. Disease? Mental illness? No way—the doctors draw a blank (though not before Friedkin milks a bloody medical procedure in the most revolting way possible), and the shrinks are snotty, double-talking charlatans. The film-makers use these dumb caricatures in place of probing questions. They aren't awed or even troubled by mystery; either emotion would slow down their steamroller.

The movie ruthlessly manipulates the most primitive fears and prejudices of the audience. Reactionaries who want to return to that old-time religion can have their beleagured beliefs shored up by this circus of horrors. They can quake because Satan will get them, too, if they don't toe the line, and they can grin because the pointy-headed intellectuals can't solve the enigma. Sexuality becomes vile and nauseating—Beelzebub's wickedest art—yet luridly thrilling, so that clods will be able both to moralize and to drool over Regan's gushing four-letter words and her gory masturbation with a crucifix. Won't De Mille ever die? Very likely Friedkin him-

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self doesn't really believe in the evil of sex, but then he doesn't seem to believe in anything except reducing the audience to jelly at all costs. His cynicism is cold and deep.

Even more sophisticated viewers may be unable to resist. Plenty of lapsed Catholics are still emotionally tied to the Church; plenty of others have justifiable misgivings about the priest-like roles of scientists and psychiatrists in modern society. Friedkin's pile-driving direction can pulverize them along with the yahoos, the teeny-boppers, and the plastic mystics; he's ecumenical, if nothing else. So is true believer Blatty, who supplies the film's theological pretensions. In his messianic stupidity, he seeks to infect the audience with anxiety and guilt by dragging it through a charnal house, all in the name of God and faith. The joke is that, theologically, the movie is idiotic. It makes empty abstractions of goodness and evil; and as for faith, faith in what? In a God who allows an innocent girl to be tortured? (Another of His Unsearchable Ways, perhaps?) Blatty's faith evidently derives from fear of hell rather than love of God. Besides, faith by definition means belief despite the absence of proof, a glaring contradiction of his lumbering efforts to certify the existence of demons. Since the movie hasn't a shred of feeling for spirituality, its violent effects have no meaning; they're just cattle prods.

They're also largely unoriginal; precedents include the vaginal mutilation of *Cries and Whispers,* the demonism of *The Devils* and *Mother Joan of the Angels,* the occult hocus-pocus of *Child's Play, Rosemary's Baby,* and *El Topo,* the triple-distilled slaughter of *Night of the Living Dead.* Even Blatty's surprise ending—the exorcist taking the devil into his own body— appeared ten years ago in *Mother Joan,* where it remains an eloquent statement about the power of love. Friedkin's version is just grisly sensationalism, the climax of a black mass.

In such circumstances, the actors—among them Max von Sydow, Ellen Burstyn, and Lee J. Cobb—can do little. Playwright Jason Miller has an impressive presence, massive and saturnine, in the title role; but, joined to Blatty's hackneyed writing, it only makes the character's loss of faith look like constipation. And after Regan's charming early moments, the make-up, the gimmicks, and the dubbed voice of Mercedes McCambridge turn Linda Blair's performance into a film technician's Frankenstein. The real star of this sickening exhibition is Friedkin, and it's hard to imagine how he can be taken seriously any more. The reservations that many had about his sandblasting suspense technique in *The French Connection* have certainly been borne out by *The Exorcist.* He has become a directional demagogue, bringing in the sheep and chortling backstage. Why try to be a mere artist when you can have power like this?

—MICHAEL DEMPSEY

Short Notices

The Marshal (episode #6211 of the *Rifleman* TV series). I recently had the extraordinary experience of showing Sam Peckinpah's *Ride the High Country* to a University of Washington film class and then going home to discover an ancestor of sorts on television. Knowing that Peckinpah had worked on *The Rifleman,* among other shows, and noticing that Warren Oates and James Drury were listed in the cast of that evening's program, I tuned in. The episode indeed proved to be a Peckinpah: teleplay, direction, and a co-credit for story. A crucial installment in the development of the series, it introduced regular-to-be Paul Fix as Micah Torrance, a once-renowned lawman who had managed to live long enough to take off his badge—but only by losing his nerve and taking to the bottle. Torrance comes to the attention of Lucas McCain (Chuck Connors) and the marshal, played by R. G. Armstrong *(Ride the High Country, Major Dundee, Cable Hogue, Pat Garrett),* and McCain sets about rehabilitating him by putting him to work on his ranch. About that time, Oates and brother Robert J. Wilke appear, hot on Torrance's trail and determined to repay him for shooting them up in the line of duty some years previous. Drury, who played the least depraved of the Hammond boys in *Ride the High Country,* rides into town with them but pretends to only a loose affiliation; he affects a mellifluous manner and mocks their illiteracy—they are clearly akin to such "damn drygulchin' Southern trash" as the Hammonds and the Strother Martin–L. Q. Jones type in later Peckinpah—while setting about the seduction of Marshal Armstrong's niece. If Drury's motivation is ever declared, I missed it; but, at any rate,

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Ordinary Tenderness. This French Canadian film builds up a considerable intensity not so much of feeling as of presence—the presence of unspoken relationships between people, of unanalyzed responses to the circumstances of life. Jocelyn and Esther are a young couple who live in a small town in southern Quebec, but he works for months at a time at a mining community up north in the wilds of Labrador. As the film opens, he is beginning the long journey home—by train down to the St. Lawrence, then by car and ferry. The script, by Robert Tremblay, quite simply intercuts this journey with scenes of Esther and her friend Bernadette and with flashbacks of Jocelyn's and Esther's everyday life together. The only weaknesses of the film stem from Tremblay's and director Jacques Leduc's determination to avoid inflated sentiment. LeDuc occasionally holds a scene too long, forcing its expansive stillness into paralysis. Tremblay ends the film before Jocelyn arrives home, no doubt to avoid a climactic joyfulness that would mask the necessity of future partings; but in so doing he gives the impression that Jocelyn is in no hurry to see his wife. Otherwise, the film is remarkable for an eloquent naturalness which breaks free on the one hand from flat documentation and on the other hand from a forced selection of "meaningful" detail. There is a superb sense of Canadian geography—not as local color, but as a setting and climate which shapes people's lives, separates them, brings them together. Throughout, frozen landscapes make a dynamic contrast with warm interiors. An aerial shot of the train crawling like a caterpillar through a white and evergreen wilderness is followed by a close-up of Jocelyn sitting comfortably inside. Later, the car in which Jocelyn is riding has a flat, and he steps out in a misty, glacial world of white and pale blue. The warmest scenes in the film are of his destination: the kitchen where Esther and Bernadette make a cake for his arrival, and the dining room where they eat oranges and play with words, lingering on the cozy verb "dorloter" (fondle, coddle). One or two scenes suggest that the opposition of outside and inside, cold and warm, extends to the French Canadians' sense of being surrounded by a powerful majority with a different language and traditions. As the title implies, however, the film sets out above all to make us aware of people. Tremblay and Leduc do this with quiet brilliance, showing no fear that the sparseness of conflict and incident might seem boring or banal. The result is a most extraordinary tenderness indeed.

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Speaking Directly: Some American Notes, Jon Jost's latest film and first feature, is highly cinematic anti-cinema. More purposefully than Godard, Jost uses the power of film to challenge our media-based, societally fostered perceptions of ourselves and our surroundings. He does so not by haphazardly attacking the standard forms of film, but by creating an entirely new form—the filmed self-portrait. By continually reminding us that the film we are watching is a man-made construct, Jost is at the same time able to indicate clearly that the interpretations he arrives at in his films are his own, and are not natural laws. This subjective quality of self-

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portrait form enables Jost to reject the to him questionable objectivity of film (and other media) in general, without simultaneously rejecting his own work. Of course, the self-portrait form as Jost has developed it does not of necessity entail an attack on the media; but it is because he wished to examine and communicate his views on the media that Jost found particular media-conscious form appropriate. He probes layer after layer of experience, from the most impersonal to those we consider most intimate, from physical reality through economic, political, cultural, social, and sexual definitions of the world, until he emerges almost on the other side of the individual, recognizing not only how we are all separated, but how we may be all united. All of these levels of existence are themselves presented on two leveles—what the media tell us about the world outside, and what we (represented by the subject and maker of this film) experience personally. The physical reality of bombs falling over Vietnam—a kind of lethal but now almost natural precipitation—is rapidly presented in its endlessness as a contrast to Jost's own peaceful Oregon valley homesite. The contrast in the Vietnam sequence is amplified by parallel sound tracks carrying on the one hand a factual history of the war and on the other a personal story of its effects by a Vietnamese girl—again, the public version and the private in conflict. This depth of contrast, of exploration of issues through the contradictions inherent in them, carries through the rest of the work as well, in styles tailored to the particular subject matter of the individual sequences. In the end, Jost's analytical approach provides us with more than a glimpse of a highly aroused, energetic, and very human being caught in the trap of a self-deceiving society. This is the ultimate contrast of Jost's work—that this same humanity of the film-maker, revealed to us by his very analytical mechanistic approach, is the force which makes that approach work and work powerfully. Out of elements of contradiction and disunity, Jost has fashioned an integrated whole far superior to the sum of its already considerable parts.
Route 3, Box 212, Valispell, Mont. 59901

—PIERRE G. DUNN

Tupamaros! is a 50-minute color documentary centering around many of the same incidents portrayed in semi-fiction style in *State of Siege,* made for Swedish television by Jan Lindqvist with the aid of the Uruguayan liberation movement known popularly as the Tupamaros. Not only is it impossible to say of this documentary what some might of the Costa-Gavras film —that it's "just a movie," and thus easily dismissable— but its manner of editing, presentation, and remarkable footage combine to create a gut-wrenching political reality that is difficult to escape. *State of Siege* concentrated on the kidnaping of the US agent Dan Mitrione. *Tupamaros!* mentions that central action but fills in a lot of details about the revolutionary movement in Uruguay at the time (since the film was first distributed last year, the remains of the Tupamaro organization have been pushed even further underground), why it exists, how it works, and its magnetic enchantment for a wide segment of society, from workers to students to professionals to members of the legislature itself. The tactic that originally made the Tupamaros famous worldwide was their widespread use of political kidnaping. Not for ransom, as seems the style today in all too many cases, but for education. They would kidnap rightwing politicians and editors, incarcerate them in a People's Prison (in reality, a few cells in a jail-like basement) and attempt to educate them. Their aim was not to convert their political enemies to socialism but to convince them that the National Liberation Movement in Uruguay was not a band of criminal terrorists out for kicks—which is how the government wants the people to think of the Tupamaros—but a serious, dedicated, humanitarian, well-educated and imminently strong alternative to the present system that is dominated by a few hundred wealthy families in cahoots with U.S. government and banking interests. With the full cooperation of the Tupamaros, Lindqvist was able to shoot within the People's Prison, including interviews with some of the rightwing prisoners. One politician, Pereira Reverbel, was kidnapped, then released after a few months. But when he proceeded to denounce the Tupamaros as petty criminals, they kidnapped him again. This time he stayed for 11 months. When he got out, his attitude was considerably different, even to the extent of admitting the necessity for drastic social reform. It is fascinating footage. There is also intercut footage of an interview with a Tupamaro spokesman, his face concealed, who explains the background and tactics of the movement—how it engineered its famous mass-escapes from prison, how it responded to the Death Squad (organized by the authorities with rightwing help to assassinate prominent leftists), what its future flexible plans are.

Though obviously dated in some spots, *Tupamaros* could serve as a valuable primer for many so-called revolutionaries in America today, helping them get their diarrhea together. (Available from Tricontinental Film Center, 244 W. 27th Street, NYC, 10001.)

—BERNARD WEINER

A Very Curious Girl begins in the muck and squalor of a French farmyard, but within minutes the drunken village officials are falling all over themselves to bury

[cont'd. on inside back cover]

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Tupamaros! is a 50-minute color documentary centering around many of the same incidents portrayed in semi-fiction style in *State of Siege,* made for Swedish television by Jan Lindqvist with the aid of the Uruguayan liberation movement known popularly as the Tupamaros. Not only is it impossible to say of this documentary what some might of the Costa-Gavras film —that it's "just a movie," and thus easily dismissable— but its manner of editing, presentation, and remarkable footage combine to create a gut-wrenching political reality that is difficult to escape. *State of Siege* concentrated on the kidnaping of the US agent Dan Mitrione. *Tupamaros!* mentions that central action but fills in a lot of details about the revolutionary movement in Uruguay at the time (since the film was first distributed last year, the remains of the Tupamaro organization have been pushed even further underground), why it exists, how it works, and its magnetic enchantment for a wide segment of society, from workers to students to professionals to members of the legislature itself. The tactic that originally made the Tupamaros famous worldwide was their widespread use of political kidnaping. Not for ransom, as seems the style today in all too many cases, but for education. They would kidnap rightwing politicians and editors, incarcerate them in a People's Prison (in reality, a few cells in a jail-like basement) and attempt to educate them. Their aim was not to convert their political enemies to socialism but to convince them that the National Liberation Movement in Uruguay was not a band of criminal terrorists out for kicks—which is how the government wants the people to think of the Tupamaros—but a serious, dedicated, humanitarian, well-educated and imminently strong alternative to the present system that is dominated by a few hundred wealthy families in cahoots with U.S. government and banking interests. With the full cooperation of the Tupamaros, Lindqvist was able to shoot within the People's Prison, including interviews with some of the rightwing prisoners. One politician, Pereira Reverbel, was kidnapped, then released after a few months. But when he proceeded to denounce the Tupamaros as petty criminals, they kidnapped him again. This time he stayed for 11 months. When he got out, his attitude was considerably different, even to the extent of admitting the necessity for drastic social reform. It is fascinating footage. There is also intercut footage of an interview with a Tupamaro spokesman, his face concealed, who explains the background and tactics of the movement—how it engineered its famous mass-escapes from prison, how it responded to the Death Squad (organized by the authorities with rightwing help to assassinate prominent leftists), what its future flexible plans are.

Though obviously dated in some spots, *Tupamaros* could serve as a valuable primer for many so-called revolutionaries in America today, helping them get their diarrhea together. (Available from Tricontinental Film Center, 244 W. 27th Street, NYC, 10001.)

—BERNARD WEINER

A Very Curious Girl begins in the muck and squalor of a French farmyard, but within minutes the drunken village officials are falling all over themselves to bury

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portrait form enables Jost to reject the to him questionable objectivity of film (and other media) in general, without simultaneously rejecting his own work. Of course, the self-portrait form as Jost has developed it does not of necessity entail an attack on the media; but it is because he wished to examine and communicate his views on the media that Jost found particular media-conscious form appropriate. He probes layer after layer of experience, from the most impersonal to those we consider most intimate, from physical reality through economic, political, cultural, social, and sexual definitions of the world, until he emerges almost on the other side of the individual, recognizing not only how we are all separated, but how we may be all united. All of these levels of existence are themselves presented on two leveles—what the media tell us about the world outside, and what we (represented by the subject and maker of this film) experience personally. The physical reality of bombs falling over Vietnam—a kind of lethal but now almost natural precipitation—is rapidly presented in its endlessness as a contrast to Jost's own peaceful Oregon valley homesite. The contrast in the Vietnam sequence is amplified by parallel sound tracks carrying on the one hand a factual history of the war and on the other a personal story of its effects by a Vietnamese girl—again, the public version and the private in conflict. This depth of contrast, of exploration of issues through the contradictions inherent in them, carries through the rest of the work as well, in styles tailored to the particular subject matter of the individual sequences. In the end, Jost's analytical approach provides us with more than a glimpse of a highly aroused, energetic, and very human being caught in the trap of a self-deceiving society. This is the ultimate contrast of Jost's work—that this same humanity of the film-maker, revealed to us by his very analytical mechanistic approach, is the force which makes that approach work and work powerfully. Out of elements of contradiction and disunity, Jost has fashioned an integrated whole far superior to the sum of its already considerable parts.
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the young heroine's mother for the promise of a lay, and you know you're outside the limits of reality and into the freedom of fantasy. That's the strength of this film about a young indigent who turns her position of dependence into the enslavement of her oppressors. Marie is completely free of the restrictions most of us live by —social, economic, psychological, sexual. She is completely outside the normal bounds of society. Wielding her sex with a blithe contempt for social taboos and a child's delight at the power it brings, she completely confounds the village bumpkins who have been preying on her. Soon her little shack blossoms with a jolly collection of symbols of her sexual triumphs. The power company is laying in electricity. Travelling salesmen from far and wide beat a path to her door. The village elders are moved to take action against the scandal: they'll organize a boycott to force down her prices. Meanwhile their wives plead with the priest; their husbands are perpetually exhausted and they're afraid to let their sons out of doors. But Marie is a match for the collective craft of the lot of them. One by one they are snared by their own lust or stupidity until she has reduced them to a horde of vindictive children trashing the junk she's left behind. She, of course, is off for a rendezvous with the only catch among the men in the film, the one person who has treated her with respect or intelligence—an outsider and, significantly, the man who brings the monthly movies into town. This ending might be viewed as too easy an out by those who want to read the film as a tract for the new woman (I saw it during a Women in Media Festival in Berkeley). After all, Marie falls for precisely the kind of man that women have always been portrayed as falling for—strong, sensitive, independent, no different from generations of movie heroes. But to ask for radical solutions from this film is to ask for more than it is prepared to offer. It's a fantasy. Marie is a witch and her attraction for us is based on unabashedly vindictive wish fulfillment.

Nelly Kaplan has managed, with tremendous wit and intelligence, to make what could have been a grim, didactic story thoroughly enjoyable. Her portrayal of the villagers is a devastating combination of understanding and contempt. Behind the stock characters of the mayor, game warden, local medicine man, and priest (the not-so-stock lesbian farmer is one of the boys by virtue of the fact that she owns more land than the mayor) are generations of superstition, wiliness, greed, self-complacency, and lust. It is a tribute to Kaplan's intelligence that she takes this heritage seriously. And it's a tribute to her audacious sense of humor that her heroine is able to twist it so securely around her little finger. —DORIS KRETSCHMER

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