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THE COVER: Bette Davis as the dowager-countess in *The Scapegoat*, produced by Michael Balcon, directed by Robert Hamer, and co-starring Alec Guinness (MGM will distribute).

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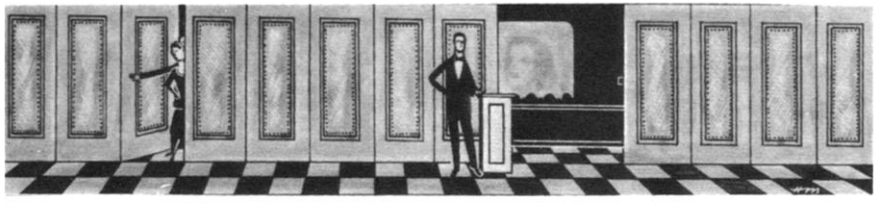

Editor's Notebook

Film Quarterly is a journal dedicated to the hypothesis that a body of serious critical thought about films is possible, and that such a development would be both useful and enjoyable.

But in sober fact, as we note in our review of *Film: Book 1* in this issue, there is little if any coherent development taking place in film writing at the moment. No major new viewpoints have been propounded recently; no central concerns have evolved; and in fact nobody is paying much attention to anybody else.

There was a time when the film attracted the attention of a strangely assorted and energetically thoughtful body of men (Arnheim, Spottiswoode, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Grierson, Rotha) who found it a subject of immense interest and whose curiosity about it knew no bounds. They roughed out a critical vocabulary for the new medium and described certain of its basic strategies. During the thirties, also, film was dealt with seriously by many writers because of its supposed propagandistic potentialities.

The situation now is, to say the least, very different.

1957 saw the appearance, or rather reappearance, of two major film books: Arnheim's *Film as Art* and a combined edition of Eisenstein's *Film Form* and *The Film Sense*. (Both were paperbacks.) Two original titles appeared also: Arthur Knight's *The Liveliest Art*, which although somewhat undiscriminating will serve as a general introduction to the art for young people just becoming interested in it; and *Novels into Film*, by George Bluestone, an exploration of the relationship between film and literature.

This was also the pattern of 1958. *Agee on Film* and *Rotha on Film* are both compilations of material originally published many years ago. As to original work, it centered on the erotic interest of films, with volumes like Ado Kyrou's *Amour-Erotisme et Cinéma* and Lo Duca's *L'Erotisme au Cinéma*, to which the Danes add *Erotik for Milioner*, by Ove Brusendorff.

More encouragingly, several new film periodicals began publishing in 1958. Aside from *Film Quarterly* they are *Filmfacts*, a weekly composed of credits and review excerpts (New York), *F*, a general quarterly (Frankfurt am Main), and *Flashback*, an occasional publication amassing articles and filmographies on selected directors (Buenos Aires). On the other hand, one periodical, *Film Culture*, ceased regular publication. And film periodicals as a whole display no real sense of direction. *Sight & Sound*, though indubitably the best-informed and best-written film magazine in the world, has lost a good deal of its verve. *Cahiers du Cinéma*, though it has plenty of verve and sometimes prints admirable interviews, tends to grotesque critical enthusiasms (the latest is Ava Gardner). Not reading Russian, we cannot give any estimate of *Iskusstvo Kino* except to say that it is abominably printed but has space for lengthy articles. (Some translations might be in order?) Of *Films in Review*, with its "uncorrupted" film reviews, nothing printable need be said.

The impression gained from the past year's output of new film writing is that the medium is now primarily of interest as the focus of a declining industry, a source of ingenious titillations, and the means of expression of scattered

and unrelated new talents. To the stagnation of the medium since the filmed play assumed dominance, we the critics are replying only by piecemeal analysis, haphazard complaint, and half-hearted enthusiasms. A whole body of writing deals with film entirely in terms of sociological implications, and a considerable number of writers have stopped saying anything about films at all. It is no accident that the pugnacity of *The Film Till Now* has given way to the blandness of *The Liveliest Art*.

This curious malaise is doubtless to a large extent only a reflection of a larger cultural paralysis to which the cinema and its hangers-on are, by the fact of the medium's mass base, especially sensitive. Similar developments are, certainly, not unknown to the stage, to popular journalism, even to poetry.

Also, as in politics, the original inspiration of the film's partisans has been steadily eroded away by events. The first flush of recognition of the new art form was fronted down by the thoroughness of its prostitution to commercial ends. The discovery that film was a considerable force for public guidance and education turned sour upon the realization that in the Soviet Union, where such uses were paramount, film became only another weapon in the hands of the bureaucracy. The hope that experimental productions might turn the film into an altogether novel and extraordinary plastic art withered from public apathy and, perhaps, some mysterious scarcity of talents. Documentary film, seemingly a new genre that might revivify the film world, failed to discover its own techniques of dramatization and ended as an instrument of war propaganda or as film narrowly educational.

What remained was the studio filmed play, dressed up from time to time with color, widescreen, and Method. To it one can pay the same kind of attention as to the popular stage play, and occasional works appear that are worth a good deal of this kind of attention. But it is not film, any more than a concrete tree trunk is wood—though it may look all right as a garden decoration.

Yet even in such circumstances as these, there are basic questions about film that no critic can shirk. These are the questions that must be dealt with in some way or other before any art form can be properly understood. Answers to these questions, explicit or implicit, underlie everything that can be said about the cinema. They define both the critic's basic attitude and his technical procedures—whether he is discussing film as exemplified by one picture or discussing the whole significance of film's historical development.

Because they are fundamental questions, they largely set the terms of debate; and one reason why there is little significant debate among film critics is that we have neglected to think about them—or, worse, imagined that we need not think about them.

The questions are simple and terrifying and inescapable:

What are the ends that films should pursue? (*What "statements" should they make, what things should they show, what effects should they strive for?*)

What are proper filmic means to those ends? (*What are the strategies of film art, what distinguishes successful devices from the others?*)

What film-makers are making or have made films as they should be made, and how have they done it?

(*What is the nature of the talents and conditions which make film flourish?*)

These are, it will be said, too-large questions, to which no one should presume to give answers. —On the contrary, unless critics deal with them, as individuals, no meaningful cultural answers can arise.

These are, it will be said, abstract questions whose answers would throw no really useful light. —On the contrary, their abstractness is precisely why their answers *would* throw useful light. The questions are there, with all their fearful concrete implications, whether we answer them or not. And good answers, we assume, would be written with much reference to

[*continued on page 65*]

real situations and existing films. (We are always looking for such answers embodied in articles for *Film Quarterly*.)

These are, it will be said, academic questions whose answers cannot affect the commercial or bureaucratic control of film production. —On the contrary, a body of critical opinion seriously addressing these questions would certainly affect the best film-makers, perhaps the alertest of the controllers, and indirectly even the public itself.

In any case, without attempting to deal with these basic issues we cannot pretend to any serious comprehension of film art, and must remain dilettantes, however elegant our postures. Ours are tentative times, certainly, and it is easier to write articles commenting on film-makers or film-making trends, leaving our answers to these difficult problems well in the background, than it is to commit oneself to a straight answer. (We all applauded Lindsay Anderson's bravery for issuing his manifesto, "Stand up, stand up!" in *Sight & Sound*—though his answers too were somewhat roundabout.)

Also, no doubt, we fear to be taken as dictating to artists, whom we often regard as irrational but wonderful beings who, if we dared tinker with them, might rush off to a psychoanalyst, taking their beautiful toys with them. Well, film-makers are tough, or they would not be able to endure film-making; and it is time we critics got tougher.

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COLIN YOUNG

The Hollywood War of Independence

The problems of the independent film-maker, trying to register some personal declaration on film, are especially acute in the United States. On the following pages we deal with some of the men who are trying to cut their way through the gloss and timidity and conventions of Hollywood.

Last summer Paramount's new family drama with Anthony Quinn and Sophia Loren, *The Black Orchid,* was one of the American entries at Cannes. Much to everyone's surprise Miss Loren won the best actress award, and perhaps to his own surprise its young director, Martin Ritt, found himself agreeing with the Hollywood reactionaries who argue that Hollywood films should not be sent to European film festivals. "They do not understand the circumstances surrounding a major studio in Hollywood," he told me recently. "Several European directors assured me that they did not feel they were working in a mass medium, making films for a mass audience. I, in turn, assured them that if I forgot my mass audience for a moment, I would be out of a job."

In the United States a studio must hope to recover most or all of its costs within the domestic market. This represents the least specialized audience in the world (as we all know there is nothing special about being an American) and there is a constant temptation, almost always succumbed to, to level everything down to the lowest common denominator. In such conditions there is little chance that an individual film-maker will produce a personal work. Almost always an American film is edited, not by the director, but by the studio—often in committee. It is not difficult to understand why. When several million dollars are at stake a responsible business will rarely rely on the opinion of one man. Other opinions, often outside opinions, will be sought. And each time such an opinion is applied to a film, it becomes to that extent less and less the director's personal statement. The Screen Directors' Guild in Hollywood in recent years has added a clause to its standard contract requiring a producer to grant the director right of first cut. But this is often no more than a formality. (There was a recent case in which the director's version of a film was seen only by him and his editor before it was taken apart again to be run, uncut, for the producers.) And with the current trend to larger budgets, based on the hypothesis that a larger investment is less risky than a smaller one, it is likely that less and less control will be left in the hands of a director, unless he is by age or experience or perhaps by financial participation powerful enough to have a controlling interest.

But it seems we can hardly expect much from the old masters. Only Ford is resisting the outright flight to the billion-dollar production, and his last film, *The Last Hurrah,* had an ominous but appropriate title for a disappointment. Wyler is following *The Big Country* (his version of the giant myth) with

Ben-Hur, while Stevens battled throughout more than one long year with the problems of photographing a cramped attic with a CinemaScope lens—rather like trying to kill a fly with a Big Bertha. And his subject, *The Diary of Anne Frank,* is not exactly new ground.

This is all very discouraging for the young film-maker trying to bore his way into films through the porthole eye of television, or to make the long hard jump from shorts or the repertory theater into features. And for many European directors this is reason enough for not working in Hollywood. Their financing problems are usually solved film by film, whenever they persuade a backer to support their latest speculation—frequently for a budget which would have been consumed by one elephant charge in a film by the late Cecil B. DeMille, or by the set costs of a low-budget studio production in Hollywood. (Michael Cacoyannis makes a film like *A Girl in Black* for $70,000—the unusually low cost of the sets in Martin Ritt's *No Down Payment.*) Individual financing in this country is not impossible, as I shall illustrate, but it is unconventional and especially difficult for the newcomer. For although he may, if he is lucky, remain independent of the studios, he is still working on the fringes of a production-distribution-exhibition system which favors the easily sold film made for the mass audience. It is not generally known that Harold Hecht had more or less to go it alone with *Marty,* first to provide the finishing money and then to encourage a distributor. United Artists—that last resort of the American individualist—refused to handle it. Hecht took a New York theater, spent as much on publicity as on production ("23,517 New Yorkers have seen *Marty*—have YOU?"), and after a while he made an enormous profit. But a young film-maker who has successfully scraped together the budget for his first feature could never persuade anyone to invest an additional large sum of money for advertising.

Of course, the freedom to make the films of their own choosing, in their own way, is not even the goal of most Hollywood directors, who seem quite content to be parts of a large organic whole. It is only a small hard-core minority which chases these freedoms, each in his own way, perhaps known to each other, but not united by anything more than interest. Some of them play poker together (for example, Ritt and Stanley Kubrick) but they solve their problems in different ways, some choosing to remain independent of a major studio entirely (like Kubrick), others already in possession of a more or less safe Hollywood studio contract

Martin Ritt (right) with Orson Welles and Anthony Franciosa, rehearsing the barn-burning scene in LONG HOT SUMMER.

but (like Ritt) waiting for their chance to be free of studio control. Others again, not yet so far advanced, are serving a hopeful, waiting apprenticeship in the theater or in live television, or have started by making some shorts—usually documentary, but occasionally dramatic. In each case the mechanical problems are different—there is no single happy road to independence. But in each case the goal is the same—freedom to make a personal film, as free as possible from compromise. The fear that they will fail is a real one, and is responsible yearly for no one knows how many defections. And the thought that when they earn their freedom they will have lost the will to use it is a constant threat. It is not always easy for the critic to find these people, but what follows is a sampling of independent film-makers working in or around Hollywood, which is as catholic as in the circumstances it can be.

Martin Ritt, in the last few years, has moved rapidly through a series of preparatory stages to his present position at Twentieth Century–Fox. Ageless—he is shown in a studio sheet as being born in March, but of no year—he has acted in about 150 television dramas and has directed and/or produced about a hundred more. He has acted on Broadway (for example, in Odets' *The Flowering Peach*) and has directed several New York hits—most notably Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*. Ironically, it was apparently this effort, rather than his first film, *Edge of the City*, which won him a three-year, two-pictures-a-year contract with Twentieth Century–Fox. His first film, also known as *A Man Is Ten Feet Tall*, was independently produced by David Susskind, a television producer. Ritt has considerable praise for Susskind, an executive who had the admirable habit of listening to what the

Ritt's first film, EDGE OF THE CITY, *was noted for its effective use of exteriors. John Cassavetes (left) and Sidney Poitier.*

director wanted, and moving everything and everybody out of the way until he got it—most importantly the location, a freight yard operated by the New York Central. The exterior scenes shot there were the most successful part of the film, with the exception of two or three remarkable duologues between the two principals—notably the one in which John Cassavetes (a young and troubled Army deserter) reaches an understanding with Sidney Poitier (a young Negro, about the same age, and a foreman in the yard where Cassavetes finds employment). This is as moving as anything in *The Defiant Ones*, and is considerably less contrived; the scene is between two human beings, one lost and the other certain, rather than one white and the other black, and when the gulf is closed between them it is only accidentally important that one is a Negro. Ritt obtained splendid performances from these young men—and from Jack Warden as a yard bully. He was less successful with the women—Kathleen Maguire and Ruby Dee—whom he from time to time allowed to overplay. But the film (from a story and screenplay by Robert Alan Aurthur) has considerably more style and feeling than either of the two films which followed at Fox—*No Down Payment* and *The Long Hot Summer*. The dialogue has an air which hints at reality and owes something to it, but which establishes itself as at least a quasi-style, most suitable for the work at hand—the men more articulate with each other than they are with their women, and communication almost always breaking down in a crisis.

The film is not entirely without structural fault, and the ending is not clear to some, although curiously enough this is the only film which ends precisely as Ritt wanted. Since that time, working always in a major studio, he has had to compromise. The film represented a promising beginning in features and it is hard to understand why Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, who released it, made no attempt to sign up any of the talent associated with it.

Ritt himself regrets the lost opportunity to make a mid-century American classic of *No Down Payment*, a drama with sociological implications which in the end runs away from as many problems as it poses. It can be argued, however, that this picture of contemporary American suburbia (taken from John McPartland's novel) is a remarkable thing for a major studio to concern itself with. In spite of its evasiveness, it succeeds in capturing much of the stifling, almost incestuous backyard-and-boudoir world of people living beyond their means and their understanding.

But it can also be argued that this story could never be made properly at a major studio; its points of attack were bound to be blunted. If it really is a story of four families among the 20,000,000 Americans who have moved into the suburbs in the last ten years, then it must contain just enough scandal to get most of them out of the suburbs into the theaters, but not so much as to alienate them. One wonders what must go on at a story conference in a studio whose publicity department, faced with the task of charming everyone in its press releases, says with bland assurance, "Church-goers, despite the sensational aspects of the picture [it includes a rape], will find it worth while since the picture opens and closes with church-going scenes." It is an unavoidable conclusion that this apparent unwillingness to offend too many people too much has spilled over into the film.

All of this Ritt is aware of, and is prepared to accept. He believes, quite realistically, that he must in the long run earn the right to make his own pictures his own way, and that to do this he must make a number of

pictures which are successful at the box office. Until then he makes his films as well as he knows how, fighting the studio on story, on casting, but ultimately losing control of the final form when he steps off the stages. "After all," he said ruefully, "they own the negative." *No Down Payment* had, as has been indicated, a sometimes hesitant release, but has by now recovered its costs. His next film, *The Long Hot Summer,* a very theatrical rendering of some Faulkner material, was extremely successful at the box office, and *The Black Orchid* (in which Anthony Quinn and newcomer Ina Balin are very appealing) is too charming to have a difficult path ahead of it. Ritt has a firm grasp of dramatic material, and usually gets good performances from his actors, who universally respect him—even, it seems, Orson Welles, who on another picture on the Fox lot recently threw everyone off the set, including the director. Ritt is much too tough to let something like that happen to him (he went to school on New York's East Side, and was a football coach in Kentucky), and he will probably survive the pressures of a major studio long enough to use the freedom that his films will buy for him. He is not willing to go out and make films "with his own Brownie." It is to be hoped that the writers who bring him material will jog him out of the back lot into the streets again.

Chasing his freedom in quite another way is Stanley Kubrick, perhaps the most widely discussed of the postwar Hollywood newcomers, with four independent features behind him—*Fear and Desire, Killer's Kiss, The Killing,* and *Paths of Glory.* He recently withdrew from the unit about to start shooting *One-Eyed Jacks,* Marlon Brando's independent production, ostensibly to begin work on *Lolita,* with his producer (since *The Killing*) James Harris. They bought the film

Stanley Kubrick on location in Germany for PATHS OF GLORY.

rights about a month after the novel appeared and since then have had several bids from other producers—the highest for $650,000. This offer, like the others, was refused.

All this gives an impression of typically inflated Hollywood economics. But it is curiously untypical of the manner in which Kubrick and Harris work. *Paths of Glory* was made for $900,000—$350,000 of which went to Kirk Douglas, its star. Thus, apart from Douglas' slice, the film was comparatively inexpensive—certainly a bargain for its distributors, United Artists. (It has to date grossed two and a half million dollars, world-wide.)

Kubrick is certain that genuine independence is possible only if the director stays clear of the major studios as long as possible. By this he means that a director should have

a completed script, and if possible have a cast selected and signed, before going to a major studio for money. Anything less is inviting interference and a loss of control. It must include at least one "name" star, and the list of possibles is quite small—Kubrick mentioned about 15 men and only 7 women. "What this implies," he summarized, "is that you require the means to remain independent until the script is finished, until you have a star, and until the deal is set up properly." (By "properly" he means that the director's control will not prove to be illusory.)

A system so inexorably tied to a box-office list of actors and actresses obviously imposes severe limitations on a director's freedom of choice with material. But this does not distress Kubrick. "There is still a large enough number of good properties to permit you to do what you want—and remain independent."

The only time he has ever worked with a major studio was after *Paths of Glory,* when, with a 40-week contract from Dore Schary, he was let loose in the MGM library of story properties. It took him a long time to find anything to interest him, but before he left (in the wake of Schary's fall from grace) he had turned Stefan Zweig's touching short story *The Burning Secret* into a screenplay.

Kubrick's start was quite different from Ritt's, and his career is altogether much more of a piece. Employed by *Look* as a still photographer, he turned to film, making two shorts for RKO before stepping up to features with two hurly-burly films which he would rather not talk about now—*Fear and Desire* and *Killer's Kiss.* But when they came out film critics did talk about them and saw the kind of promise which, it is generally agreed, Kubrick honored in his next two films. The money for his first two came from family and friends. Without this support, which must at times have seemed like blind devotion, he might never have reached his present position; it would be hard to estimate the number of aspirants who have never solved the problem of how to raise that first $50,000.

When he came to make *Paths of Glory,* United Artists was the only financing organization in Hollywood which would touch it, and then only after Kirk Douglas agreed to play in it. The majors might have balked, Kubrick thinks, at the thought of offending their interests in France (through theater holdings, etc.). But United Artists is not committed in this way and, Kubrick added, perhaps has a more realistic view of the contemporary world market. In his experience they have been very good with scripts about which there is general apathy or, as in this case, antagonism.

Kubrick's two later films have received widespread critical attention—almost all of it favorable. *The Killing* is thoroughly manufactured, but the script goes out of its way to give motivation to all of the central characters and this alone would distinguish it from run-of-the-mill gunslingers if it did not anyway have considerable style and impact; it holds up well when reseen today. *Paths of Glory* is in almost every way a more important work—not only because it was almost three times as expensive. It is obviously *about something*—when we remember that this dramatization of an incident of military deceit in the French Army of World War I has still to be shown publicly in France.

What will probably be Kubrick's next film is also a war story. Presently titled *The German Lieutenant,* it is by a new writer, Richard Adams, formerly a paratrooper in Korea and more recently a Fulbright scholar to Europe, where he studied with Carl Dreyer. The story is based partially on his experiences, but has been switched to Germany in World War II.

Kirk Douglas in a frame from Kubrick's PATHS OF GLORY*—a film distinguished by the realism of its battle scenes.*

I asked Kubrick at this point in our conversation why he wanted to make another war film—was there nothing about the contemporary scene which interested him? His reply is crucial and must be given in full.

"To begin with," he said, "one of the attractions of a war or crime story is that it provides an almost unique opportunity to contrast an individual of our contemporary society with a solid framework of accepted value, which the audience becomes fully aware of, and which can be used as a counterpoint to a human, individual, emotional situation. Further, war acts as a kind of hothouse for forced, quick breeding of attitudes and feelings. Attitudes crystallize and come out into the open. Conflict is natural, when it would in a less critical situation have to be introduced almost as a contrivance, and would thus appear forced, or—even worse—false. Eisenstein, in his theoretical writings about dramatic structure, was often guilty of oversimplification. The black and white contrasts of *Alexander Nevsky* do not fit all drama. But war *does* permit this basic kind of contrast—and spectacle. And within these contrasts you can begin to apply some of the possibilities of film—of the sort explored by Eisenstein."

He said somewhat wistfully, however, that he hoped to be able to deal some day with a more straightforward contemporary scene. To some extent he might do so of course with *Lolita*, but here his primary interest is to explore the development of Humbert's character, and the varieties of his love for his moppet—ending, ironically enough, with what Kubrick takes to be an almost selfless love for Lolita when, now 17, she is stuck with a humdrum pregnancy, and husband, and life. He does not plan to change the ages of the principals, nor the nature of their relationship, but he says they have a way of handling the subject which allows them to consider making the film at all.

Kubrick stands much closer to his material than almost any other director currently working in Hollywood. In each of his films to date he has been the principal or sole author of the screenplay (he did the original draft of *Paths of Glory*, and Calder Willingham came in for the second), and he is at least the supervising if not the actual editor of his filmed material. On *Killer's Kiss* he carried credit for photography as well as direction, and he operated one of the cameras during the attack sequence in *Paths of Glory* (one fitted with a Zoomar lens). Thus it is not surprising that there should be a strong feeling of unity and single-mindedness in his films. Such a result is not guaranteed by one man's control of the material—he could be undecided about it. But it is rarely achieved in committee films. "A camel," as the recent proverb has it, "is a mule made by a committee."

There is an unconventionally intellectual air about Kubrick's films, but this may be more a by-product of style than an intentional ingredient. Certainly he does not mean his films to be intellectual in the sense

of making a clear-cut statement about something. "I cannot give a precise *verbal* summary of the philosophical meaning of, for example, *Paths of Glory*. It is intended to involve the audience in an experience. Films deal with the emotions and reflect the fragmentation of experience. It is thus misleading to try to sum up the meaning of a film verbally." However, it is precisely his very evident style, praised by an eagerly perceptive band of professional film critics, which for some commentators (although not myself) prevents their involvement in Kubrick's characters and situations.

Kubrick has already given ample evidence of his strong grasp of *mise en scène* and the extension of character which an actor can be encouraged to bring to the pauses between lines of dialogue. On a second viewing of *Paths of Glory*, Douglas causes some uneasiness, but the film is otherwise beautifully performed, staged, photographed, cut, and scored—using, for example, a rasping, alarming staccato of drums during the battle scenes. It is a disappointment that Kubrick was not able to continue with Brando. Their relationship could not have been an easy one, but the result could have been fascinating.

Very much less established than either Ritt or Kubrick are dozens of young men working somewhat on the fringes of things, some as associate producers, some as writer-director-producers of the very low budget (sometimes nonunion) horror and teen-age films, and not a few for Disney's television series of more or less true-life adventures. I talked with three such people, all products of the motion picture department of the University of California at Los Angeles.

Two of them, Denis and Terry Sanders (aged 30 and 27) have just completed their first feature, and the other, Nick Cominos (35), with an excellent short waiting for distribution, is preparing his first full-length film.

Shortly after he left U.C.L.A., Cominos was hired by Twentieth Century–Fox in the special effects department, where he became an editor. A few years of this gave him the momentum required to float the capital for a half-hour, 35mm color short, *Once Upon a Sunday*, which opened last year's festival at Cork, Ireland, but which is still lacking a distributor. Its subject is a state park near Carmel on the Pacific coast in California. Its statement—that there are many reactions to nature, but nature is primary and, comparatively, immortal—is perhaps not of the greatest tactical significance, but on the way to making it Cominos tells us a lot of what he feels about the values underlying North American culture. Most of the people in the park use it for a stage for whatever they are doing—a cyclist training, a young man polishing his car, children imitating a jet plane overhead, their parents and grandparents having a family picnic and dancing to the music of the old country, and the woman who, to the great boredom of her husband, walks across it briskly for a constitutional. On the other side are a young girl who is painting, a Filipino fisherman, and a few older intellectuals, including Henry Miller and Robinson Jeffers. The point seems to be that it is perhaps only the sensitive intellectual or the unsophisticated primitive who can have the right appreciation of nature.

There is one particularly frightening and effective scene with a family of Negroes who drive into the park in a Buick, the car radio tuned to a Gospel meeting. They stop beside some other visitors and look out. A little girl on a nearby hill seems to be shouting down to them and waving. Her father, perhaps angry at this fraternization, shouts at the girl to come down. The Buick drives away,

and a small child in the back turns to look, and suddenly screams as if frightened by the prospect of the father beating his child. The camera pans away with the car, whose radio is now shouting out "Save Brother Jonathan! Yeah! Save Sister Ruth! Yeah! Help Brother Joshua! Help!" The contrast is capped as the camera settles on an aged tree which in a sense is made the spectator, or at least the reference point: it has watched similar things in the past—both lovers and haters—and we are given a strong feeling of the permanence of the forest, and the transitoriness of the people who come to it. This is, if you like, the existentialist absurdity.

Cominos made the film, with a few friends, in a period of three weeks. He could have done it more quickly, but the weather plagued him and he broke a finger one day moving a reflector. He is now working on a treatment for *Give Your Heart to the Hawks,* an epic poem by Robinson Jeffers published in 1933, a drama of fratricide in a Scottish immigrant farming family in northern California. Cominos recently said about the poem, "I am interested in *Hawks* because it comes closer than anything else I have seen to representing a critical period in the growth of Protestant America, the period which contained the seeds of a transition from a predominantly agricultural to an overwhelmingly industrial society. Our urban population seems totally ignorant of the drives and ambitions of our extremely complex pioneer society, represented in popular fiction and in school history as a series of rather obvious contrasts between good and evil, romanticized and distorted. I am interested, in a sense, in warning the urban dweller to be more aware of his origins—as in a sense *Once Upon a Sunday* contains

Nick Cominos (left) on location at Point Lobos for ONCE UPON A SUNDAY, *with Robinson Jeffers, the poet.*

what you might call a gentle warning about certain aspects of contemporary society."

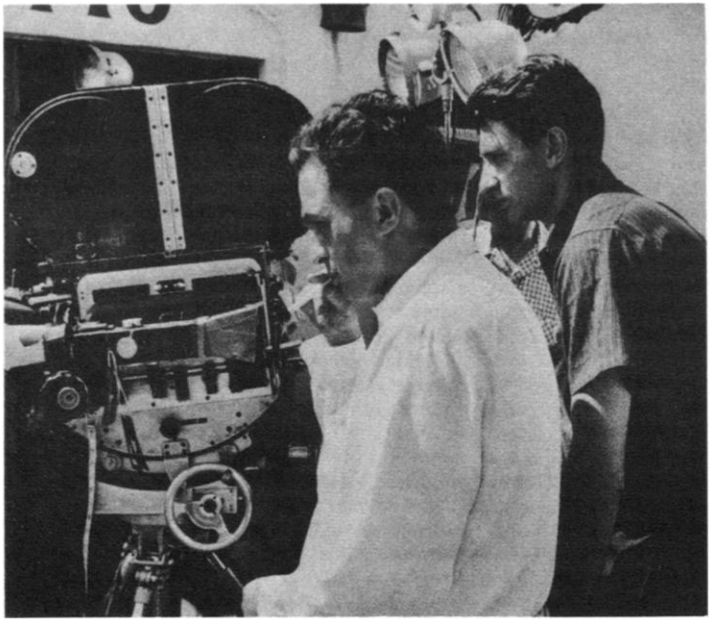
Cominos hopes to make the film in the fall of this year, but at present is still trying to persuade some distributor to take his short in its present form. One told him that he would take it if the Negro scene were cut out, but Cominos commented sadly that this is a sure sign that the whole point of the film has escaped him.

The Sanders brothers have already made a considerable reputation with three shorts produced while they were students—notably the two-reel Civil War story *A Time Out of War,* which won an Oscar and prizes at Venice, Edinburgh, and London. A friend of Charles Laughton saw *A Time Out of War* on *Omnibus* and called him about it. He saw it, liked it, and asked Terry Sanders (who had photographed it) to do his second-unit work for *Night of the Hunter*—his first film as a director. Later Laughton and his producer-associate Paul Gregory hired the brothers to write the screenplay for Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead.* Laughton was to have directed the film, but fell out of love with it. As reported in an earlier issue of *Film Quarterly,* the script suffered a fate worse than death, first at RKO and then at Warner Brothers, so that its authors now consider that the book has still to be filmed. In some recently published correspondence, Mailer is quoted as saying that Gregory did not even know what the book was about. The Sanders brothers find this odd, and claim that it was not Gregory's fault that the film failed. "He was the only executive connected with the film who tried to save it."

They do not know yet whether or not this credit damaged them. They have not been available for employment for over a year, but certainly, during this time, their phone was not kept busy by producers impatient to sign them. Several critics blamed bad scripting, although they recalled happily that Dilys Powell's review in the *Sunday Times* (London) "was very sweet."

While waiting for various other things to happen, in 1956 and again in 1958, they wrote television scripts. They also completed a screenplay from Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' *Jacob's Ladder,* but have since lost the rights to the book, along with their former enthusiasm for it. And now, exactly one year after starting work on it, they have completed their first feature, independently produced for Allied Artists release. Its title is *Crime and Punishment—U.S.A.,* it was written by Walter Newman (who has earlier credits for *Ace in the Hole* and *Man With the Golden Arm*), and it is a modernized version of Dostoievsky's classic. Terry Sanders produced and Denis directed. It is due for a March or April release.

Interviewed recently, the Sanders brothers gave some of the background to their production. One of the factors which keeps up the costs, even of independent production, is the Hollywood AFL trade union's fear of runaway companies and its attempt to maintain full employment by setting the crew requirements beyond what is sometimes necessary. (A film made without an IATSE seal may be refused exhibition, since the projectionists can refuse to operate their machines.) A rival CIO union, active in live television, has occasionally been used for nontheatrical production, and at first the Sanderses thought they could make their film with a NABET crew for $50,000. "On the basis of a NABET crew we interested a backer and got a commitment from him for $25,000. Later, however, he insisted on an IATSE situation, and we accordingly had to push the budget to $70,000. In order to raise the difference we took the property



Denis Sanders (left) and his brother Terry on location in Venice, California for CRIME AND PUNISHMENT—USA.

around, but not to any of the major studios. We showed it to Allied when we heard that they were willing to back independent low-budget films. They read the script, liked it, and agreed to put up 60 per cent, or $42,000. But we had to post $10,000 completion money in cash, and this we were able to raise privately. In fact, the final cost will be about $100,000 (Allied was pleased enough with the first cut to put up the difference). But since we went for about a year without salary, this figure is itself unrealistic. Also, considering the fact that people worked for us for minimum scale, often when they could have earned more elsewhere, and that many other favors were extended to us, a more realistic budget for the next film will be about $150,000 or perhaps closer to $160,000. $70,000 was itself, even on our own terms, unrealistic, but we banked on our film being in good enough shape by then to raise more for scoring and completion. And this is more or less what happened.

"Low budget breeds autonomy," they continued, "but, on the other hand, the limited audience we are aiming for demands a budget low enough to match the anticipated income. This we have to be aware of, and responsible to. Any success at the general box office is then a bonus, but we cannot count on it. We do not wish to make films for a mass audience at the lowest common denominator. Thus, low budget is the key, although there can be no skimping whenever we know that something is necessary. For example, on this one we spent $8,000 more than we bargained for on the score, but we thought the extra was worth the difference."

It is always possible, of course, that what a director thinks is necessary will grow in

scope as he becomes more established. But both the Sanderses and Cominos argue that there is a need for low-budget pictures to fill in all the enormous exhibiting gaps left by the blockbusters. Also, the Sanderses admit that certain material has to be passed over as economically unsound—for example, *The Naked and the Dead*, which they consider should not have been made if it was not to be made seriously.

The film itself is an interesting development of their earlier work. As they pointed out, "*A Time Out of War*, after all, only had about eleven lines of dialogue." *Crime and Punishment, U.S.A.* is somewhat uneven, as one would expect a first feature, shot on a short schedule, to be. There is some breathtaking material on location, in the streets, oil fields, and amusement parks in and around Venice, California, throughout which there is a genuine feeling for time and place. There are several very well directed duologues between Frank Silvera (as the Inspector) and George Hamilton (as the Student), during which the Inspector pulls his suspect closer to a confession. But there are also some flat conversation scenes in which problems of performance – integrating a group of actors—and staging are not solved. The film is certainly not intended to be Dostoievsky, and should not be thought of as such. It is not Walter Newman's best script, but in many ways the direction is better than the script. The scenes which cause trouble are those which will come with practice – straightforward plot-exposition passages where people stand around and talk. (Kubrick's way of doing this is to make people walk all over the set and follow them with his camera.) But, on the other hand, the ending, in which, quite without dialogue, we are made to realize why the Student must deliver himself to the police, is brilliantly carried through and might easily have brought a more experienced director down.

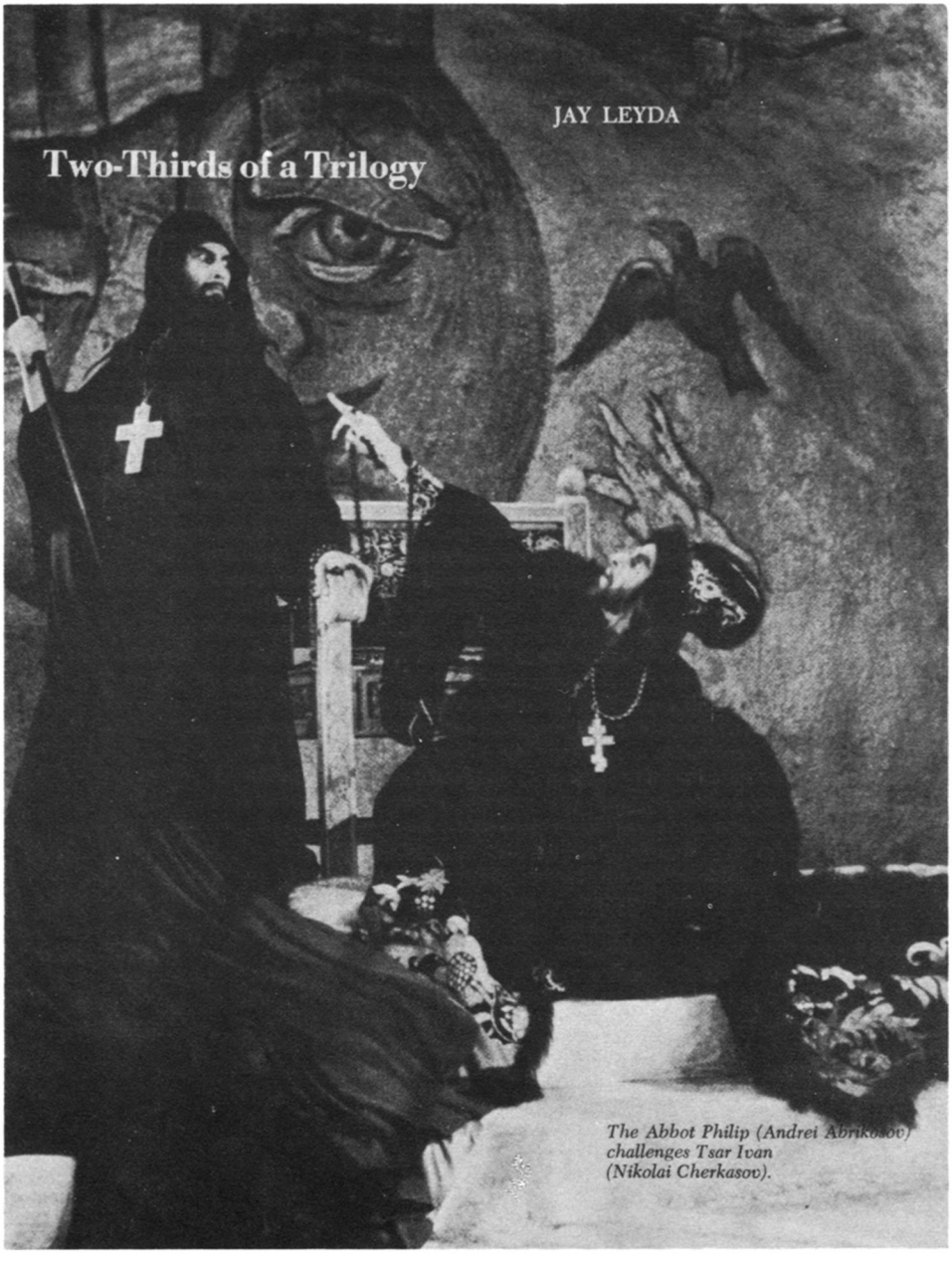
The net closes: Frank Silvera (the Inspector) questions George Hamilton (the Student) in CRIME AND PUNISHMENT—USA.

George Hamilton, who plays the lead role, is a newcomer mercifully free of mannerisms, although not always as good as the dialogue requires him to be. Frank Silvera as the Inspector, however, Mary Murphy as the Prostitute, and John Harding as Swanson the Immoralist are all excellent, with Silvera giving the outstanding performance of the film—a tired, self-confessedly not very intelligent man who, however, knows a killer when he sees one, and knows how he will behave.

This, then, is the "growing edge" of Hollywood. It is a different story than the one which might be told of Bergman, Ray, or Bresson, and it is perhaps not as heartening. But Kubrick *et al.* are Americans, trying to work in or through Hollywood. If there is to be any "native" cinema in this country at all, it is as well that these gentlemen are there, making the attempt.

Two-Thirds of a Trilogy

JAY LEYDA



The Abbot Philip (Andrei Abrikosov) challenges Tsar Ivan (Nikolai Cherkasov).

Eisenstein's several aims in making *Ivan the Terrible* have continued and will continue to be defined and argued. The theories find no common ground and do little to resolve the many questions the film evokes. For more than a decade we had only three pieces of evidence—the released version of *Ivan*, Part One; the published script of the whole two-part (later three-part) film; and denunciations and rumors of the unreleased *Ivan*, Part Two. On this basis were formed the political interpretation (Ivan IV shown as a prototype of Stalin), the psychological interpretation (explored, in detail, through Chapter XV of Marie Seton's biography of Eisenstein), the artistic interpretation (usually presented as the formal freezing of a too deliberate artist), and other side issues or private phobias. Now we have another important piece of evidence, the released version of *Ivan*, Part Two. (The sequences filmed for Part Three will probably remain uncut and unshown.) A last piece of evidence will, I hope, become generally available soon: Eisenstein's notes and drawings in preparing the entire work. Weighing these materials brings one to the conclusion that the best perspective on *Ivan the Terrible* is still that given by Eisenstein in an introductory article on his approach to the historical place and complex character of Ivan IV:

> And thus, concealing nothing, smoothing over nothing in the history of the actions of Ivan Grozny,—detracting nothing from the formidably impressive romanticism of that splendid image of the past, it has been our wish to present it in all its integrity to the audience of the world. This image, —fearful and wonderful, attracting and repelling, utterly tragic in Ivan Grozny's inner struggle along with his struggle against the enemies of his country,—can be comprehensible to the man of our day. ("Ivan Grozny," *VOKS Bulletin*, 7–8, 1942.)

A reading of the whole scenario together with a viewing of both parts—the only just way to experience Eisenstein's last film—shows a scrupulous execution of this large program that he set for himself. Ivan's historical "mission" is never lost sight of, nor are the human contradictions in his motives and behavior, along which the main dramatic line is built. The separation of the two parts by the film's critics is a fault for which they are not entirely responsible, for Eisenstein could not have foreseen how many years would pass between the appearance of Parts One and Two (nor that Part Three would remain a project). Seen together at last, the majestic, ceremonial qualities of Part One, growing more passionate toward its conclusion, are transformed into the flaming bitterness and violent malice of Part Two. The calculated stylistic growth of the whole drama could only be guessed by the disgruntled critics of Part One, including the outraged Hollywood audience at its Academy preview. To see Part Two by itself must have been equally a shock to the private political viewers in 1946—here was the intrigue and carnage of *Hamlet's* conclusion without the preparation and artistic justification of the first two acts, or the torture and storm of *Lear* without the introductory dramatic mask of ceremony and hypocrisy that Shakespeare spent scene by scene stripping away. If any of the Kremlin viewers had some parallel in mind with Stalin,* or even felt the need to change the popular concept of the *Terrible*, one can imagine how person-

* Plays about Ivan ran into the same trouble, trying to dramatize the new historical attitude to him with a minimum of blood-letting.

ally insulting Ivan's drama appeared. The keenest of those viewers must have been worried by the mystery play episode (was this a hint that the whole film was a fable?—with what moral?), and by the more explicit passage in which Ivan permits someone else to assume the responsibility for his bloodiest acts.

For a project of such complex magnitude Eisenstein was just as intent on efficiency of schedule and budget as in the simpler *Nevsky,* regardless of the problems of wartime filming in the Palace of Culture in remote Alma-Ata—and only at night, when munitions factories were not using the electric power. Within a year after filming was begun in April 1943, almost all of Part One was in the cutting room, along with much of Part Two; these later scenes had often been filmed early, to take advantage of standing sets and actors' commitments. The photography was divided between Tisse, who took the exteriors (including the siege of Kazan and the thrilling "shots in depth" at the end of Part One), and Andrei Moskvin, who filmed all the studio sequences, the larger part of the film (in Part Two the camera rarely leaves the studio).

An error, possibly fatal for both the work and its creator, may have been made in the wartime decision to divide Part Two, as published, into two parts—to produce a trilogy. Several scenes planned for the original Part Two required northern exteriors (and Tisse) that could not be adapted to the studio work in Alma-Ata. (In any case, it is difficult to see how all the material and ideas for Part Two could ever have been crowded into a film of normal length.) The resulting trilogy plan thus concluded with a Part Three of great mass movement, battle, breadth, etc., transforming the new Part Two into a purely "interior" dramatic interlude between grander and more open sections. This doomed Part Two to a concentration on psychology and on intrigue, the most dangerous elements in any "social" treatment of Ivan's reign.

The tasks that Eisenstein gave to the actors caused more friction than in any of his previous experiences with trained actors, for their training had not prepared them for the heroic Elizabethan manner, the startling "noble" style invented for *Ivan.* The staging of Shakespearean tragedy had grown increasingly realistic in the Soviet theatre; the works of his more extreme contemporaries, Marlowe and Webster, impossible to play realistically, were almost unknown in actual performance there (though beloved by Eisenstein); and the one Russian "Elizabethan" drama, Pushkin's *Boris Godunov,* was unthinkable except on a realist stage.* The most resistance to Eisenstein's demands came from the most trained actors; up to Eisenstein's death Nikolai Cherkasov, who played Ivan, complained bitterly of the compositions he had been twisted into, the aching positions he had been forced to maintain:

> Carried away by his enthusiasm for pictorial composition, Eisenstein moulded expressive, monumental *mises-en-scène,* but it was often difficult to justify the content of the form he was striving to achieve. In some of his *mises-en-scène,* extremely graphic in idea and composition, an actor's strained muscles often belied his inner feelings. In such cases, the actor found it difficult indeed to mould the image demanded of him. Eisenstein insisted that

* The Eisenstein archive (now being prepared for publication in Moscow) contains a project for a Pushkin film; his sketches for the scene of Boris's monologue anticipate the style of *Ivan the Terrible.*

The child Ivan (Erik Pyriev) and his quarreling boyar-counsellors. From the original Prologue to Part One, adapted (as a memory) to Part Two.

his ideas be carried out. This insistence infected us . . .

My confidence in the film waned and my worries grew with each passing day. After watching scenes of the second part run through I criticized some episodes, but Eisenstein brushed my criticism aside, and in the end stopped showing me edited bits altogether. In films, it is the director who has the last word. (Cherkasov, *Notes of a Soviet Actor*, an English text published by the Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, *ca.* 1956.)

For his "romanticism" Eisenstein had no need for the shadings and delicate indications that Cherkasov had learned with such psychological "truth." When Michael Chekhov saw the film in America, he could not believe that his former colleague, Serafima Birman (who plays the hawklike boyarina), could have accepted such a "betrayal" of all their lessons without her protest. On the other hand, younger actors—such as Ludmila Tselikovskaya (playing Ivan's bride) and Pavel Kadochnikov (Vladimir)—enjoyed the new problems Eisenstein gave them.

The grandeur of our subject called for monumental means of presentation . . . This was how the style of the film was determined, a style that ran counter to many of the traditional methods to which we have grown accustomed . . . The general custom is to try to make the historical personage "accessible," to portray him as an ordinary person sharing the ordinary, human traits of all other people —to present him "in dressing-gown and nightcap."

But with Ivan we wanted a different tone. In him we wished chiefly to convey a sense of majesty, and this led us to adopt majestic forms. We had the actors speak in measured tones, frequently accompanied by music . . . (Eisenstein, "How We Filmed *Ivan the Terrible*," *Cinema Chronicle*, February, 1945.)

The unified "deliberate" film, especially the film that does not conceal its maker's calculation, has always been the least popular film anywhere in the world—in and out of the film industry. A *Rashomon* or *Cobweb Castle* will always have a harder life than a *Gate of Hell*; a Murnau or a Dreyer will always suffer more than a Lubitsch or a Huston. The rare film artist who defies the spontaneous, to show that the medium can invent as well as mirror, has as much to contribute to the future of cinema as do all the great artists—including Chaplin, Dovzhenko, Fellini—who treasure the *effect* of improvisation. Since the release of *Ivan*, Part One, there has been some slight use, by Soviet and foreign film-makers, of the lessons it teaches, but full use of *Ivan*'s art apparently waits for the future.

In January, 1946, close to the completion of the cutting of Part Two, I heard from Eisenstein that his theoretical work advanced throughout the production of *Ivan*:

I was (and still am for about 3 weaks) busy like hell: just finishing to shoot and

cut the second part of Ivan. This part includes two reels made in color [the banquet before the murder of Vladimir]. Color used in quite different a way, than it is usually done—so that it gives a big additional chapter to what is nearly ready in book form.* If everything is allright here with the picture I expect to take a vacation and finish the book—¾ of which are ready for print. Most of the stuff is unpublished (part of it even—unwritten yet!) and is mostly concerned with the development of the principles started by "Potemkin" during these 20 years in different media (is that the way to say it?)—treatments of sound, music, color. The way of composing exstatic scenes, etc. "Ivan" in connection with "Potemkin." I will send you a detailed plan as soon as the film goes to the laboratory to be printed. . . .

Part Two was completed under a great lift of morale; the postponed Stalin Prizes of 1943 and 1944 were announced in early February, 1946, and they included awards to the artists responsible for the high quality of *Ivan the Terrible,* Part One.

The final work on the editing of *Ivan,* Part Two, was done on the day that Part One's prize was to be celebrated. Eisenstein left the cutting room, for the last time, at 10:30 P.M., went directly to the celebration dinner, and while dancing, at about 2 A.M., collapsed to the floor with a heart attack. Five weeks later, lying in the Kremlin Hospital, he described the next few horrible moments to Brooks Atkinson:

> They told him to lie still; they told him not to move, that they would carry him to the hospital.
>
> "But I was temperamental," Mr. Eisenstein continued. "I insisted on getting up and walking to the car unassisted."
>
> According to the doctors, that is when he died. . . .
>
> "I am dead right now," he said mischievously. "The doctors say that, according to all rules, I cannot possibly be alive. So this is a postscript for me, and it's wonderful. Now I can do anything I like. I am going to have a good time." (*New York Times,* March 11, 1946.)

His "good time" was to read the accumulation of old and new books that *Ivan* had kept him from; his cable to me of March 21 renewed the writing promise: ". . . looking forward long reconvalescence entirely devoted writing books." And on April 18, 1946: ". . . trying hard to recover . . . working on opus two." At the end of May he was transferred to a sanatorium outside Moscow, and in June, to his cottage in the country. I do not know for how long the news was concealed from him that the Central Committee was extremely critical of Part Two. Unless he was allowed no papers he must have seen the attack in *Sovietskoye Iskusstvo* (a weekly he always read), of August 16, 1946:

> The second part of *Ivan the Terrible* provides a very clear illustration of the results to which a lack of responsibility, a disdainful attitude toward the study of essential material, and a careless and arbitrary treatment of historical themes may lead. (An editorial, "Increase the Sense of Responsibility Amongst Film Experts"; I quote a translation made by the British Films Officer in Moscow.)

One of the most negative periods in Soviet film history was introduced by the Central Committee's resolution of September 4, 1946.

* This was to have been a sequel to *The Film Sense*; it was unfinished at the time of his death.

The particular target of its detailed attack was the second part of *A Great Life*, a film about the post-war restoration of the coal mines of the Donbass, directed by Leonid Lukov—but the second part of *Ivan the Terrible* was also unequivocally condemned:

> Eisenstein . . . showed his ignorance of historical facts by portraying the progressive force of the oprichniki [bodyguards] as a band of degenerates similar to the American Ku Klux Klan, and by portraying Ivan, a man of strong will and character, as a man of no will and little character, resembling Hamlet.

For a while Eisenstein's physical condition prevented either defense or revision of his film, and at that time there was no one else brave enough either to defend or to revise it. But in the following months Eisenstein made two careful moves, calculated to bring his *Ivan* back to life. In *Culture and Life* he published a reply to the resolution's criticism; agreeing for the most part with the condemnation, even going further in some details, there is yet one ambiguous passage that has a flavor of defense:

> We know Ivan Grozny as a man with a strong will and firm character. Does that exclude from the characterization of this tzar the possibility of the existence of certain doubts? It is difficult to think that a man who did such unheard of and unprecedented things in his time never thought over the choice of means or never had doubts about how to act, at one time or another. But could it be that these possible doubts overshadow the historical role of historical Ivan as it was shown in the film? Could it be that the essence of this powerful sixteenth-century figure lies in these doubts and not in his uncompromising fight against them or unending success of his state activity? Is it not so that the center of our attention is and must be Ivan the builder, Ivan the creator of a new, powerful, united Russian power, Ivan the inexorable destroyer of everything that resisted his progressive undertakings? (*Kultura i zhizn*, October 20, 1946; I quote the translation used in Marie Seton's biography of Eisenstein.)

Alexandrov later told Marie Seton of another move this winter. Eisenstein wrote to Stalin, asking for a discussion of the banned film, and Stalin invited him and Cherkasov to talk with him about their plans. The result was a compromise: as soon as Eisenstein was well enough to work, he should complete Part Three, incorporating in it the least offensive sequences from Part Two. It was just after this that he cabled me (March 14, 1947): "Everything okay continue working Ivan." But, so far as we know, he was never well enough to again enter a sound-stage or a cutting room.

Ten years after his death, the night of February 10–11, 1948, and five years after Stalin's death, moves were made to bring *Ivan*, Part Two, to the world film audience,

The lullaby sung by the Boyarina Staritskaya (Serafima Birman) to her son Vladimir (Pavel Kadochnikov) is interrupted.

and it was finally released to Soviet audiences in September. A month later it had its "western" première in the setting of the Brussels Exposition where, if any hero were to be named for the week there of The Best Films of All Time, it would certainly be Sergei Eisenstein, the creator of *Potemkin* and *Ivan*.

The curious irony of this delayed exhibition of *Ivan*, Part Two, is that we are seeing it in exactly the version in which Eisenstein left it, without any of the revisions demanded by the angered or worried censors of 1946. This extremely significant fact was revealed in the statements of two distinguished Russian visitors to Brussels at the time of *Ivan*'s showing there—Cherkasov and Kozintzev, a colleague and lifelong friend of Eisenstein—"This is the film as Eisenstein showed it to me." There are a few roughnesses in the cutting of Part Two that may be accounted for by recalling that he completed his work-print only, without an opportunity to make a final polished version before the negative was cut, posthumously, to match his work-print. The content and arrangement of scenes do not always correspond to that of the known scenario, but such an exact correspondence would be extraordinary in the case of any finished film, and surely in the case of one that was completed two years after its scenario was published.

The only flaw in the Brussels and subsequent London screenings of Part Two was that the color sequences were shown in black and white, for Moskvin was dissatisfied with the process he had used, compared with his later successes in color. Two months later, however, the persistence of the Cinémathèque Française achieved a Paris showing of the last reels as intended by their makers —a world of difference in the total effect of the film. In Brussels Kozintzev had told us how Eisenstein had treated color as another instrument, and of his occasional unreal manipulation of colored light; but the actuality surpassed all expectation. After a generation of discreet film color it is a new stimulation to see it used indiscreetly, boldly, and with ideas. Like another group of instruments, it heightens every purpose it is applied to, and you can hear Prokofiev orchestrating for it, with the same unreal dramatic enhancement that you hear in the boyarina's ambitious lullaby when her exultation is suddenly supported chorally. Though the cathedral climax between the two color passages was filmed earlier in black and white, the transitions between color and monochrome were turned ingeniously to the film's advantage. And it was good to see Eisenstein enjoying a taste of color before his career closed.

We have not yet seen the whole of Eisenstein's trilogy, and it is now sadly clear that we never shall, for the passages intended for Part Three are too fragmentary for editing or judgment (though its sketches may be complete). But we now have an hour and a half more of *Ivan the Terrible* than we had before, and this is a great deal to be thankful for. It means this much more of Eisenstein's ideas and inventions, plus this much more of Prokofiev's music—prepared for us thirteen years ago by two great artists who are now dead.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN

The New Hollywood: Myth and Anti-Myth

It must now be apparent even to the most indifferent movie-goer that something unusual has recently been happening on the screen. Although for years he has been accustomed to suspending his cares in the soft black impersonal lap of his neighborhood auditorium, the spectator is now more frequently jolted than caressed by many of the films he sees—they seem especially designed to disturb his tranquillity. The celluloid is losing its sharpness of focus and assuming the murkier tones hitherto associated with European realism. The settings are changing from plushy modern apartments atop imposing skyscrapers to shanty-town slums in rotting southern or northern towns. The costumes, apparently acquired no longer from Mainbocher but from the surplus stores of the Salvation Army, hang on the actors as dashingly as skivvies on a scarecrow.

At the same time, the glamor queen is unpinning her hair, exposing her faulty skin and puffy eyes, and reverting to the untutored accents of her original speech; the matinee idol is yielding before a tousled, scratching, stammering, frequently unhandsome average Joe as distinguished as you or I; and the extras are being recruited not from Central Casting but from taverns and corner drugstores. The heyday of Hollywood glamor is drawing to a close, hastened by catcalls from the wings. Behind the scenes one can almost hear the fading tread of the cosmeticians, the speech teachers, and the beauty consultants—that vast army of unfamiliar names inscribed on a film's opening credits—who have hitherto played so large a part in creating "screen magic."

It would seem, then, that Hollywood is making room among its old formulas for radical new developments; it would seem also that the film-makers are beginning to assume attitudes toward their products which, twenty years ago, they would have considered visionary and impractical. Certainly, pictures like *On the Waterfront, A Hatful of Rain, Wild Is the Wind, The Goddess, Come Back Little Sheba, Baby Doll, The Rose Tattoo, The Long Hot Summer, Hot Spell* (and countless others) embody, whatever their actual merits, a conscious artiness at which producers would formerly have shivered.

Is it possible that our celebrated dream factory has abandoned its artificial merchandise for the complex stuff of life? Is the industry undertaking to agitate the populace with harsh truths rather than lull them asleep with comforting fantasies? Is Hollywood, in short, now prepared to subsidize works of art? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to recall the conditions that brought these new films into being.

After the war, of course, television absconded with a large portion of the audience the movies once held captive. Since millions of Americans, sitting in a drugged stupor before their sets, became deaf to the call of the box office, the movie moguls began to conclude that the old formulas were no longer sufficient. Only two classes of moviegoers remained faithful, and even these were beginning to desert: the teen-agers, who used the balconies of movie theaters as trysting places, and the inveterate celluloid-eaters, who preferred foreign films and the oc-

casional art movie. The first attempt to woo back the deserters was the technique of the giant screen. CinemaScope, VistaVision, Todd-AO, Cinerama, and stereophonic sound were originally designed to awaken the spectator to the limitations of TV's constricted universe. The giant screen tried to demonstrate that the price the spectator paid for entertainment in his own home was to be eternally trapped in his own domestic troubles. This was a discerning judgment. At the time that the new movie techniques were introduced, the predominant video form was the domestic drama, only a cut above soap opera. The prophet of the new drama was Paddy Chayefsky, and its new heroes were middle-aged men in quest of romance, loveless butchers, nervous white-collar workers, and dissatisfied wives. Even the "adult western" soon developed into a family drama where a hero in a cowboy suit set about solving a minor domestic crisis not too far removed from the problems of the viewer.

The giant screen, on the other hand, emphasized the boundless dimensions available to Hollywood. Besides exulting in their leisurely tempo, the movies could stretch themselves in limitless space. While the TV viewer sweated and gasped for air in sympathy with a quiz contestant in a coffin-like isolation booth (the authentic symbol of TV's world), Todd-AO took the movie-goer for a three-hour trip around the world.

But rather than offer anything new in the way of material, the giant screen attempted primarily to preserve and enhance the old formulas. The movie-makers were trying to feed a traditional public appetite that to a large extent no longer existed: the craving for colossal screen glamor. The old matinee idols, despite their graying hair and sagging jowls, were still expected to attract admiration from the spectator through the time-

BABY DOLL: *The new scene is the shanty or slum (Mildred Dunnock and Karl Malden).*

worn methods: their extraordinary good looks, their superhuman deeds, and their freedom from petty human complaints. On the assumption that few would dispute the heroic proportions of a man over thirty feet tall, these qualities were now exaggerated by the hero's enormous size. On the giant screen, Gary Cooper grew lankier, Jayne Mansfield bosomier, and Richard Widmark meaner, while the cleft in Kirk Douglas' chin enlarged into a minor Grand Canyon. It was Hollywood's last attempt to exploit America's old hunger for giantism: Paul Bunyan was breaking the plains on a horse as big as a mountain, its hoofbeats magnified a thousandfold by the magic of stereophonic sound.

Although the giant screen had a few big successes and recaptured a few of the deserters, it could not hold them past the initial novelty. The public, preferring claustrophobia to agorophobia, remained largely apathetic, still immobilized before their sets. What is worse, even the faithful began to desert. The teen-age girls might identify with Audrey Hepburn as Gary Cooper made

love to her under a table, but the teen-age boys were finding it hard to identify with a hero who looked old enough to be their grandfather. Similarly, the more discerning film-goers were generally cold, in some cases positively antagonistic, to the lure of the giant screen. The movie-makers decided to surrender their claim to the confirmed TV addicts and try to consolidate their position with the audience that still remained. They cast around for a new form which might be acceptable to all their patrons, and discovered—"realism."

It was, of course, an extremely belated discovery; realism, in various guises, had been flourishing on European and American stages for over a hundred years. But, considering Hollywood's traditional reluctance to agitate anybody, it was inevitable that the movie-makers would turn to the most inoffensive type. Rather than the Ibsenite form which rigorously exposed the cant, hypocrisy, fraud, and humbug beneath the respectable appearance, Hollywood's realism was to become more akin to Zola naturalism —dedicated to a purely surface authenticity.

The postwar Italian movies of deSica and Rossellini, concerned with poverty-stricken characters of the lower class and focusing on the unpleasant physical conditions of Italian city life, had caught the eye of the critics and collected a vigorous following among intelligent film-goers. When Paddy Chayefsky turned an inexpensive film like *Marty* into a surprising commercial success by reproducing the atmosphere (and junking the moral concerns) of Italian movies, Hollywood had to conclude that television had conditioned the American public to commonplace reality. It was becoming clear that the aimless and boring lives of people like Bronx drugstore cowboys could—if seasoned generously enough with sentimentality—attract box-office gold. Hollywood, in consequence, ever alert to changes in mass taste, began to retool in preparation for the new form.

The first move was a radical change in personnel: Hollywood went on an exhaustive quest for new experts. Zola realism, for a number of years, has been the artistic domain of the New York theater, so it was inevitably to the New York theater artist that the industry turned. Directors especially were in great demand. Elia Kazan was provided by Warner Brothers with his own production unit and absolute freedom in choosing his subjects, casts, and associates; Sidney Lumet and Delbert Mann were kidnaped from TV; Joshua Logan was periodically imported to energize such films as *Bus Stop* and *Sayonara*; even fledgling directors like Martin Ritt (*Edge of the City, The Long Hot Summer*) and Daniel Mann (*Come Back Little Sheba, Hot Spell*), with only a few Broadway shows to their credit, were whisked to Hollywood, where they are now afforded a respect they never enjoyed in New York.

Along with the directors came their collaborators—Broadway dramatists, television writers, and novelists. The plays of Tennessee Williams, William Inge, Robert Anderson, and Michael Gazzo, for example, are finding their way to the screen, sometimes transferred by the author, sometimes by an able adapter, frequently with surprising fidelity. In mounting competition over literary material, studios are purchasing off-Broadway plays, TV scripts, and even as yet unpublished novels. If, in the 'thirties and 'forties, William Faulkner and Aldous Huxley could write films in complete anonymity, today Tennessee Williams and Paddy Chayefsky draw almost as large an audience as the star.

Inevitably, a whole new crop of young stars was introduced as well, many of them

trained in New York naturalistic theater schools like the Actors Studio and already familiar to Broadway and television audiences. Marlon Brando, Anthony Perkins, Paul Newman, Ernest Borgnine, Anthony Quinn, Anthony Franciosa, Don Murray, Steven Hill, and Ben Gazzara have become the matinee idols of the 'fifties, with actresses like Eva Marie Saint, Julie Harris, Barbara Bel Geddes, Anna Magnani, Shirley Booth, Kim Stanley, and Carroll Baker as their romantic counterparts. Few of these people are notable for their outstanding good looks, for there is an increasing tendency to deglamorize the Hollywood star. The new actors attract attention by their intensity of feeling, rather than by physical attractiveness, and have developed a style of acting which even some of the older stars are beginning to adopt.

In other words, New Yorkers have begun to infiltrate the film industry and to influence it with many of the convictions of the Broadway stage, including a traditional distaste for the old Hollywood products. In the past, Broadway's antagonism toward Hollywood took the form of moralistic condemnations and satiric attacks. The Group Theatre, that dynamic production unit which flourished in the 'thirties and which reluctantly fed so many of its associates into the films, always regarded Hollywood as Inferno and the Hollywood producer as a vulgar Mephistopheles who purchased the soul of the serious artist and degraded his talent with attractive offers of money, fame, swimming pools, and the love of beautiful women. Elia Kazan attacked, in an article, the "manufactured entertainment" of the movies, while Clifford Odets took his revenge on the film colony for enticing him from the stage with a venomous play (*The Big Knife*) exposing Hollywood's corruption, artificiality, and acquisitiveness. To Broadway, Hollywood has traditionally been a land of phony dreams created of tinsel and cotton candy where the real questions of existence are generally ignored.

BABY DOLL: *Carroll Baker.*

Today, however, instead of overtly attacking the industry, the Broadway people are covertly attempting to reform it from the inside. They now constitute a highly influential unit within the larger circle of Hollywood movie-making. Such is Hollywood's desperation over declining receipts that the studios (and banks) are willing to subsidize the new artists, provide them with independent companies, and distribute their pictures. The result is that Hollywood has been underwriting the destruction of its old forms. Most of the conventions of the realistic film seem to have been created almost in purposeful contrast to the conventions of the traditional Hollywood romance. Consistent with their own tradition ("real," in the Broadway lexicon, has generally been a synonym for "seamy"), the realistic film-makers are dedicating themselves to the exposure of the unsavory truth behind the manufactured dream.

With suggestions of incest in *Desire Under the Elms*, sadism in *Baby Doll*, adultery in *God's Little Acre*, and homosexuality in *The Strange One*, the realistic movie works manifold variations on conventional sexual themes. Similarly, violence becomes more open and frequent. A brawny hero in a Hollywood epic by John Ford might batter another for hours with chairs, sticks, stones, and broken bottles and emerge from the melee with no more than an attractive little bruise on the cheek. When Marlon Brando is beaten up by labor racketeers in *On the Waterfront*, he streams cascades of blood from open wounds, loses a few of his teeth, and suffers visibly from broken bones.

Not only does the realistic film stand in purposeful contrast to romantic films, but it sometimes even derives its effects by playing on the spectator's memory of the old Hollywood myths. Marilyn Monroe's performance in *Bus Stop*, for example, in which she played a dissipated, anemic, peroxide-blonde "chantoosy," has significance primarily if one remembers her in more well-groomed roles—say, as the glamorous idiot of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Similarly, the dilapidated, weather-stained Mississippi mansion used in *Baby Doll* calls to mind, and even comments on, the movie magnificence of Tara's enormous halls and curving staircases in *Gone With the Wind*. The dirt and the cobwebs, and the sex and the violence, of the realistic film serve a partial debunking function. They expose the glittering and hyperbolic lies of Hollywood glamor.

This is further emphasized by the techniques of the genre. In contrast to the technical virtuosity of the CinemaScope epic, the realistic film is singular for the modesty of its presentational devices. It is frequently shot in black and white and designed for projection on the smaller, conventional screen. The director, furthermore, prefers to work in actual locales rather than on the more artificial studio lots—many movie actors today spend more time in Arkansas, Mississippi, and New York than they do in Hollywood. Similarly, like the realistic play the realistic film employs interiors more often than exteriors. Despite the hypothetical advantage of the movies over the stage in its flexibility of locale, the new film is generally content to keep its hero fixed in and around the four walls of his house.

The character of the hero undergoes a corresponding change. The old matinee idols were groomed as romantic leading men, at pains to exhibit their charms in the most attractive possible manner; the new idols are less concerned with their persons than with their agonized spirits. If Clark Gable and Cary Grant could set a million female hearts aflutter merely by exposing their teeth, Anthony Quinn and Ben Gazzara struggle—lest they violate some secret agree-

ment—never to smile. Glowering, slumping, and scowling, the new actors exert their appeal not through graceful dash but through sullen bad humor. Furthermore, if the hero of the romantic film is accustomed to performing mighty deeds, usually in an open-air setting, the realistic hero is more often victimized by the confining world in which he lives. And he is trapped not only in the interior of his world but in the interior of his soul. Rather than holding an enemy at bay with a couple of loaded pistols, he is himself held at bay by the power of his neurosis.

A Hatful of Rain is typical of the new species. Adapted from a successful play by Michael Gazzo, the film takes place in New York in a familiar lower-middle-class housing development. Certain civic landmarks are readily identifiable when the action infrequently moves into the street, but most of the film is shot in two or three rooms of the hero's apartment. Suffering within these rooms are the leading male character, played by Don Murray, and his wife, played by Eva Marie Saint, both of them former New York actors. The hero's problem is to hide from his family the fact that he is a dope addict while managing to acquire enough drugs to satisfy his habit. Driven by his addiction, he quarrels with his wife and his father and tortures himself with remorse. A subplot revolves around the unrequited love for the hero's wife of his brother (Anthony Franciosa), a young clown who sits around the house most of the time in a T-shirt, guzzling beer. Sadistic dope pushers are introduced to speed the action and add melodrama; a drunken scene provides some comedy; and a scene with the father, in which he is blamed for his neglect of his sons, introduces psychological motivation. At the end, after his illness has been revealed to the entire family, the hero collapses into a state of quivering helplessness. His wife, awakened to the gravity of the situation, telephones to the police for help.

A HATFUL OF RAIN: *domestic drama in apotheosis (Don Murray and Eva Marie Saint).*

It should be clear that, although qualitatively superior to the average TV fare, *A Hatful of Rain* draws its material from the same conventions and exploits the same audience responses. The drug addiction theme is "daring" by Hollywood standards, but the film is, nevertheless, primarily a domestic drama in which the spectator is supposed to identify himself and his own household problems. The hero is singular for his inability to decide his own fate. He remains mute and passive while the "forces" take the stage and manipulate the action. What we have, in fact, is not a hero but an anti-hero—the most moving scene in the film is a cry for help.

Now the anti-hero is the central character of the anti-myth in which the "real" is juxtaposed with the "illusion," the tawdry with the grand. Considering that realism feeds to such a large extent off the extant Hollywood myths and illusions, it is inevitable that at least one realistic film should be an explicit anti-myth—in other words, that it

should take for its very theme the debunking of Hollywood glamor.

The Goddess, written by Paddy Chayefsky, is the life history, from childhood to her late thirties, of a movie queen. When this film was first announced it caused a little stir because, in taking a movie queen for his heroine, Chayefsky was reported for the first time to have created a figure out of the ordinary. The reports were wrong. Chayefsky's is possibly the most commonplace "goddess" in the history of drama or mythology. If Gazzo created an anti-hero in *A Hatful of Rain,* Chayefsky has here produced the counterpart, an anti-heroine. As played by Kim Stanley, she is unimaginably seedy: puffy-faced, tending to fat, and endowed—even in her adolescence—with the heaviest bags two young eyes have ever sustained.

The film is exclusively concerned with the heroine's psychological history. Growing up in a Maryland slum (the camera hovers affectionately above the dirty dishes), she is traumatized by a loveless childhood with an indifferent mother. The heroine, in consequence, begins to seek love wherever she can find it, first in the arms of the local swains and later in two unsuccessful marriages and innumerable affairs. Her first husband is an alcoholic—she finds him lying drunk and begrimed in a gutter—who later turns out to be the unwanted son of a movie actor. He is "damaged"—passive and suicidal—and the marriage ends when he storms off to war, followed by her curses. Her second marriage – to an inarticulate athlete (from time to time, the parallel with a living movie queen asserts itself)—is dissolved because of their inability to communicate and her voracious ambition to get into the movies.

It is difficult to understand how, considering her plainness, but the heroine eventually becomes a famous movie star. Although as Rita Shawn she is now loved by multitudes, she is still isolated and unhappy. She grows alcoholic and emotionally unbalanced, throwing frequent fits of hysteria. She quarrels violently with her mother, now a religious fanatic, who disapproves of her daughter's immoral life in Beverly Hills, where she lives between sanitariums. Later she becomes addicted to barbiturates and is last seen in a deranged stupor being cared for by an imposing female presence who represents the tender mother she never had in her childhood. The suggestion of Lesbianism in this relationship completes the deviant circle of the heroine's sexual history.

Instead of an examination of Hollywood life, we are here given a clinical study of a heroine indistinguishable from Pavlov's dogs: a victim of internal and external forces, completely incapable of exercising her will, imprisoned in the structure of her heredity and environment. Her aspirations, we are told, are specious and unsatisfying, she is unable to love, and she can find no faith to sustain her; without redeeming features of any kind, she leads a life of noisy desperation.

Now, this picture may attract patrons to the theater by its promise of glamor—which is, after all, the only interesting thing about a movie star—but glamor is the one biographical quality which Chayefsky neglects to include. Instead of someone distinctive and unique, Chayefsky has purposely created a quite commonplace figure, similar in temperament to his butchers and white-collar workers. Rita Shawn's nymphomania, her Lesbianism, her alcoholism, and her drug addiction may tally with underground reports of Hollywood behavior but these qualities are, nevertheless, the standard ingredients of Zola realism, common to most films of this type. In contrast to the heroine of another anti-Hollywood film of some years back

THE GODDESS: *Kim Stanley as the anti-heroine just before she makes it.*

(*Sunset Boulevard*) who though gaudy and vulgar at least had a fascinating Hollywood style, this goddess has nothing unusual about her at all. Rita Shawn is an expressionless shell barraged by traumas, more ordinary than anyone in the theater. One is encouraged to ask the reason.

One answer gives us some clue to the kind of spectator response the realistic film tries to evoke, for Rita Shawn's stunning lack of phyiscal and mental equipment is obviously designed so that the average female spectator will identify with her. A new kind of identification is being urged, quite distinct from the way Hollywood tried to manipulate us in the past. If movie-goers were once allowed to daydream that they were Clark Gable kissing Grace Kelly, or Ingrid Bergman being pursued by Gregory Peck, they are today supposed to identify with Don Murray and Kim Stanley in the grip of damnable neurotic torments amidst dirty linen.

And yet, one must ask just how close to the average spectator's situation the material of these films really is. Undoubtedly, a drug addict and a nymphomaniac seem more "real" to us than a cowboy, a big game huntter, or a ballroom dancer; but why, when America has the largest middle-class population in the world (when, in one sense, it sees itself as entirely middle class), are its predominant movie heroes dock workers, motorcyclists, juvenile delinquents, prostitutes, butchers, Southern farmers, seamen, and drifters, the economically and the emotionally dispossessed?

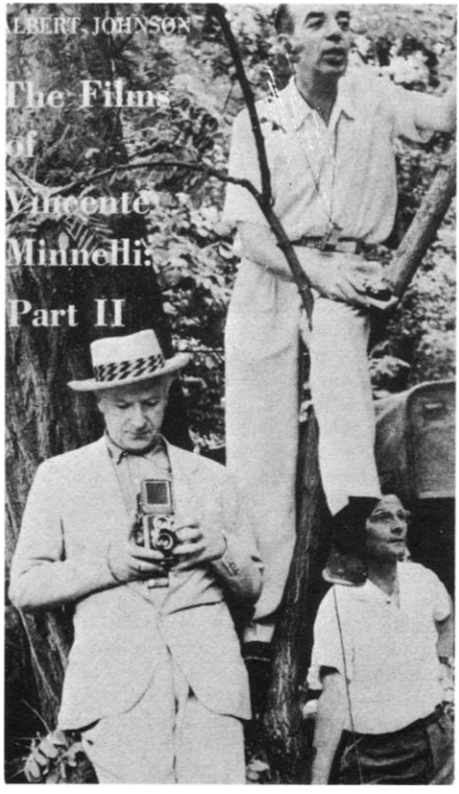
For the adult audience, I think, these heroes are interesting precisely because of their *distance* from everyday life. Americans can now afford to be indulgent toward grubbiness and poverty because they have been enjoying over the past ten years a prosperity unparalleled in their history. Having achieved what Hollywood once presented as the comfortable illusion – the well-stocked refrigerator, the well-furnished apartment, and the gleaming new car–the great middle of the American population can now regard the torn T-shirt, the dirty fingernails, and the cluttered sink as the "truth about existence." What once was immediate and painful can now be viewed with cheerful equanimity because, although it *seems* close and real, it is becoming remote from our experience. For the adult audience, in other words, the anti-myth is in the process of becoming the myth, its images almost as exotic as Hollywood's old close-ups of spotless clothes and faultless features.

For the adolescent audience, on the other hand, the appeal of the realistic film is immediate and direct. It is no accident that, although movie heroes like Humphrey Bogart and Jimmy Stewart never seemed to have any families and were remote even from their women, the heroes of the realistic film are invariably involved in conflicts with their parents and hang on to their girls for dear life. (Even films like *A Hatful of Rain* and *The Goddess*, with supposedly "adult" content, derive their action and motivation from parent-child conflicts.) For his relations with his parents provide the crucial dilemma of the adolescent's life. It is hard-

ly a coincidence that actors like Marlon Brando, Jimmy Dean, and Anthony Perkins —the mainstays of the realistic film—have become the central heroes of adolescent culture, or that teen-age images like Natalie Wood, Julie Harris, and Susan Strasberg (rather than mature women of the type represented by, say, Norma Shearer and Greta Garbo) are generally the new heroines. The huge blow-up of Carroll Baker in *Baby Doll* lying in a crib and sucking her thumb is a more articulate symbol of the new genre than its creators know.

What has happened is that Hollywood, resigned to the fact that the majority of its audience is now composed of people between the ages of fifteen and twenty, has yielded to the teen-ager's demand to see himself and his problems depicted. Sometimes this results in an amalgamation of realism and adolescent drama—Andy Hardy is provided with a switchblade. Films like *Rebel Without a Cause, East of Eden, The Blackboard Jungle, The Wild One,* and *High School Confidential* employ realistic techniques to depict the delinquent adolescent's troubled relations with his parents, his girl, or his gang. But Zola realism, whether directly aimed at adolescents or not, is admirably suited to mirror the problems of the young because it offers a youthful, rather than a mature, picture of the world. Like the hero of the realistic film, the adolescent feels himself a victim of forces beyond his control. Like this hero, he feels manipulated against his will into situations he does not desire and traumatized by a world he never made. In limiting its world to the domestic scene, the realistic movie provides the adolescent with scenes that he can recognize. In centering on delinquents, addicts, and escapists, it gives him a perfect expression for his own feelings of rebellion and isolation.

Needless to say, such a form has no more claim to art than a comic book—realism has become another peg on which Hollywood hangs its commercial hat. Although its traditions are auspicious enough, the realistic film has now settled into rigid formulas, no more true to life than the formulas of the Western and a good deal more restricting to the imagination. The Broadway people who come to Hollywood are simply swapping their own conventions for the conventions of the romantic film. And though these conventions are more sophisticated and in some cases (the films of Elia Kazan) more expertly controlled, they are really as ingratiating, as false, and as far removed from the moral concerns of art as the old. Films of high quality do occasionally emerge from Hollywood: John Huston's early films were first-rate and Stanley Kubrick promises to be an authentic movie talent if his anger holds out. But such films are infrequent, seldom box-office successes, and never written to formulas. For films of quality proceed not from the demands of a mass audience but from the painful prodding of an artist's conscience. They do not creep along the surface of the skin, but journey deep into the recesses of the soul.



Cecil Beaton (with camera) and Vincente Minnelli (in tree) on location in Paris during the shooting of GIGI.

If a director's interests in the art of the film are identified with a particular genre, it is extremely difficult for critics to accept his experiments with other material. Vincente Minnelli's tendency to creatively indulge his curiosity about the special challenges of light comedy and drama has only brought taunts from his critical detractors, who are inclined to dismiss his failures with little insight into the most inescapable hazard of directing, either on stage or screen—the inept script. Minnelli is the only director in Hollywood at present who is not primarily devoted to the fashionably squalid school of cinema, and the worlds that his films create upon the screen are never completely real because they are always environments in which art is too omnipresent. Minnelli seems old-fashioned to the contemporary converts to neorealism, because he adheres to a belief that the foremost duty of the cinema is to astonish. It has been the aim of this article to point out the achievements possible with this method. One must also, however, call attention to the very real dilemma of remaining a stylist in an era of screen realism in Hollywood. Although Minnelli has many followers in the cinematic world, he is much more appreciated in European film circles than in his own country. Besides such newcomers as Kubrick, Lumet, Delbert Mann, and Ritt, Minnelli's work often appears needlessly commercial. But none of these younger men would be interested in handling the subject matter of Minnelli's films unless they had control of the script. Perhaps this is Minnelli's chief flaw; in a time of loud intimidations of screen writers by producers and directors, he seems to have a very genuine respect for the screen writer. Some of the most famous screen writers in Hollywood have been guilty of supplying him with the most obvious contrivances since the days of Elinor Glyn, and Minnelli has been content simply to film these scripts with the most theatrical flourishes he can manage. No matter how labored the script, Minnelli's film images always suddenly burst into life at certain points, and one senses that his material ceases to interest him before and after these moments. To those who have discerned this same trait in the latest films of such directors as Renoir, Huston, Wyler, and Ford, it may be conjectured that the atmosphere of improvisation — of on-the-spot changes of business and characterizations preferred by these veteran film directors while shooting a film—may account for the peculiarly uneven quality of the completed film as a whole. Minnelli is equally inclined to prefer the spontaneous, unexpected revelation about some aspect of personality, or the visually striking image which may occur to him in the middle of his tasks, and besides, his flair for décor and costume arrangement has not dimin-

ished. The backgrounds in Minnelli's films always seem about to reveal a wall inscribed with "Vermeer was here"; he cannot leave life as it is—he is a rearranger of the out-of-place, as he sees it, in décor as well as in characterization: *intensifying* the commonplace is his forte.

Late in 1952, Minnelli was aided in his interest in satire by writers Betty Comden and Adolph Green, and *The Band Wagon*, his next film, was praised because of its sly wittiness. The center of the praise was "The Girl-Hunt Ballet." Producer Arthur Freed was responsible for the idea of a dance parody on the bloodthirsty detective stories by Mickey Spillane, who was then enjoying a "literary" vogue. Minnelli read the Spillane books, all of them filled with sex and mayhem, and he has said that he emerged "in a state of trance. Almost every chapter was a parody of itself, and lent easily to the patterns of musical spoofing."

"The Girl-Hunt Ballet" is quite stylized. From its beginning, with a tattoo of machine-gun bullets cutting the curtains, there is a visually exciting quality about it, as a great backdrop of the big city is revealed, with silhouetted skyscrapers and red fire escapes. Fred Astaire, white-suited as usual, speaks the pseudo-tough narration of the Spillane hero. The salon episode in the ballet, with its 18th-century drawings upon the wall; Cyd Charisse in black sequins against sets of intermingling gray, purple, black, and lavender; and the dance upon the Times Square subway platform, with running, black-clad gunmen somersaulting, firing pistols, and falling dead upon the smooth floor—these things hit the viewer with sporadic effectiveness, for the parody is spotty, a succession of amusing jibes elaborated and shown, but without consistent humor. It is only when the lyric hero and heroine get into the "Dem Bones Cafe" that the ballet comes to life. When the gangsters and their molls break into wordless, ecstatic cries, they create a scene of theatrical lowlife with

THE BAND WAGON:
Stylized Oedipus: Jack Buchanan.
Stylized merriment: Jack Buchanan, Nanette Fabray, Oscar Levant, Fred Astaire
Stylized Spillane: Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse, Shelly Manne.

BRIGADOON: *The lyric hero and heroine (Cyd Charisse and Gene Kelly).*

some of the ribaldry of John Gay's world. Charisse dances erotically with Astaire, her red garment sparkling through the camera's hazed lens. (This dream-role of barroom jazz seductress is peculiarly her own; compare her similar work in *Singin' in the Rain* and *Meet Me in Las Vegas.*) Creators of "The Girl-Hunt Ballet," in addition to the dancers, were Edwin B. Willis and Keogh Gleason, the set decorators; Michael Kidd, the choreographer; and Roger Edens, whose arrangements for Arthur Schwartz's score were exemplary.

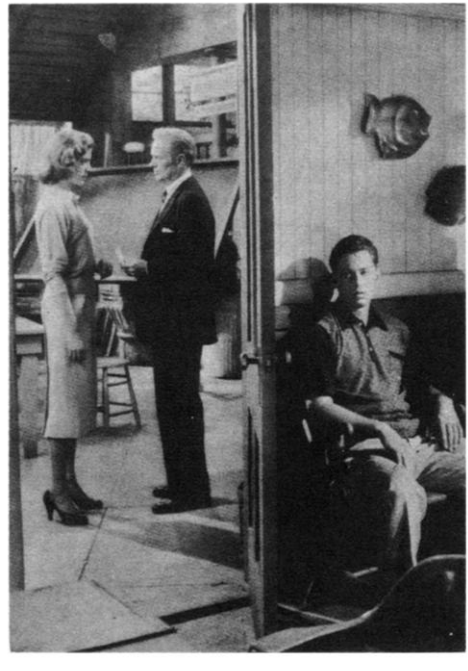
However, the film does not thrive today because of the ballet-parody alone. Its satire of some incredibly ornate productions of "Oedipus Rex" and "Faust," as enacted by Jack Buchanan, and the rousing horseplay of "That's Entertainment" were other additions to the tradition of the musical.

Without a doubt, *The Long, Long Trailer* (1953), a comic vehicle for the television favorites Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, was something of a vacation. It is an absurdly pleasant film, and Minnelli's last encounter with the normal-sized screen. There is, ironically enough, a moment in the film that offers an interesting parallel to the car-hysteria sequence from *The Bad and the Beautiful,* and it is also photographed by Surtees, slyly parodying himself: asleep in the trailer, Lucille Ball is awakened by flashing lights from cars along the highway, police sirens and pistol shots. There was also an enigmatically grotesque characterization by one of Ball's relatives, referred to as "Poor Grace" (Connie Van), seen all too briefly.

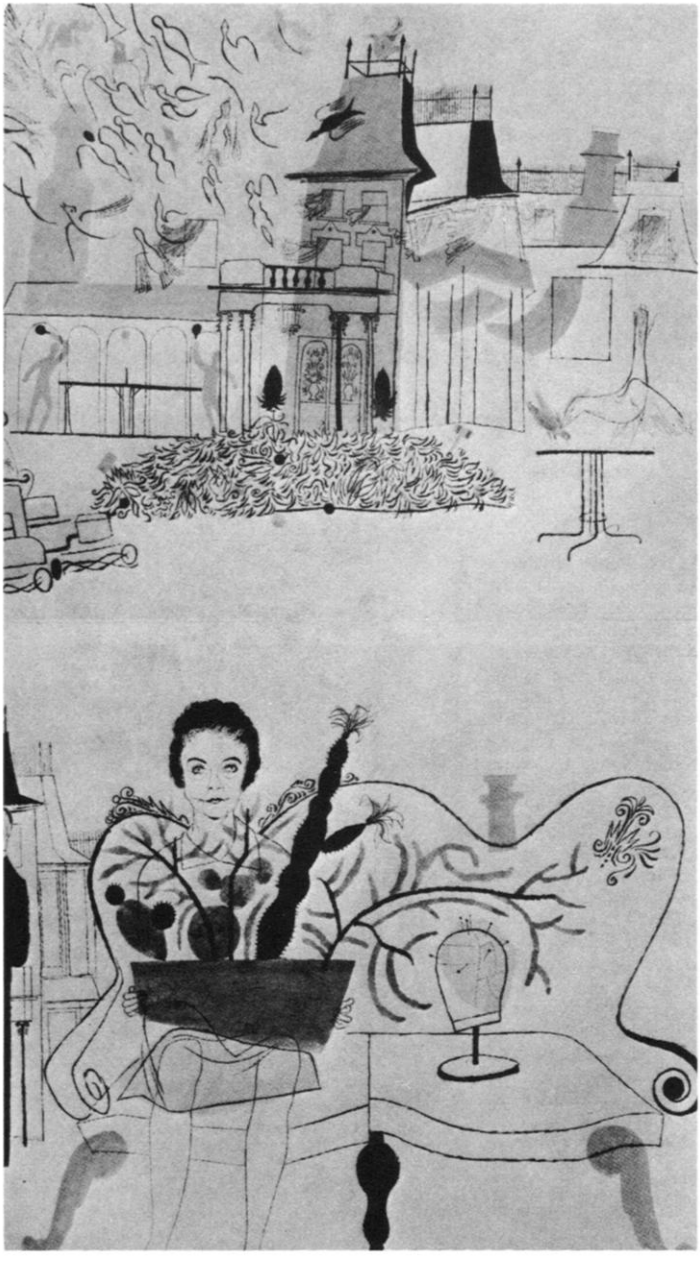
Since *Brigadoon* (1953), all of Minnelli's films have been in color and CinemaScope. CinemaScope, with its possibilities for more detailed photographic backgrounds and expansive scenic effects, was exciting for him on a purely experimental level, but, unfortunately, the wide screen merely enlarged the errors of the production. Minnelli's New York cocktail-lounge sequence, full of chatter and frenetic characters, was highly praised, and rightly so, but the changes in transposition of the Lerner-Loewe fantasy from stage to screen tampered with the very aspects of the play and score which might have made *Brigadoon* one of the best film musicals of the decade. The pitfall lay in trying to integrate into an already complete work of lyric art what had proven to be successful in a previous musical. Unfortunately, Gene Kelly's Cohanesque dances, as pleasant as they were in *An American in Paris,* were not satisfactory substitutes for Agnes De Mille's stage dances for *Brigadoon*: too many American cinema-goers knew and loved the stage musical to accept any drastic differences. The play was not treated cinematically either, and all of the Scottish sequences were interior reproductions. The film became rather shoddy fantasy, saved only momentarily by the New York sequence, a dance-duet to "The Heather on the Hill" by Kelly and Charisse, and the restoration of Van Johnson to the musical, in a triumphant song-and-dance number with Kelly.

Perhaps Minnelli was anxious to get started on *The Cobweb* (1954), which is as therapeutically stylized in its treatment of neuropsychiatric patients as *The Snake Pit* was patently pseudo-documentary in its approach. *The Cobweb*'s faults are more than balanced by its visual excellences, but the esoteric, unsympathetic characters are not adequately motivated, and the sanitarium itself, a haunting architectural whimsy, is like a drawing by Mary Petty, where

the sets and interiors (by Preston Ames and Keogh Gleason) place the characters in a world of mental illness not entirely free of fashionability, a playground for healthy American neuroticisms, full of hints and mishaps. But there is a correctly tense aura of madness over the entire film, and Leonard Rosenman's turbulently atonal score captures a tormented, sharp-edged nervousness. Several images remain long after the plot has dissolved: the wig-sequence between Lillian Gish and Richard Widmark, dominated by the actress' pantomimic gifts; and the emergence from a crowded theater by the young lovers (Susan Strasberg and John Kerr), briefly poignant and without dialogue, as Strasberg imperceptibly recovers from her ochlophobia. In this film, the diffuse screenplay is constantly kept alive by pictorial mannerism. There is a Guignol quality in the sudden view of a patient (Edgar Stehli) with slashed wrists, staring over his rumpled bedding; a cool-eyed blonde enviously appraises Gloria Grahame in a theater lobby, giving a routine sequence a quite unexpected vitality; and, finally, there is a memorable image of Widmark moving brokenly down a rain-swept riverbank as searchlights throw a red-white glow across the water, like liquid fire. *The Cobweb*, as a production, is a sort of schizoid showcase, sometimes mature in its approach to complex motivations on an intellectual plane. It fails to succeed entirely, because it reaches out in too many intriguing directions: psychopathology, the therapeutic process, administrative conflicts in the clinic, and marital problems. Most of the film's philosophy sounds plausible enough, but the reasons for the mental diseases of the patients (particularly Oscar Levant, Sandra Descher, Jarma Lewis, and Edgar Stehli) are allowed to drop behind the cobwebby plot, which spins out for two hours, illuminated here and there by Minnelli's careful attentiveness to minute details of characterization (notice Lauren Bacall's mute concern about emptying an ashtray). And in a realm where library draperies, adorned with David Stone Martin's masterful drawings, could stir up such a tempest, it was irritating never to see those drapes of wrath completed.



THE COBWEB:
(Top) The wig-sequence (Richard Widmark and Lillian Gish). (Bottom) Love and melancholia (Lauren Bacall, Richard Widmark, and John Kerr).



THE COBWEB:
Two of the many drawings made for the production by David Stone Martin. These were supposed to be interpretations of the sanitarium and fellow patients made by the melancholy adolescent, Stevie (John Kerr) for use on draperies for the clinic's library.
These drawings illustrate Minnelli's use of the artist's eye in planning his productions, the touch of a stylist rather than a technician.

KISMET: *Arabian Nights exercise: The "Not Since Nineveh" number (Dolores Gray and dancers Wonci Lui, Reiko Sato and Pat Dunn).*

Kismet (1955) was extraordinarily beautiful (Preston Ames' sets and magnificent costumes by Tony Duquette) but alarmingly lifeless. The production looked promising, but a tight shooting schedule and a series of difficulties with the weather (a massive procession sequence had to be staged indoors, with less effect) seemed to reduce the original concept of the film to routine musical status. Only two numbers were worthy of attention, and these were "Fate," sung by Howard Keel while some dervishes twirled outside a mosque, and "Not Since Nineveh," a marvelous Arabian Nights exercise in broad daylight, sung by Dolores Gray, with some brilliant dancers performing choreography by Jack Cole.

Minnelli went to France for the arduous task of making *Lust for Life* (1955), the story of Vincent Van Gogh. It is an odd film, beautifully photographed in authentic locales, particularly Arles and the Borinage, and Kirk Douglas' performance was more convincing than expected. However, the essential gloom and depression of Van Gogh's story, constantly at cinematic odds with the bursts of color in the paintings, the obvious fictionalizations and the paradox of all the American and British voices in the French surroundings, made *Lust for Life* rather innocuous as a human document.

Lust for Life was filled with images of Van Gogh in Arles—black crows fluttering across yellow fields, the artist screaming in agony at a taunting mob outside his window, or running down a coal-strewn hill in the excellent Borinage sequences. But finally, the film is simply a noble experiment. Van Gogh's story was one which demanded the dignity of tragedy, one which could not compromise with a need to simply entertain, and even Minnelli could not overcome the appalling failure of the script to understand the humanity and, often, the sameness of a genius.

The most forgivable thing about *Tea and Sympathy* (1956) is that the original author, Robert Anderson, was responsible for the screen play as well. The film's power was completely destroyed by the movie censorship code, which was expected, but apparently MGM decided that the play's success guaranteed a large audience regardless. The central theme of false accusation in a New England prep school was re-

Kirk Douglas as Van Gogh in LUST FOR LIFE.

tained, but the homosexual implications were eliminated, making the hero, Tom Lee (John Kerr), a victim of bullying more than anything else. The basis for his persecution was an ability to knit, and this device tended to rob the film of inner conviction. If, however, the purposes of the *film* are concentrated upon, and the play completely dismissed from one's memory, it becomes evident that *Tea and Sympathy* as a film is simply an attack upon insensitivity toward others and the conformities demanded in adolescent male society. The film's interest as a piece of popular drama then becomes more absorbing. A fantastic ritual by night, when the upperclassmen attack other students and tear off their pajamas by torchlight, is at once theatrical and brutally symbolic of senseless conformities; the sequence in which Tom's roommate, Al (Darryl Hickman) tries to show him how to walk acceptably, is moving and authentically played; when the headmaster's wife, Laura (Deborah Kerr), visits the local floozie, Ellie Martin (superbly played by Norma Crane) in the soda fountain, Minnelli makes the scene a symbolic, wordless encounter between the jukebox Magdalene and the Ivy League Madonna, an interesting touch of character insight, and the contrast between Tom's interludes with the two women shows the gap between a moment of truth and the moment of agony.

Tea and Sympathy became much gentler and more annoyingly evasive on the screen, and its ending is unsatisfactory, with all the loose ends tidied up uncomfortably in autumnal flashbacks and reminiscences. Once again, Minnelli created a world not at all real, but inhabited by people whose vague familiarity made them attractive emblems of stylish semitragedy.

Designing Woman (1956) is uneven farce, cleverly written by George Wells, but the film lies somewhere between the screwball comedy of the 'thirties and a musical. The latter influence was supplied by the presence of Dolores Gray and Jack Cole, both of whom were allowed to sing and dance just a little, respectively, but they also managed to give hilarious performances. Minnelli also brought Gregory Peck and Lauren Bacall quite aptly into the comic pattern, and the luxurious backgrounds of Los Angeles and New York are representative of the American's dream of wealthy sophisticates living complacently in a slick world of material comfort. The humor tended to be obvious and heavy-handed most of the time, except for two sequences: a parody of a lovers' quarrel between Peck and Gray, in which she blandly drops a dish of ravioli into his lap, and a tumultuous fight sequence in a backstage alley, when Jack Cole, as a Minnelli grotesque, subdues several gangsters with high-kicking feet—but *Designing Woman* was merely a director's lark, after all.

Of all the influences from the world of art upon Minnelli, constantly moving him toward cinematic evocations of a bygone era, the influence of the French Impressionists is the strongest. *Gigi* (1957), based upon the novel by Colette, is one of the most ornate and colorful tributes to turn-of-the-century Paris ever made in the American cinema. In Paris, Minnelli joined forces with the famous British artist and designer, Cecil Beaton, to re-create an environment of elegance and imaginary innocence. It does not seem to have mattered that the film

musical's tradition had to be considered at all, for *Gigi* is really not a musical in the strictest cinematic sense. It is a glorified charade, rich in visual effect and as esoterically charming as an antique jewel box. The film's musical style is shamelessly borrowed by Lerner and Loewe from their stage success *My Fair Lady*, but the technique of "patter-recitative" for almost all of the songs is less acceptable on the screen, and *Gigi* seems oddly static because it has no dancing. Actually, one confronts here a sumptuous presentation of a standard cinematic observation: even a jaded and rich young man must undergo the ordinary man's discomfort of falling in love.

The story of the guileless Gigi (Leslie Caron), who is trained for the career of a courtesan by her Aunts Alicia and Hortense (Isabel Jeans and Hermione Gingold), is too slender a frame for the upholstery of Minnelli's images and Beaton's splashes of color, so that when Gaston Lachaille (Louis Jourdan) gives a masked ball, or ventures into Maxim's with his latest mistress, one completely forgets the plot; there is too much to look at in the backgrounds. The only moments in *Gigi* that are firmly based upon familiar musical traditions are Maurice Chevalier's numbers and when Gigi, Gaston, and Hortense sing "The Night They Invented Champagne."

However, Minnelli's use of the lyric hero in *Gigi* is brilliantly achieved, making Gaston more important than anyone else in the film. Gaston's long soliloquy and melodic utterances of the title song, excellent in conception and mood, are followed, later in the film, by a reprise of the number in purely photographic and musical terms. The orchestrations and camera elaborate Gaston's top-hatted silhouette against the nighttime streets and fountains of Paris as he roams, disconsolately silent, stunned by first love. It is a musical number unlike anything else ever seen upon the screen, an Impressionist mood-piece haunted by the sketches of Lautrec. The Trou-

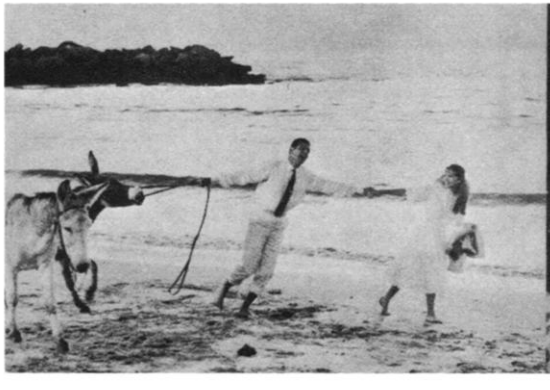
TEA AND SYMPATHY:
(Top) American ritual: (Darryl Hickman and John Kerr).
(Bottom) Moment of agony: (John Kerr and Norma Crane).

The courtesan's way (Leslie Caron and Isabel Jeans).

Mistress and lover (Eva Gabor and Jacques Bergerac).

GIGI: *The past recaptured.*

The lyric hero and heroine (Louis Jourdan and Leslie Caron).



Maxim's 1900 (Louis Jourdan and Leslie Caron).

ville sequence quietly closes with a glimpse of Gaston and Gigi pulling a donkey across a sunset-golden beach, a vignette from the worlds of Renoir and Manet. With *Gigi,* Minnelli reaffirmed his position as a director primarily interested in the pictorial effect of the cinema. To him, the spectator's receptiveness to the subject matter of a film depends solely upon the visual pleasures given. It has not been difficult to convince critics of this point of view in the fields of comedy or musicals. The danger lies in Minnelli's tendency to also decorate dramatic situations based upon recognizable, commonplace American locales.

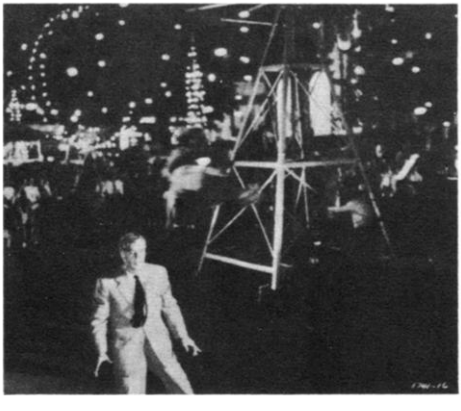
He has deliberately abandoned black and white photography and, ironically, not one of his dramatic films in color has been as poignant as *The Clock* or as stylistically cynical as *The Bad and the Beautiful.* The prevailing quality of *The Cobweb* is intellectual elegance; in *Tea and Sympathy,* sentiment instead of sarcasm dominates, and somehow color photography tends to shift the spectator's attention toward visual experience in itself, rather than bring about an awareness of the relationship of characters to life.

The Reluctant Debutante (1958) made no pretensions toward reality. William Douglas Home, adapting his stage comedy to the screen, poked fun at the weariness of the London "season" for debutantes, a relentless succession of balls and parties which had been the cause for sardonic amusement in England ever since the war. Minnelli made the film a "beau geste," a lighthearted toast to the end of a recent social era, in which Kay Kendall and Rex Harrison exhibit their sophisticated inanity. *The Reluctant Debutante* is successful because it depicts a world that cultivated artificiality and pretentiousness. The tempo of the film is set by Eddie Warren's society orchestra (subtly playing songs from Minnelli's early musicals at each party); and, in the midst of this polished comedy of ill manners, there is even a memorably bizarre character, out of Minnelli's gallery of comic grotesques, a toothy member of the Horse Guards, cleverly played by Peter Myers.

In his most recent film, *Some Came Running*

THE RELUCTANT DEBUTANTE: *Height of "The Season" (Sandra Dee, Kay Kendall, Angela Lansbury and Rex Harrison).*

(1958), the director desperately tries to avoid entanglement in the amorphous novel by James Jones. Although the screenplay (John Patrick and Arthur Sheekman) captures the rough, barroom dialogue with skill and realistic, humorous effectiveness, the story of a returned veteran and potential novelist, David Hirsh (Frank Sinatra) and his love affair with an emotionally repressed high school teacher (Martha Hyer) tends to throw the entire film off balance. The fictional town of Parkman, Indiana (the film was shot in Madison, Indiana), with its tawdry gin-mills contrasted with the mansions of suburbia, is excellently photographed and readily accepted – notably the teacher's extraordinary book-lined kitchen. But one is never convinced that the teacher, Miss French, is Jones' fictional conception of a contemporary Emily Dickinson, as he intended, and Sinatra's laconic personality is at its best in the raucous escapades in Smitty's Bar, not when exchanging platitudes with this remote creature. *Some Came Running* has some saving qualities, however, that must be considered. Confronted with the story, Minnelli concentrated upon grotesques: a witty braggart and gambler (Dean Martin) who never removes his ten-gallon hat, his otiose floozie (Carmen Phillips), and a Doll Tearsheet in Indiana named Ginny (Shirley MacLaine). Unreal to the point of fascination, but in a milieu of their own, these three and Sinatra have enough humanity in them to bring life to the sequences in which they



SOME CAME RUNNING: *Minnelli's night-world. (Top) Doll Tearsheet in Indiana (Frank Sinatra, Shirley MacLaine, Dean Martin, and Carmen Phillips). (Bottom) Carnival terror (Steven Peck).*

appear together. In another of Minnelli's symbolic encounters between tart and good woman, dialogue and music make the incident batheuc.

The totally photographic gesture of *Some Came Running*, what one must wait for in any Minnelli film, is offered in two visually compelling episodes. The surrender of Miss French to David is excitingly shot in semidarkness by cameraman William Daniels with a pinpoint of light catching the actress' eye; and toward the end of the film, during a centennial celebration, a crazed gunman is suddenly camera - struck against a crimson wall, outlined against violet alleys, seen through a twirling carousel, or the myriad lights of a Ferris wheel.

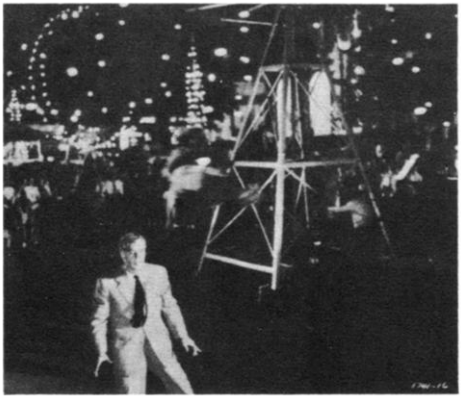
One feels that Minnelli does not think of *Some Came Running* as a failure; he is an experimentalist, still attempting to bring the elusive colors of real life to complete terms with the controlled colors of the screen. Whether he will succeed or not, one cannot say, but the artistic gestures in his films are of importance to all young filmmakers who look toward Hollywood's studios as a laboratory for creative rather than commercial expressions of cinematic art; the dilemma of Vincente Minnelli is theirs as well.

Film Reviews

The Seventh Seal

The Seventh Seal, the latest of Swedish director Ingmar Bergman's recent films to reach this country, is a triumphant declaration of what is occasionally and uniquely possible in the cinema—*occasionally*, since, as we discuss elsewhere in this issue, a personal commitment in film is rarely possible, and *uniquely*, since Bergman demonstrates a control over and synthesis of narrative, performance, and style which are uniquely available in the cinema, and then only to its masters.

The film is set in fourteenth-century Sweden, at the height of the black plague. Disease, pestilence, fear are everywhere. Women give birth to monsters—children with the heads of calves—and death may at any time, and for anybody, overtake life. A young woman is suspected of being intimate with the Devil, and is to be burned as a witch. Priests drag gigantic crosses and lead supplicants through the streets, lashing



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each other with thonged whips in a desperate attempt to pacify the "God who lives forever." A church muralist, with the relish of a man who knows he is doomed, records these events so that future congregations will be properly impressed and frightened.

It is into this gloomy but dramatically rich situation that Bergman places his leading characters—principally a knight and his squire, returned to Sweden after ten years at the Crusades, disillusioned. The knight is now engaged in a double quest—to perform some one significant act, and to discover, if he can, the meaning of life. To provide a form for this potentially unruly content, a limit is placed on the knight's time. As the film opens (after an astonishingly evocative shot of a large-winged bird hovering in the empty sky) the knight is found resting on a rocky beach. It is dawn. Close to the knight is his squire, asleep. And beside him lies, open and prepared, an ornate chess set. Suddenly the sound of the sea and of the wind is cut; the knight looks up and finds himself confronted with Death. In order to buy the time that he needs for his quest, he challenges Death to a game of chess. The game continues at intervals throughout the film, and although the issue is never in doubt it provides the film with a constant reference point and the setting for a running relationship between Death and the knight. The knight is plagued, not so much by the prospect of death, as with the knowledge that he can neither kill God within him nor find a belief that God exists, either now or in an afterlife. The present life, filled with suffering and despair and inhumanity, would have no meaning—only nausea and disgust—if there were no prospect of deliverance. Thus death has to be a transition to something else—to an afterlife which will explain and justify the present. His squire, with whom he has a continuing argument, and who is silenced (under protest) only by death itself, is much more of a rationalist. Less idealistic, with a hedonist's relish of life, he knows death only as an end to life, and as such it has to be resisted.

These two attitudes are most completely contrasted during a brilliantly staged scene—the

THE SEVENTH SEAL: *Bengt Ekerot (Death) and Max von Sydow (the knight).*

burning of the witch. The knight, willing to go anywhere for knowledge, asks the girl for her secrets, but her replies are enigmatic, almost flippant. She is tied to a ladder and raised above the pyre. The knight sees hope in her eyes, the squire only the despair of someone looking at a void. And then, significantly, she dies on the ladder. She has been saved from the executioners, but the knight's questions have not been answered.

In the end Death also is a disappointment. At the moment of his triumph over the knight he is silent, and declares that in fact he has no secrets. Thus the argument between the knight and his squire goes unresolved, and if the film ended here we would be left with a sense of despair and, almost, of personal loss.

However, woven into this central engagement are a number of other characters whose lives and attitudes are made to bear upon the knight's quest. There is a group of strolling players, whose director, Skat, seduces the wife of a blacksmith and, to escape his wrath, feigns suicide. Resting in the bough of a tree from the exertion of what might have been his most important performance, he is startled to find that Death is sawing down his refuge. The blacksmith and his wife, representatives of commonsense self-indulgence, continue, awed for a moment (ironically, by the false death) but, to all intents and purposes, not seriously involved.

Death will be a shock when it comes to them, but that's all. The remaining members of his band remind us of the holy family, and their names are the same, save that the child is called, not Jesus, but after the archangel Michael. Resting with this family in the bright sun of a Swedish summer afternoon, and eating wild strawberries with them, the knight has a temporary respite from doubt. Later, just after Death has captured his queen, he is given the chance to save their lives. Aware that Mary's life has been called, the knight upsets the board and temporarily distracts Death, so that Mary and Joseph, with their child, are able to make their escape. Thus, although failing in his larger quest, the knight performs a solitary significant act, and has a minor triumph over Death. And here, probably, is the substance of Bergman's argument. Both the knight and the squire are, by their philosophical positions, unable to dispatch the problems presented by death, but Mary and Joseph never commit themselves to this argument and are, in fact, aloof from it and from the double scourge of pestilence and a reactionary church. Calm and serene, they are the only ones who in the end are saved.

Death comes as a relief only to a woman whose life earlier had been saved by the squire, who hoped to make her his housekeeper (hoping also that in the meantime his wife has died). She kneels before Death and says—with her only line of dialogue throughout the film, and with as close as she ever gets to a smile—"It is finished." "Consummatum est"—the last words of Christ on the cross. The Apocalypse is at hand.

The various internal dramas of the film are brilliantly controlled by Bergman. His skill in staging a scene, in composing it, in moving the camera, and in obtaining performances of stature from a varied cast is breath-taking. He owes much to his cameraman, Gunnar Fischer, who also photographed *Smiles of a Summer Night* and several other Bergman films, and it is only in minor places that Bergman might be thought to falter, although the choice of music (by Erik Nordgren) seems oddly theatrical. Perhaps his principal dramatic achievement, in the script as much as in the direction, is to leave us with a feeling always of character, never only of symbol. In a piece which is nonetheless rich in symbolic imagery, the characters emerge as people. Twice when we might otherwise question the real humanity of the knight, Bergman introduces the character of his wife, first by allusion and then, near the end, in person. The knight is humanized and made more significant by this personal extension and also by his relationship with the squire. Both of these parts are brilliantly played—the squire with a kind of well-mannered and articulate sensuality by Gunner Björnstrand, and the knight by Max von Sydow, tortured, twisted with doubt, but always a knight, always with the authority and integrity of his position. Bengt Ekerot, as Death, avoids most of the mediæval clichés and, although of course deprived of the opportunity for a personal relationship with any of the characters, is still not impersonal; not only a symbol, but a character who is capable also of personal doubt.

The film is a successful period piece in the sense that it creates the precise period and locale which permit the story and the characters to develop. But the references to contemporary times, the age of anxiety and of the atom bomb, are not hard to find. The title, and some of the narrative, is taken from the Revelation of St. John the Divine (chapters five through nine), but the allusions, in dialogue and in song, owe as much to Nordic mythology as to any Biblical origin. The film, made through Svensk Filmindustri, is an extraordinary major studio production—a remarkable, personal work, which establishes Bergman (for those who had any doubt) as the leading European director.

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The Horse's Mouth

It is difficult to recall a film about creative artists that is not somehow patronizing. If "art" is treated seriously, it is too often attended by solemn proclamations about the divinity of the creative spirit (or perhaps its madness). If, however, the treatment is comic, it is all quite silly: artists are a gay and irresponsible bunch not to be taken seriously.

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With *The Horse's Mouth* Alec Guinness, both as screenwriter and actor, has avoided taking either approach. He had in Joyce Cary's novel wonderful material to begin with. But there is his own comic talent, too, which can be funny and serious at once without being foolish or sentimental. Selecting from Cary to suit his talents, yet preserving somehow the tone of the original, Guinness' screenplay and performance amount to a rare comic achievement that speaks of serious things from behind surface flippancies and outrageous hokum.

The Horse's Mouth tells of an aging and disreputable artist, Gulley Jimson, whose talents as painter and con man are about evenly matched. The hero of Cary's novel is unquestionably a genius. Preoccupied with the slant of a model's shoulder or the intensity of a color, while Blake's poetry races in his head, he only incidentally and somewhat absentmindedly commits fraud and theft.

But for Guinness the shadier side of this outrageous hero must have seemed more promising than the visionary. So we can hardly resent his emphasis on the comic undertow in the life of his character. We must in fact take on faith the artistic brilliance of Guinness' hero, and the paintings done for the film by John Bratby have enough overstatement to keep even this question open. Yet, curiously, the moments when Alec Guinness draws and paints are more convincing than, for example, similar scenes from *Lust for Life* or *Moulin Rouge*.

As the film opens, Gulley Jimson is being released from jail, where he has spent a month for threatening his wealthy benefactor, Mr. Hickson. Now free, and as usual penniless, he resumes his assaults on Hickson by telephone, unable to resist a flair for absurd vocal impersonations and wild improvisations as the president of the Royal Academy or the Duchess of Middlesex. This is classic Guinness material, easily reminiscent of his earlier films, *Man in the White Suit*, *The Lavender Hill Mob*, and *The Ladykillers*—the gifted man at odds with the world, but dauntless and exceptionally versatile. Guinness' comic virtuosity, like that of Chaplin and Keaton and Lloyd, is always part of his characterization, and these roles have per-

THE HORSE'S MOUTH: *Alec Guinness as Jimson painting the raising of Lazarus.*

mitted him to perform all manner of comic turns in and around the main line of action.

The substance of this film is the artist's quest, in this case an insanely funny Odyssey only one step ahead of the police. Searching always for a canvas large enough to receive his masterpiece, Jimson finds a superb blank wall in the apartment of a potential customer—a tapestry having been sent out to be dry-cleaned. During the owner's absence on vacation, Jimson gains admission and turns the flat into a studio. He strips the flat of its valuables, pawning them in order to finance his painting, and keeps meticulous note of the revenue, considering it an advance against the completed, but unsolicited work. He imports a pirate's gang of models whose feet provide the subjects for his mural on the raising of Lazarus. His disciple cooks Irish stew on a hot plate, while a rather frightening sculptor (Michael Gough), hearing that Jimson is on to a good thing, moves in with a huge block of stone whose delivery results in the flat's almost total ruin.

And here we have an important and recurrent theme—the artist, not only his Philistine enemy, is a destroyer. This theme is turned inside out as it were, when later in the film Guinness himself drives the Borough tractor to collapse the last standing wall of a condemned church—the wall containing his most recent "masterpiece," hastily assembled under his direction by students of an art school which he improvised for the purpose. It was perhaps his greatest work, but he alone must destroy it, since no man but himself can bear that responsibility. He seems to bear it lightheartedly.

Director Ronald Neame (who worked earlier with Guinness in *The Promoter*) has caught many exquisitely comic images. Ernest Thesiger's Mr. Hickson expresses masterful distaste and squeamishness in close-up, while his butler (Richard Caldicot) tries with elegant woodenness to maintain his dignity in the face of Jimson's gross assaults on butlership. For Gulley's inglorious retreat from Hickson's house, surrounded by the police, Neame has staged a stunning series of farcical maneuvers that remind us of the best in the silents. And later, in the apartment scene, he heightens the sense of devastation by retaining in our view two or three bleak survivals of the rooms' former elegance – a regal lamp whose shade has been pawned, an oriental rug, and an elaborate period chair or two. The result is pure surrealism.

Throughout, the acting is superb. Kay Walsh as Coker, attached to Gulley Jimson almost against her will, gives a beautifully observed performance. Mike Morgan as Nosey and Renée Houston as Gulley's former wife give excellent and fully realized characterizations.

But the whole depends on Guinness' contribution, and this performance must rank with his best, although the creaking voice he assumes for most of the role seems unnecessary and is not quite assimilated in the performance. (Might we suspect that the writer-actor had some last-minute misgivings about his own suitability for the role of this seedy artist, and added a Popeye voice as a disguise?)

But even with this reservation, Guinness projects a marvelous audacity that is not easily resisted. Dreamer and menace, genius and buffoon, Guinness' Gulley Jimson is a fine realization of the absurdities as well as the idealisms of the creative life. In the final shots, he goes sailing down the Thames in his rickety and quite unseaworthy houseboat, and passes painters of another kind freshening up the hull of a great ship. Then, in an appropriately overstated fade-out (the traditional one made "mythic"), Gulley Jimson passes through the open arms of the Tower Bridge. It is absurd, but it is also grand.

—HENRY GOODMAN.

Lonelyhearts

No accident, you feel, that Nathanael West and the German artist George Grosz once founded a magazine together. West's novel *Miss Lonelyhearts* (like *The Day of the Locust*, which describes the wretched struggles of a few obscure, hopeless Hollywood characters) creates a savage cartoon world. Nightmare and dissolution are the main properties of this world; the characters are nearly all grotesques, as in Grosz's drawings. At times they even remind you of

mitted him to perform all manner of comic turns in and around the main line of action.

The substance of this film is the artist's quest, in this case an insanely funny Odyssey only one step ahead of the police. Searching always for a canvas large enough to receive his masterpiece, Jimson finds a superb blank wall in the apartment of a potential customer—a tapestry having been sent out to be dry-cleaned. During the owner's absence on vacation, Jimson gains admission and turns the flat into a studio. He strips the flat of its valuables, pawning them in order to finance his painting, and keeps meticulous note of the revenue, considering it an advance against the completed, but unsolicited work. He imports a pirate's gang of models whose feet provide the subjects for his mural on the raising of Lazarus. His disciple cooks Irish stew on a hot plate, while a rather frightening sculptor (Michael Gough), hearing that Jimson is on to a good thing, moves in with a huge block of stone whose delivery results in the flat's almost total ruin.

And here we have an important and recurrent theme—the artist, not only his Philistine enemy, is a destroyer. This theme is turned inside out as it were, when later in the film Guinness himself drives the Borough tractor to collapse the last standing wall of a condemned church—the wall containing his most recent "masterpiece," hastily assembled under his direction by students of an art school which he improvised for the purpose. It was perhaps his greatest work, but he alone must destroy it, since no man but himself can bear that responsibility. He seems to bear it lightheartedly.

Director Ronald Neame (who worked earlier with Guinness in *The Promoter*) has caught many exquisitely comic images. Ernest Thesiger's Mr. Hickson expresses masterful distaste and squeamishness in close-up, while his butler (Richard Caldicot) tries with elegant woodenness to maintain his dignity in the face of Jimson's gross assaults on butlership. For Gulley's inglorious retreat from Hickson's house, surrounded by the police, Neame has staged a stunning series of farcical maneuvers that remind us of the best in the silents. And later, in the apartment scene, he heightens the sense of devastation by retaining in our view two or three bleak survivals of the rooms' former elegance – a regal lamp whose shade has been pawned, an oriental rug, and an elaborate period chair or two. The result is pure surrealism.

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But the whole depends on Guinness' contribution, and this performance must rank with his best, although the creaking voice he assumes for most of the role seems unnecessary and is not quite assimilated in the performance. (Might we suspect that the writer-actor had some last-minute misgivings about his own suitability for the role of this seedy artist, and added a Popeye voice as a disguise?)

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Flemish painters, Breughel and Bosch. The evil, the deformed, the tempters and the tempted, hang in West's gallery. Most of all he is fascinated by lust, and calls it Faye—Faye Greener, the dreadful insatiable would-be movie star of *The Day of the Locust*, Fay Doyle, the frantic, aging, unsatisfied married woman in *Lonelyhearts*.

It is Fay's lust which destroys the young newspaperman who writes an advice-to-the-lovelorn column. He is at first sickened, then agonized, by the desperate lives revealed in the letters he receives. Sickened because the letters open up a world of mean and ugly frustration, agonized because behind every "Perplexed" and "Disgusted" and "Desperate" is a real cry for help. His column, he feels, can be no more than a useless bromide. So his Gethsemane begins: literally, because a Christ complex decides him to take these sufferings upon himself. Out of pity he lets himself be seduced by the woman who tells him her husband has been an impotent cripple for seven years. The husband finds out about it, is crazed with jealousy, and murders Lonelyhearts. So much, West seems to say, for excessive compassion; like Christ's, it will be misunderstood.

West turns the screw even further by giving the editor for whom Lonelyhearts works the kind of problem that people write letters to the paper's agony column about. Married for years to a vicious and frigid wife whom he still loves, frustration has made him cruelly cynical. When Lonelyhearts talks about love and compassion, he sneers at him.

All this sounds unlikely material to be "written for the screen and produced by" Dore Schary. Judging from his films, Schary is a man with his heart in the right place. He likes rather guileless, uplifting works. He has right thoughts on all the right subjects (racial tolerance, the atom bomb, President Roosevelt, America, etc.) West's newspaper editor would probably give him a nervous breakdown. As it happens, Schary's adaptation is taken not only from the novel but from a Broadway version by Howard Teichmann which had a brief run last year; apparently it began the process of softening-up which is here completed. Between them, the two writers have reversed the entire meaning of West's novel. In the film, the crippled husband can't bring himself to shoot Lonelyhearts (you know the scene—gun suddenly drops from nerveless fingers); Lonelyhearts, forgiven by his wholesome, sheepish girl-friend for the episode with Fay Doyle, goes off to another job. And the editor is reconciled to his wife—no longer a pathological virago but a trim, patient woman who's been begging him to forgive her for sleeping (once) with another man, ten years ago, when she was drunk. She is played in a series of rather elegant hats by, of all people, Myrna Loy.

What we are left with, is uncertain. The smooth black-and-white images are definitely not those of West's harsh, shattered, pessimistic world. I suppose we are intended to accept the story of a kind young man who is nearly dragged in the mire by the wretchedness of the people he pities, escapes just in time, and by his display of Christian compassion induces a change of heart in his embittered editor. However, something more than an over-all tone of liberal *schmalz* is necessary to make this convincing. It is true that you can't quite keep a good story down, and in the first half of the picture—though neither writer nor director show any imagination in exploring Lonelyhearts' inner doubts and disgust—the shadow of West's original idea is clearly enough seen for the result to be interesting in a mild way. In the second half (except for the bar scene in which Lonelyhearts encounters Fay's husband just after he's been seduced

LONELYHEARTS: *Montgomery Clift.*

by her), there is not even a shadow, and the result is uninteresting in a mild way.

The director, Vincent J. Donehue, has done better things on television. Here he makes no gesture of his own; his contribution seems passive and a bit limp. As the disagreeable editor, Robert Ryan has an impossible part. His dialogue is facetious and heavy-handed—instead of "Where are you going?" he asks, "Whither away, pilgrim?" and says "Hail and farewell!" instead of "Good-bye"—and the situation with his wife is unbelievable. In addition to brooding over ancient cuckoldry, he appears to be a disappointed liberal—there's an odd scene when he starts talking about the hydrogen bomb and the Ten Commandments in a sarcastic but right-minded way. Maureen Stapleton as Fay Doyle, pitiable but repellent, strikes the authentic West tone: a subtle, clever performance.

It is not Montgomery Clift's fault if the character of Lonelyhearts remains vague. The material is inadequate. As it is, he suggests doubt, tenderness, and sincerity very well. In an imaginative version of the novel, he could be wonderful. Among West's papers after his death was found the first draft of a film adaptation of *Lonelyhearts*; perhaps this, directed by Buñuel, might have been a masterpiece. On the other hand, something from the more fragrant pages of, say, Paul Gallico, might be a treasure-trove for Schary.—GAVIN LAMBERT.

Amici per la Pelle
(*The Woman in the Painting*)

The fate of this picture provides a rather saddening commentary on the situation of foreign films in the United States. Made in 1955 in Italy under the name *Amici per la Pelle*, it has finally arrived in this country under a totally dissimilar and somewhat misleading title. (In England it was known as *Friends for Life*, a title far closer to the original.) Not a big picture in any sense of the word, with no stars, no spectacle, and no sensational aspects to exploit, in ordinary screen size and in black and white—the picture undoubtedly presented a problem of distribution. Ideally, of course, it should have gone into an art house where, with the proper handling, it would reach the type of audience who might be expected to support it. What was done with it? In New York, at any rate, it ran for a week as the second feature on a double bill at a theater which usually shows foreign films on their second run. The posters outside the theater attempted to generate interest in the picture by statements which hinted at nonexistent sensational elements. Did the film reach the proper audience? To some extent, no doubt, but certainly not to the extent it should have and under conditions which could hardly be called ideal. Maybe future bookings will win it the attention it deserves. One certainly hopes so. At any rate, the situation with foreign films is often frustrating: we wait years sometimes for films to get here, having heard and read about them elsewhere with eager anticipation; our patience is occasionally rewarded and our hopes justified, but often there are other forces—censorship, unthinking mutilation for commercial purposes, crass exploitation techniques—that intervene to prevent the proper reception of the film. It is all more than a little saddening.

What of the film itself? It is the story of the friendship of two boys, Franco and Mario. Franco (Andrea Scire) is the son of a diplomat; his mother is dead and his home changes with his father's assignments. Mario (Geronimo Meynier) is the son of a manufacturer of ceramics. Franco, who has just returned to Rome from England, first meets Mario at school when they are both sent out into the hall as punishment; this acquaintance soon develops into a friendship which, despite minor squabbles and setbacks, becomes the central force of their lives. As the friendship grows, Franco reveals to Mario the existence of the house where he was born, unused now, but containing an object of great meaning for him—the portrait of his dead mother.

A break in their relationship occurs after a school race in which Mario, who is winning until forced to drop out of the race from exhaustion,

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To this simple story director Franco Rossi has brought insight and a warm understanding; he has not so much directed a film as he has revealed a segment of life. From his two young actors he has elicited performances that are so remarkable and so right that never do we think of them as "acting": to watch their movements, their gestures, their reactions is to feel that nothing else at that particular moment would have been correct. Rossi has been especially successful in making us aware of the feelings of the boys: the growing bond between them; the slight jealousies and the hurt feelings, the sudden bursts of friendliness and affection; Franco's loneliness and his fascination with Mario's home life; Mario's awakening interest in girls, and Franco's resistance to this intrusion of an alien world on their friendship; Franco's hurt at the breakup of their friendship. We are led into the world of childhood through the minds and the feelings of the two boys. The point of view is theirs, and director Rossi allows nothing to destroy this balance.

If the film does not reach the heights of a *Shoeshine*, it is because it is smaller in scope and lacks that picture's social overtones. But it belongs with *Shoeshine* and such pictures as *La Maternelle and Mädchen in Uniform* as one of the handful of fine films on childhood.—WILLIAM BERNHARDT.

Flebus

This delightful satire on what might be called the Freudolatry of everyday life is the best and most promising American cartoon since *Fudget's Budget*, UPA's last creative gasp. Its drawing is superbly stripped-down, to a kind of Steinberg style without curlicues; its colors are by turns vibrant and astutely sickening; its pace is brisk and perfectly controlled; its theme is important; and it is very funny indeed. Theaters ought to book it, advertise it, and put it on their marquees as they did *Gerald McBoing-Boing*. And we can all hope that its producers, who are apparently at Terrytoons (Twentieth Century-Fox is distributing it), will soon show us what else they are up to.—ERNEST CALLENBACH.

Sleeping Beauty

Walt Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* is a predictable failure; after all, you can hardly spend six million dollars today without destroying a lot of imagination along the way.

The film's characters and story can scarcely be distinguished in style from those of *Snow White*, except by their total lack of ingenuity. Only the well-researched, Renaissance-flavored art direction diverts; the characters that pass before it do not entertain, the too-occasional gags do not amuse, and the music cannot be whistled—all of which makes for pretty dull make-believe.

The Disney preoccupation with painstaking draftsmanship has never been more evident than in this 75-minute monument to dramatic realism. As a publicity throw-away suggests, "the inert drawings are scarcely distinguishable from life and living beings." One wonders why they bothered using the animation medium at all.—RAYMOND FIELDING.

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DOM

New Images

[With the following group of reviews *Film Quarterly* inaugurates coverage of experimental films, to which we hope to give intensive and fairly regular scrutiny. While we, and many of our contributors, chafe at some of the connotations the term "experimental" has gained in connection with film, we have found no other that will serve better to indicate works whose impulse is non- or anticommercial, whose objectives are noneducational, and whose methods are sometimes novel. Remembering that the atmosphere of the commercial cinema is cynical and opportunistic, we may perhaps forgive experimental film circles a certain atmosphere of obscurantism or pomposity. In both worlds, much trash is produced. We will try to search out the artistically ambitious works in both, and give them the critical analysis they deserve.—ED.]

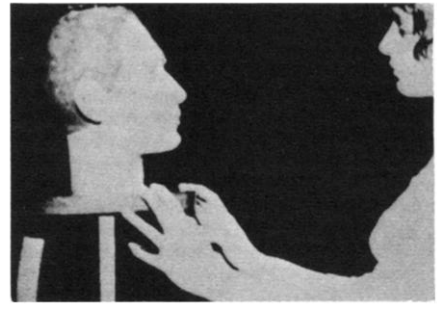
Dom: a film by Walerian Borowczyk and Jan Lenica

Loving: a film by Stan Brakhage

L'Opéra Mouffe: a film by Agnès Varda

What have we here? Three nominally experimental films that are of three distinct categories of experimentalism. All three were entered at the Experimental Film Festival, Brussels, 1958, in good faith, I am sure, as both avant-garde and experimental, yet in substance and approach, as well as method, they are so diverse that at once it is evident that at least one of them overlaps on the documentary area. All three, moreover, were distinguished by an award—the most fortunate being *Dom*, which took the Grand Prix (about $10,000). In addition, alert critics might be expected to determine what each one means to the art of the film.

As one who did not attend the Festival itself, I find it natural (as others must) to wonder how just and plausible were the awards given these entries. Since statistics regarding the jury and



the types of film considered have been announced elsewhere, including the program notes of Cinema 16 (which held screenings of the prize-winners in New York), I shall not give them here. In any case, the point that engrosses me is the status of the three above-named films as avant-garde art.

The truth about avant-garde film is that it is *the* art of the film, existing as it were under concentration camp conditions, and not just the vanguard of a body of long-recognized and mature art. The "art of the film" is, alas! not, as many imagine, a given quantity. Having no implicit existence such as other arts have won, it has to be defined and demonstrated. This is so simply because—to state it in the fewest possible words—commerce has far too strong a grip on film standards to have permitted a competent school of criticism to eliminate from consideration as art all the more or less elegant claptrap touted by critics themselves as art. Here I can merely define, not argue, this premise as such.

Let us directly regard the film art in the light cast diversely by *Dom*, *Loving*, and *L'Opéra Mouffe*. Putting it this way, one may classify as follows: *Dom* adheres with a truly classic purity to the postulates and precedents of the Dada-Surrealist school of Buñuel, Dali, Man Ray (incidentally one of the judges), and Marcel Duchamp; undoubtedly, this is the true avant-garde school which has been internationalized, and which Cocteau and his followers in the U.S. have systematically expanded and rationalized. It has one vital, governing premise:

the mechanical recording of natural movement and the photographic surface of nature (as well as nature's colors) are "out"; movement in film is to be as varied and arbitrary as movement in music while the image itself can be transformed or distorted in any way suiting the purposes of the film artist.

One is always aware, looking at *Dom*, that its movement is governed by "danced" rhythm; actually, the movement is usually equivalent to the earliest cinematographic attempts to record nature, but here paced variously at will. By *Dom*'s courtesy, therefore, we can discern the same sort of movement *as esthetic value* because (as when we are shown an antique film print of two men fighting and fencing) it is manipulated rhythmically and spatially in whatever way desired; the film's modernist music score italicizes this point. Using film, art and scientific prints, as well as direct photography of nature, *Dom* provides a consistent feeling of artifice that nowadays may strike us as "puritanical": it is preeminently a *laboratory* film, the true creative work being concentrated in the ways that already created drawings and photographs are reused; no laboratory device is actually original (I believe) and yet the ensemble, since a highly conscious idea animates it, is beautifully presented and holds together.

Dom uses a basic symbolist method, and, of course, symbolist ideas in art still mystify even specialized art publics, just as poetry itself still mystifies those who went through Shakespeare courses in school. The symbolist idea in *Dom*, however, could hardly be simpler or stricter. "Dom" means *house, home* . . . A woman waits for either husband or lover, whose footsteps she hears on the street outside (the fighting sequence indicates he may be away having a duel); he comes in, places his hat on an old-fashioned hatrack and appears to her as a handsome clothes-dummy's head, which she caresses only to see it soon disintegrate under her eyes (perhaps signifying the wounds he has suffered in the fight).

The above, naturally, is only the synopsis. The film's central idea has been communicated, I imagine, by a sequence dealing with a primitive graphic concept of the brain's mechanical structure: man's true "home" is his brain, which forms all his notions of the outside world. This theme has been presented in terms of an old house front, old prints, and old-fashioned props, including a very lovely "vamp type" lady; as still images, many shots are close to the Dada collages of Max Ernst and Francis Picabia's paintings. The strictly controlled rhythms and repeated image - sequences build up suspense and tension. Someone is coming; someone waits; what will happen? A green wig is animated as though it were a spider or an octopus; it moves in minimal jumps the way the woman's head is made to move as she opens her eyes on hearing the man's footsteps. Time is cyclic because—as psychology has long known—the anxiety of waiting, in the mind of the one who waits, anticipates and re-anticipates an event over and over before it really happens.

All this is simple enough and certainly familiar enough. The distinction of *Dom* lies in an asset which a great majority of the films seen at the Festival, for one or another reason, may have seriously neglected, and whose presence in *Dom* may account for its gaining the Grand Prix. This is a careful, sensuously beautiful surface: a continuously designed and appealing area of vision whose clean, dramatic composition is never allowed to lapse. If any fault at all were to be found with it technically, one could observe that it is sometimes a little on the smart magazine "layout" side and resembles the advertising décor influenced by the Bauhaus as well as by surrealism . . . all the more surprising, then, its true inspiration. Its clean technical edges, both aural and visual, may have decided the experts in its favor. One has merely to place it next to *L'Opéra Mouffe* and a film similar to the latter, *Life Is Beautiful*, also entered at the Festival and shown at Cinema 16, to see just how "pure" *Dom* is as an avant-garde experimental and how "impure" the other two are.

We should notice, so far as method is concerned, that *L'Opéra Mouffe* and *Life Is Beautiful* parallel *Dom* to a certain extent. This overlap lies in the rudimentary concept of *montage* as defined by Eisenstein. *Dom* uses artificially

L'Opéra Mouffe

colored clips from dated movies, photographs, and prints; *Life Is Beautiful* exclusively uses film clips from studio storerooms (jazz dancing, parades, concentration camps, atomic explosions, and a studio-made allegoric sequence as climax). All black and white, *L'Opéra Mouffe* probably photographed its sequences from scratch, but they *could* have been film clips so far as their material and approach go; strangely enough, this film too uses symbolic sequences of the animate still-life kind; a dove trapped in a glass globe, one suspects, is a coy version of Peace artificially confined in Space.

Only, in one perspective, what it pretends to be, *L'Opéra Mouffe* (a pun on "L'Opéra Bouffe" and a poor Paris neighborhood nicknamed La Mouffe) is a sensitive documentary, and, as such, "experimental" to the extent that it introduces imaginative moods into the documentary. We see lyrically, unaffectedly nude lovers; we see children playing monsters in masks; we see the pitifully old, the morally and physically misshapen. But is the method of showing these things imaginative *enough*? For one thing, it is uneven. At times, it is pretentious, arty, and banal (as in the young girl running slow-motion through a field and in the trapped dove) and at other times it simply "drifts" by adding one image statistically, rather than meaningfully, to another (as in the sequences of drunks and the people wiping their noses); in such cases, the *montage*-idea becomes very diluted. Image added to image without development or impetus is not true *montage* but picture-magazine journalism . . . here "exotic" to Americans because it depicts Paris, tritely famous sink of iniquity. Technically, *L'Opéra Mouffe* is a "suite," a series of facets, but these facets possess no unifying principle either intellectual or sensuous. Supposedly, one thinks: "How human! how pitiful! how sweet! how strange! . . . in brief: how lifelike!" Yet, however interesting and well-photographed in the conventional sense, the "anthology" attitude that life is an endless network of strange contradictions can never get, in terms of meaning, beyond the stage of clever reporting; it can never reach the stage of meaning that is art *as an efficient form*; it falls apart into the scattered materials of *potential* art.

Yet when, as presumably here, reporting *pretends* to be art, how undependable the reporting, as such, emerges! *L'Opéra Mouffe*, with its air of a jaunty café ballad, is deceptively "chic" and highly irresponsible in every way. The best reason for talking about it is that it represents a decided trend in ways of contemporary thinking, insofar as these ways have a significant moral meaning. This too involves the technical procedure of *montage*. The "trick" of placing lyric, exuberant, and happy images side by side with dreary, pathetic, and horrible ones is that we live in an age of special fear and tension, fed intimately by two world wars within half a century and the prospect of a third, ominously fatal, one. Like *L'Opéra Mouffe*, *Life Is Beautiful* is geared to this moral psychology. Its *montage* is sometimes audio-visual, as when we suddenly hear Louis Armstrong's familiarly funny "life is beautiful" theme rasped out while images of a great social disaster unreel before us; in strictly visual *montage*, nightclub whoopee serves as an immediate introduction to inmates of concentration camps in all their misery. This "allegori-

cal space" of social protest and criticism is pure *montage* according to a basic definition.

But what are we supposed to *feel*, and what are we supposed to *conclude*, in the presence of this same allegorical space? Viewing the ape who places a wreath upon a tombstone surmounted by a marble cherub, and reading the inscription, "Homo Sapiens," what can we feel and think but "How ironic, how pitifully ironic! . . . man is still only a thinking beast!" Actually, it is a rather stale joke, put in this way, and we occasionally laugh or groan in neurotic desperation; the filmic invention, as such, is minimal, and so is the imagination. Therefore *Life Is Beautiful*, and *L'Opera Mouffe* too, are simply documentary treatments of a moral psychology, and "experimental" only insofar as they play on it in terms of *montage* imagery. One may call them radical-liberal, even "avant-garde," journalism, but not *art*. They are "stunts" and once their points are absorbed, they appear empty—like editorials.

One point naively overlooked by this "sophisticated" school of film journalism is that the festival of the clown, part of the ancient rites of mourning death, implies the human truth which Dante epitomized in the title of his *Divine Comedy*: death is not merely death, it is also resurrection. Thus, in the two-faced masks worn by children in *L'Opéra Mouffe*, life is but the other side of the coin of death, comedy but the other side of the coin of tragedy. In human experience, it is far from being news that horror and joy, beauty and ugliness, life and death seem inextricably mixed with one another; in fact, it is the oldest truth of consequence to be discovered and honored by mankind. Modern views, those of social protest, suggest that this is perhaps because man is still imperfect, still too much of an ape, and that human cruelty, and the killing of man by man, can be eliminated from human destiny.

However laudable this viewpoint is, it has existed for many ages in many forms, and when called to our attention once more, must be highly equipped in intellectual or artistic terms to merit our praise and interest. *L'Opéra Mouffe*, substantially, is only a reporter's visual notebook about the backgrounds and conditions of significant human experience; it is inadequately processed studio material, playing a charade as an experimental film. In contrast remains *Loving*, Stan Brakhage's film, which despite its obvious subject—a couple making strenuous love in the woods—manages to be personal, spontaneous, and noteworthy because it sustains the fundamental creative attitude of *inventing* with its directly photographed nature. Not that its invention, which is rather familiar in type, goes very far, but that it fully comprehends the reaches of its given limits.

What is important is that this color film of five minutes, unassisted by sound of any kind, creates a lyric and very real mood of love-making and that, actually, it was but one of the eight films for which Brakhage received his special award. Much more valuable and interesting than *Loving*, among these eight, are *Flesh of Morning* and *Reflections on Black*, both of which I discussed in a biographic account of this young film artist in *Film Culture* for April, 1958. *Loving*, however, should stand as a blackboard example of what can be accomplished with a correct attitude, one beginning by being severe and allowing neither journalism nor artiness to spoil the result. This film is symbolic of the creative myth so intelligently recommended by Cocteau to young film-makers having very little means: Take your camera out into the world and start shooting. . . . No single image in the nine films shown by Cinema 16 is any more dynamically or formally beautiful than those of the atomic explosions. Until film-makers understand the true *artistic* significance of this fact, there can be no comprehensive art of the film.—PARKER TYLER.

Two Men and a Wardrobe

"Direction and editing: Raymond Polanski. Script: Andrezj Kostenko and Ryszard Barski. Camera: Maciej Kijowski. Music: T. Komeda.

"Two men emerge from the sea, with a wardrobe . . ."

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But what are we supposed to *feel*, and what are we supposed to *conclude*, in the presence of this same allegorical space? Viewing the ape who places a wreath upon a tombstone surmounted by a marble cherub, and reading the inscription, "Homo Sapiens," what can we feel and think but "How ironic, how pitifully ironic! . . . man is still only a thinking beast!" Actually, it is a rather stale joke, put in this way, and we occasionally laugh or groan in neurotic desperation; the filmic invention, as such, is minimal, and so is the imagination. Therefore *Life Is Beautiful*, and *L'Opera Mouffe* too, are simply documentary treatments of a moral psychology, and "experimental" only insofar as they play on it in terms of *montage* imagery. One may call them radical-liberal, even "avant-garde," journalism, but not *art*. They are "stunts" and once their points are absorbed, they appear empty—like editorials.

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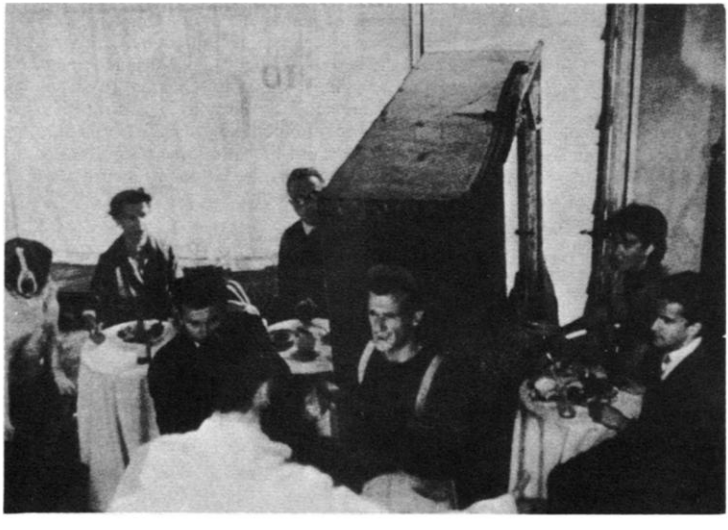
Experimental Competition tells us. The intriguing summary not only provides an ironic contrast to the contentious, bombastic, and obscure statements from other experimental film-makers which choke the catalogue, but carries a promise of something unusual—a promise more than fulfilled by the film itself.

Shown the first evening of the recent San Francisco Film Festival to an invited audience, *Two Men* preceded a Polish feature, *Eve Wants to Sleep* (which struck me as curiously like a longer, thinner variation on the same theme). I had heard from a friend in Brussels that *Two Men and a Wardrobe* was a "three-star" film; Karel Reisz, in *Sight & Sound*, had called it "the revelation of the Festival." Its showing here seems in retrospect less of a "revelation" of a "three-star" film than a *raison d'être* for the entire San Francisco Film Festival.

The film begins on a beach; something emerges from the waves—two men carrying a massive closet with a mirror on its door. They struggle onto the beach, do a little dance of joy, and start into a city, carrying the wardrobe. The two are successively kept off a streetcar, thrown out of a restaurant, denied entrance to a hotel, repulsed by a girl they try to pick up, and finally badly beaten by a gang of adolescents. From time to time, the camera turns aside to reveal a pocket being picked, a drunk staggering up and down a flight of stairs, a man's head being beaten in. Discouraged, the two men finally seek shelter in a field entirely filled with empty casks. The watchman tries to throw them out, and beats them with a barrel stave. The two carry their wardrobe back to the beach, reënter the water, and disappear under a breaker.

The preposterous premise is established immediately, rather like the opening of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*; what follows is unquestionable, and set forth in a detached, logical fashion. The two men enter a city, are repulsed everywhere, and then attacked. Around and behind them, ceaseless brutality. The line of the action is admirably sustained: the wardrobe's journey through the city is only interrupted from time to time, as the camera turns aside to reveal another outrage. When the men regain the beach, no one could be surprised to find that a little boy has set up row upon row of perfect little mounds



TWO MEN AND A WARDROBE

of sand along the beach. They thread their way tactfully, delicately through the mounds to reenter the water. (It is no accident that the mounds of sand are perfect replicas of the concrete blocks set down on European beaches during the war to repel tanks, but the resemblance is unobtrusive, underemphasized.)

The photography and direction are excellent; the camera work detached, impersonal, with an occasional telephoto shot. I caught a single visual error: a wide-angle shot when one of the men advances, his fists in front of him. The relative exaggeration of his fists' size was the only such lapse in an otherwise formally perfect production.

Throughout its fifteen minutes, *Two Men* juggles symbol and reality, lighthearted story and allegorical message in a casual manner we are hardly accustomed to. The Film Festival audience accepted it as an amusing story, inexplicably punctuated from time to time by a moment of sickening brutality. (In some ways the brutality is quite reminiscent of that in *Los Olvidados*; in spite of one murder too many at the end of the Polish short, I find it altogether less forced and self-conscious than Buñuel's film.)

The film's success is largely in its expert manipulation of two levels of meaning and in the flexible, "open" quality of its symbolism. I interpret the wardrobe to represent all the ethical, moral, and religious values considered "outmoded" in pre-Gomulka Poland—and, for that matter, throughout the world. The mirror then represents man's conscience, reflecting his own self-criticism. (It is this mirror which gives away the adolescents as they are about to attack a girl, and provokes a fight in which the mirror is smashed.) One published interpretation of the film states that the two men get into trouble because they try to interest organized society in their wardrobe. This is simply inaccurate. Rather, the wardrobe is a heavy burden, which the two will not put down or abandon, but which in turn amuses, affronts, or enrages everybody else. I do not wish to insist on this single "translation." The story could, for example, be read as a variant on the legend of St. Christopher. Again, one scene opens with a fish apparently floating among clouds in the sky. One of the two men picks the fish up—it has been lying on the wardrobe mirror, which reflected the clouds overhead. The two proceed to eat the fish—or are they eating something else? It's not crucial; for one of the greatest virtues of the film lies in its literal, realistic level, admirably maintained throughout. There is no real need to translate the film at all to get something out of it. And of how many "symbolic," "Freudian," "experimental" films can this be said?

Indeed, *Two Men and a Wardrobe* can be taken as the perfect compendium of all that the ordinary experimental film is not—lengthy, confused, opaque, ill-proportioned, humorless, and technically inept. What it reveals about life in Poland is open to discussion, as is what it reveals of the Polish avant-garde school. But the superlative quality of Polanski's film is beyond question or qualification. I have no hesitation in stating that *Two Men and a Wardrobe* is the best film of its kind in thirty years.—JONATHAN HARKER.

Image by Images, Cats, Jamestown Ba-Looes, A Man and His Dog Out for Air (films by Robert Breer)

Describing the films of Robert Breer is an extremely difficult task, for he is one of the most thoroughly original creators working in films today, in terms of both technique and sensibility. Roughly speaking, his works belong to that category of films generally called "abstract" (though his are also highly "concrete"), but differ from everything else that has been done along these lines in one basic respect: Breer is undoubtedly the first film-maker to have brought to his medium the full heritage of modern painting and the sum of sophisticated experimentation that it represents. Breer began his career as a painter, was one of the early members of the postwar Parisian school of *abstraction froide* (disciples of Mondrian, the Bauhaus painters, and, more recently, Herbin), and his first films were candid attempts to "animate" the large forms and pure,

of sand along the beach. They thread their way tactfully, delicately through the mounds to reenter the water. (It is no accident that the mounds of sand are perfect replicas of the concrete blocks set down on European beaches during the war to repel tanks, but the resemblance is unobtrusive, underemphasized.)

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flat colors that peopled his canvases. His first really successful film of this kind, *Form Phases IV*, was for the most part a continuously animated flow of vaguely geometrical, clearly defined shapes evolving on a flat surface according to extremely complex rhythmical patterns, and it exploited ambiguous relationships between optical planes to remarkable effect. This seven-minute film was practically without "cuts" (in this case juxtapositions of completely dissimilar patterns) though it did employ a form of ellipsis by which fixed images underwent series of sudden, partial transformations. This last technique had already been employed, though in a much more schematic form, by the Swedish painter and film-maker Viking Eggeling, who is Breer's only real precursor. (In a sense, however, that great French primitive Emile Cohl might well have recognized the author of *A Man and His Dog Out for Air* as a worthy heir to his own rhythmic and graphic genius.)

Image by Images, the earliest of Breer's films shown in Brussels, represents a further step in his creative development, and was his first attempt to wed the two very disparate techniques which have since become the basis of all his work: on the one hand, the fluid, through-animation technique I have just described, and, on the other, a technique which was probably first experimented with by Norman McLaren: ultra-rapid montage in which each image (or "shot") occupies only a very small number of frames, resulting in a cascade of dissimilar images flashing by on the very brink of retinal perception. It is in the use of this latter technique that Breer's films are perhaps most revolutionary—and most inaccessible.

Having mentioned McLaren's name, however, I feel that before going on to deal with Breer's later films I must open a brief parenthesis. Breer's films differ from McLaren's on two very basic counts, one technical and the other æsthetic. Whereas films such as *Begone Dull Care* and *Blinkety-Blank* were drawn and painted directly on film, Breer has always worked on the conventional animation table, for he feels that the technique employed by McLaren is far too restrictive. And indeed the niceties of controlled animation and color texture to be found in Breer's films are quite inconceivable with the transparent inks obligatorily used by McLaren and his disciples and above all with the cramped working surface which the actual 35mm frame provides. These limitations condition the other basic difference between the two men's work, for McLaren's films were never more than facile, startling divertissements, devoid of any genuine rigor and completely "one-dimensional"; when you had seen one you had seen them all (McLaren finally realized this, of course, but unfortunately chose a new path on which he can only squander his talents), whereas even Breer's detractors generally have to admit that their highly condensed complexity, both formal and emotional, set his films quite apart from the illustrious Canadian's "little fantasies."

Image by Images, then, was Breer's first attempt to combine suavely moving shapes and lines *simultaneously* with clusters of rapid-fire images of the most disparate and often startling nature (occasionally one is aware of having glimpsed stills of household objects, a sheet of typewritten paper, or the back of a human hand). His use of p a r a l l e l, independent rhythms, some of which are of such a secret nature as to be perceived only unconsciously, calls to mind the complex, highly intellectual techniques of composition used by the most advanced twelve-tone composers, such as K. H. Stockhausen and Pierre Boulez. In two subsequent films, *Recreation I* and *Recreation II*, fluid animation was eliminated almost altogether, and a different image appeared with nearly each new frame. These short films might be called micro-rhythmic (to borrow another term from the modern musician's vocabulary), and most spectators require several screenings to detect the cunning structures which govern these torrents of images and to attune their sensibilities to the subtle mechanisms by which abstract designs and still photos *interact*, thereby setting up entirely new reverberations in the mind and eye. With repeated showings, the sense of tremendous speed created by these films is considerably attenuated, and the jostling images come to express a kind of quintessential stillness. In *Recreation I*, for

example, the successive juxtaposition – at the dizzy rate of 24 *different images* per second–of rectangles cut from newspapers creates an effect which, oddly enough, is not unlike that produced by the majestic collages of Kurt Schwitters.

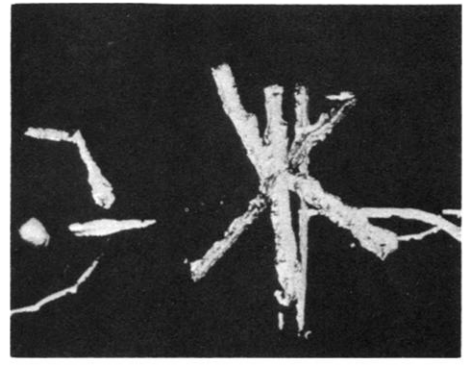
These experiments, which have generally had a rather provocative effect on unprepared audiences, laid the groundwork for Breer's most ambitious film to date, *Jamestown Ba-Looes,* so titled because it was shot during a vacation the artist spent at that New England resort (his habitual place of residence is Paris). Though he had already employed figurative "gags" in the little gem of a film he calls *Cats,* and which was a near-perfect synthesis of abstract and figurative metamorphoses, *Jamestown,* the longest of all his films (12 minutes), constitutes a remarkably successful effort to treat figurative gags as *concrete entities* and to integrate them into purely abstract rhythmic patterns in much the same way that certain French composers (Varèse, Pierre Henri) have tried to integrate concrete *sounds* and even spoken words into purely musical structures. The film is in three parts, of which the first and last are in black and white and use similar thematic material, while the middle section was shot in Kodachrome (as were all his previous films) and is the most abstract of the three, making ample use of swishing blurs of pure color. The two black and white movements (for that is what they really are) employ a startlingly wide variety of elements, including a great many animated magazine cutouts. We recognize the faces of Napoleon, Nasser, Dulles and–I believe–Sophia Loren. There is an allusion to Sputnik II and a magical burlesque on modern warfare. The whole thing is hilariously and indescribably funny, for Breer's sense of humor, as it is revealed in both *Cats* and *Jamestown,* is second only to his rhythmic and graphic inventiveness. *Jamestown* is a less uncompromising work than most of the films which preceded it, and the somewhat Dada-like gags which enrich its texture make it far more accessible to "the general public," but it also contains some of the most refined examples of the micro-rhythmic technique–which is a substantial contribution to the elaboration of a conception of film æsthetics on the level of sophistication of other contemporary art forms.

In view of Breer's obvious importance and originality, one cannot help wondering why the Brussels jury neglected his work when it came to handing out awards. The choice of *Dom* as grand-prize winner would seem to indicate that they were simply out of their depth, though this is rather surprising considering the reputations of the individual jury members. A partial explanation may perhaps be found in the quality of the sound tracks which Breer has added to his films. These seem little more than hasty afterthoughts, and their rather haphazard clumsiness is a shocking contrast to the refined, studied complexity of the images themselves.

His most recent film is *A Man and His Dog Out for Air,* which is a completely new departure in Breer's work. Returning to almost pure abstraction, he shot this very short but brilliant film entirely in black and white. It consists of an astonishingly complex ballet of marvelous wiggly lines, is animated with unprecedented virtuosity, and suggests, I feel, an entirely new notion of cinematic space.–Noel Burch.

Free Radicals

Of all Len Lye's work, from the early experiments through *Rainbow Dance, Trade Tattoo,* and up to *Color Cry,* this film is the most austere, direct, simple, and successful. In it Lye has returned to first principles of hand-painted film, using black and white and primitive forms. Its angular lines, etched on black leader, jangle



Len Lye's Free Radicals.

example, the successive juxtaposition – at the dizzy rate of 24 *different images* per second–of rectangles cut from newspapers creates an effect which, oddly enough, is not unlike that produced by the majestic collages of Kurt Schwitters.

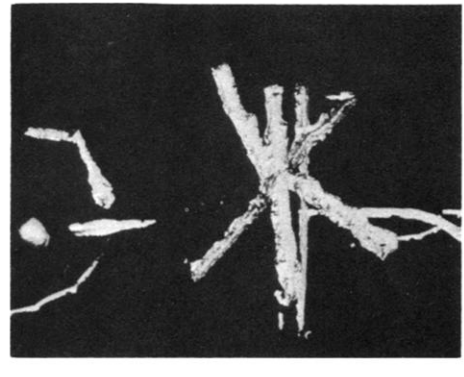
These experiments, which have generally had a rather provocative effect on unprepared audiences, laid the groundwork for Breer's most ambitious film to date, *Jamestown Ba-Looes,* so titled because it was shot during a vacation the artist spent at that New England resort (his habitual place of residence is Paris). Though he had already employed figurative "gags" in the little gem of a film he calls *Cats,* and which was a near-perfect synthesis of abstract and figurative metamorphoses, *Jamestown,* the longest of all his films (12 minutes), constitutes a remarkably successful effort to treat figurative gags as *concrete entities* and to integrate them into purely abstract rhythmic patterns in much the same way that certain French composers (Varèse, Pierre Henri) have tried to integrate concrete *sounds* and even spoken words into purely musical structures. The film is in three parts, of which the first and last are in black and white and use similar thematic material, while the middle section was shot in Kodachrome (as were all his previous films) and is the most abstract of the three, making ample use of swishing blurs of pure color. The two black and white movements (for that is what they really are) employ a startlingly wide variety of elements, including a great many animated magazine cutouts. We recognize the faces of Napoleon, Nasser, Dulles and–I believe–Sophia Loren. There is an allusion to Sputnik II and a magical burlesque on modern warfare. The whole thing is hilariously and indescribably funny, for Breer's sense of humor, as it is revealed in both *Cats* and *Jamestown,* is second only to his rhythmic and graphic inventiveness. *Jamestown* is a less uncompromising work than most of the films which preceded it, and the somewhat Dada-like gags which enrich its texture make it far more accessible to "the general public," but it also contains some of the most refined examples of the micro-rhythmic technique–which is a substantial contribution to the elaboration of a conception of film æsthetics on the level of sophistication of other contemporary art forms.

In view of Breer's obvious importance and originality, one cannot help wondering why the Brussels jury neglected his work when it came to handing out awards. The choice of *Dom* as grand-prize winner would seem to indicate that they were simply out of their depth, though this is rather surprising considering the reputations of the individual jury members. A partial explanation may perhaps be found in the quality of the sound tracks which Breer has added to his films. These seem little more than hasty afterthoughts, and their rather haphazard clumsiness is a shocking contrast to the refined, studied complexity of the images themselves.

His most recent film is *A Man and His Dog Out for Air,* which is a completely new departure in Breer's work. Returning to almost pure abstraction, he shot this very short but brilliant film entirely in black and white. It consists of an astonishingly complex ballet of marvelous wiggly lines, is animated with unprecedented virtuosity, and suggests, I feel, an entirely new notion of cinematic space.–Noel Burch.

Free Radicals

Of all Len Lye's work, from the early experiments through *Rainbow Dance, Trade Tattoo,* and up to *Color Cry,* this film is the most austere, direct, simple, and successful. In it Lye has returned to first principles of hand-painted film, using black and white and primitive forms. Its angular lines, etched on black leader, jangle



Len Lye's Free Radicals.

to African folk music. The result is the most stylish, condensed, and formal work in the genre. The wit of Lye's earlier films shows itself here in a more serious concern with form. The unessential, the decorative have been stripped away to make line, shape, and movement more striking. It is a rare accomplishment in a genre so essentially amorphous and beset by the trivial. If proof had ever been needed that Lye, the pioneer in this field, is the real—and for some the only—master, here it is. The attribution to it of second prize at the Brussels competition ($5,000 donated by the Belgian producing firm SIBIS) was a recognition of the fruit of Lye's many years of experimentation.—JOHN ADAMS.

Book Reviews

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Since his sudden death in 1955, James Agee's reputation as a film critic, already legendary, has if anything been augmented; he has even come to be considered a major American scriptwriter, though rumor has it that his scenario for *The Night of the Hunter* was completely rewritten before shooting and Peter Viertel has claimed much the same of Agee's version of *The African Queen* (in his *Black Heart, White Hunter*).

To those of my generation, who began reading film criticism about the time Agee gave up his columns in *The Nation* and *Time*, *Agee on Film* is both a fulfillment of expectations and, at times, a disappointment. It contains all of the *Nation* articles for 1942–1948; a selection of those written for *Time*, 1941–1948; *Life* pieces on "Comedy's Greatest Era" and "The Undirectable Director"—John Huston; an irrelevant jibe at pseudo folk art; and the *Sight & Sound* review of *Sunset Boulevard*.

The compilation is poorly edited, designed, and illustrated. The introductions which precede the various sections were obviously written by someone with little knowledge of or interest in films: "*Sunset Boulevard* appeared in the British *Sight & Sound*, now defunct. . . ." The dust jacket states, with the last-ditch cliché of someone who doesn't know what photography or films are all about, "Agee's writing has an almost cinematic quality, a lens-like precision and immediacy . . . he considered the movies as valid an art form as any other . . ." I suspect that the editors side with W. H. Auden, whose letter to *The Nation* they quote: "I do not care for movies very much." The book itself is awkward and ungainly, while the stills which serve as illustrations are conventional and unimaginative—with the exception of a glowering, handsome portrait of Dovzhenko, who is mentioned only in passing in Agee's text.

Unlike the anonymous editors, I do not feel that Agee's columns for *The Nation*—in which the Literary Editor "gave him free rein to cover what he wanted and to write as he pleased"—always come off as happily as some of the long pieces written later for what the editors call "a wider and more varied audience." At any rate, the articles printed give the impression of a development in Agee's critical work, the best of which was not always reserved for the untrammeled pages of *The Nation*. I found most satisfying the longer reviews of *The Lost Weekend* (with its expert testimony on hang-over symptoms), *Sunset Boulevard*, *The Rainbow*, several war documentaries, the *Time* piece on *Henry V*, and the articles on Griffith, silent comedy, and John Huston.

Agee's judgment is not impeccable, seen with the hindsight of ten to fifteen years; it is only incomparably the best of his period. For a reviewer, writing for weekly deadlines, presumably unable to check first impressions with a second viewing, his score is remarkable. Agee's

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errors, seen in retrospect, almost invariably take the form of excessive enthusiasm—for which he even had the wit and courage to apologize, as in the case of *Shoeshine*, *To Live in Peace*, and *Cover Girl*. I would quarrel with certain evaluations he never found reason to revise: to Agee, *Farrebique* was a masterpiece; I think he overrates Humphrey Jennings' *The Silent Village*; I can't see *The Story of G.I. Joe* as "a tragic and eternal work of art"; while *Desert Victory* seems to have impressed him as an almost unqualified success. Yet any such "errors" are errors of generosity, rising out of a desperate need to find value in the motion picture, and a desperate need to do justice to the films he wrote about. In only a few cases did I find films which I thought he *underrated*: Jennings' *Listen to Britain*, Hathaway's *Kiss of Death*, *The Spiral Staircase*.

In addition to the rare masterpieces of the war years (what a singularly thankless period 1941–45 was for any American reviewer!) Agee had a happy faculty for recognizing and insisting upon the interesting, the promising, the near-misses: his painful evaluation of *The Best Years of Our Lives*, written in two parts over a period of weeks for *The Nation*, seems to me a real triumph of thoughtful judgment. The first, so far as I know, to recognize the quality of Val Lewton's productions, he hits immediately on their best moments: the family relationships in *The Curse of the Cat People*, the horrifying climax of *The Body Snatchers*, in which Karloff's half-nude, phosphorescent corpse attempts to embrace Henry Daniell. He calls our attention to films other reviewers would not ordinarily even mention: the documentaries *With the Marines at Tarawa*, *The Battle of San Pietro*, *Memphis Belle*, as well as to the only partly successful *Heaven Can Wait* and *Nightmare Alley*.

Among other things, *Agee on Film* is a compilation of the Unofficial Masterworks, the Ones That Got Away—the shots, the scenes, the sequences that are usually consigned to oblivion by more definitive works on the film. In many ways, this gives the book an advantage over the broad historical surveys, which even in such a slow period as the war years tend to concentrate on a very small number of masterworks—which have been pretty well done in by this critical esteem.

Agee is equally good at puncturing the pretensions of the windy, the arty, the condescending—the films that frequently continue to enjoy a "classical" reputation: *The Pearl*, *Dreams That Money Can Buy*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Wilson*, *The Fugitive*. For once, the writings of an eyewitness have been preserved in book form, an eyewitness without visible preconceptions or inflexible systems of appreciation, who is capable of this kind of statement:

> ". . . more and more people who think of themselves as serious-minded, and progressive, thoroughly disapprove of crime melodramas. They feel that movies should be devoted, rather, to more elevated themes such as a biography of George Washington Carver, omitting nothing down to the last peanut, or a good faithful adaptation of Adam Bede in sepia, with the entire text read offscreen by Herbert Marshall, or the story of how the way to atomic control and the brotherhood of man has been pointed out by egg coöperatives."

No critic was ever more conscious of what goes to make up film art, but neither was any critic more aware that good film art must be good entertainment: he speaks of the makers of *Dreams That Money Can Buy* as "underestimating their audience and the difficult, considerable art of really entertaining"; while, for him, Huston's films required responsibility of their audiences which is "by any virile standard . . . the essential to good entertainment . . . unquestionably essential to good art."

Agee's respect for films, for their creators, for their audiences, and for himself, is everywhere evident; his sensitivity to the point of embarrassment, evident in his fiction, gives his film criticism a modesty, decency, and distinction which are pretty well extinct. He was above all an active film-lover, always willing to give back to a film as much as or more than he received, afraid only that he might not be doing a film justice, or that the film was not worthy of its audience. Though his training as poet and writer lends distinction to a style unheard of in movie reviews, the emphasis is always on the

James Agee as actor: THE BRIDE COMES TO YELLOW SKY.

visual. Though his background and frame of reference were unique among film critics, his concentration on the cinematic aspects of films was also unusual.

One cannot help being disturbed occasionally by the schizophrenic attempt to write simultaneously for two periodicals as different as *The Nation* and *Time*. This shows up sometimes in Agee's writing, sometimes in his judgments, both of which are occasionally too flexible, too adaptable to their respective environments. Certain phrases and tricks of construction common to all the Luce publications appear in the *Time* reviews. This results in those devastating, anonymous, and dogmatic judgments which assume "that the audience is passive and wants to remain passive," to use Agee's own phrase. Agee's most flagrant example: "*Anna Kerenina* is . . . by far the costliest . . . but far from the best." A footnote tells us which versions of the novel are better than the Vivian Leigh vehicle under discussion: "Two better ones: *Love* (1927) and *Anna Kerenina* (1935), both starring Greta Garbo." But the untrammeled *Nation* style can be equally embarrassing: the review of *The Lost Weekend* concludes, "I understand the liquor interesh: innerish: intereshtsh are rather worried about this film. Thash tough."

From time to time, one finds him re-reviewing the same film for the other magazine. It is difficult to tell whether the differences that appear result from second thoughts and reflection, or from Agee considering it necessary to revise his findings for a different audience. On April 8, 1946, *Time*-man Agee says of *Henry V*: "One of the great experiences in the history of motion pictures . . . not to be sure the greatest: the creation of new dramatic poetry is more important than the re-creation of old." By July 20, 1946, *Nation*-man Agee says: "*Henry V* is by no means the best movie ever made; it is a re-creation of an old dramatic poem. . . ." As much as in the style as in the judgment, the two reviews make an interesting comparison: overwhelming colon for *Time* readers, literate semicolon for *Nation* readers. The *Time* passage begins with a positive statement (designed to let the reader know where he stands immediately); the *Nation* review starts with a negative (incidentally rebuking hordes of enthusiasts, who may or may not have read his *Time* review). For *Nation* readers it is enough to say that the film is a "re-creation"; for readers of *Time* Agee apparently felt it necessary to explain why this made it less than the greatest. In both magazines, incidentally, Agee repeatedly falls back wearily on certain phrases, such as "this is made impossible by the postal laws" and "the not very eloquent but mailable way of saying it."

As time went on, Agee seems to have been increasingly concerned with what might have been: with the possibilities missed, miscasting which he rectifies for the reader, suggesting a host of ways in which what was merely acceptable could have been great. What he has to say of *Meet Me in St. Louis* is characteristic of his role as critic-who-would-be-creator: "I must confess I could have liked it much better still. . . . I am persuaded that this very good because very real idea might have been adequately served only in proportion as the girls, and the visual and emotional climate they move in and are supposed to love, themselves approached and honored rather than flouted and improved on reality." Again, of Mickey Rooney in *National Velvet*: ". . . he is an extremely wise and moving actor, and if I am ever tempted to speak disrespectfully of him, that will be in

anger over the unforgivable waste of a forceful yet subtle talent, proved capable of self-discipline and of the hardest roles that could be thrown it. (I suggest it jealously, because I would so love to make the films rather than see them made; but if only a Studs Lonigan for the middle period could be found. . . .)"

This passionate disappointment in what he saw, this increasing need to imagine and spell out what could have been, inevitably led, after he had given up regular reviewing, to work as a scriptwriter. The omission of his scripts, those unrealized as well as those actually filmed, and also of his commentaries for various documentaries, constitutes the worst omission of *Agee on Film*. The scripts for the unproduced *The House* and *Noa-Noa,* the shooting script for *The Bride Came to Yellow Sky,* and perhaps excerpts from *The Quiet One* commentary would have added immeasurably to the value of the book. The same is true of stills from all of these films—production shots for *In the Street,* a still of Agee in the bit he played in *The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky.* In the meantime, we have much of the best work of the best film critic this country has produced, which makes *Agee on Film* the most valuable book of its kind easily imagined.—JONATHAN HARKER.

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In less critically straitened times, the materials in the volume would have appeared mainly in magazines. Like ourselves, Mr. Hughes has used a mixed approach to this medium which is at once art and industry, and has included three distinct types of writing. The first (and the hardest to find) is straightforward theoretical analysis, represented by Siegfried Kracauer, whose virtues and defects are both well enough known to require no comment here. The second type derives from men actually working in film: Mr. Hughes has circulated a questionnaire designed to elicit their basic attitudes on the filmmaker's situation today, and responses are included from Lindsay Anderson, J. A. Bardem, Luis Buñuel, René Clément, Carl Dreyer, Bjarne Henning-Jensen, Elia Kazan, David Lean, Sidney Meyers, Satyajit Ray, and Jean Renoir. It is worth meditating upon the fact that Kazan, Lean, Ray, and Renoir have no particular complaint about commercial or audience restrictions, and feel that the responsibility for making better films rests with them. In many other respects the responses are, as the saying goes, very revealing. Several directors, incidentally, consider television both the most encouraging and most discouraging development of recent years. Also in this category are two brief sequences from Agee's unproduced *Noa-Noa* script and Cesare Zavattini's report on how a favorite project of his, *Italia Mia,* did not get produced. (It was actually a kind of transfigured travelogue, but both deSica and Rossellini were, at least temporarily, interested in doing it.) The third type of material is more or less critical articles, comprising some reflections by Mrs. Robert Flaherty, a discussion of art theaters and film societies by Arthur Knight, and "Experiment in the Fifties," by Jonas Mekas. After duly noting the artistic irrelevance of widescreen and touching on the experimental work of Norman McLaren, Mr. Mekas turns to the "film poetry in its pure form" of Brakhage, Harrington, Richter, Broughton, Anger, Maas, Peterson, and Deren — "Rimbaud-type" films in which these young film-makers "open themselves, unabashed, unashamed, to their inner hells." There is a need, he maintains, for an "angry" young man "to laugh, to sneer at this [commercial] illusion; to aim, in a most deadly way, for its destruction—even by exaggerating the need for the subjective, personal, Rimbaud-like approach (if that approach arises out of

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Like every film magazine being published today, thus, Mr. Hughes' anthology is necessarily a patchwork job, though a good one. It reflects intelligent concern for the medium but shows no overriding tendency, no coherent school of thought, and no great fervor. Like flags in an uncertain breeze, its contributions flutter this way and that, now listlessly, now bravely. This sad situation, in which we share, keeps one wondering: O western wind, when wilt thou blow?—ERNEST CALLENBACH.

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Film Quartered

CONDUCTED BY A. PISMO CLAM

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Correspondence & Controversy

Mightier than the Eye?

In reading the "Editor's Notebook" of the Winter *Film Quarterly,* I was stopped cold by a couple of paragraphs in which you wondered wryly about that axiom of the film: "Keep it visual." You went so far as to ask, "Maybe the ear *is* more powerful than the eye?" but then you dismissed this as ". . . sophistic doubt."

The air of gingerly repugnance with which you sidled around this "sophistic doubt" seems to me a measure of your reluctance to face certain facts about the film as art—a reluctance you share with many of the "serious students of the film" for whom your magazine is edited. The ear more powerful than the eye? Indeed it is. Pictures are *not* as powerful as words, not as moving, not as evocative, not as supple.

The most obvious penalty of depending upon sight, in the way that the film depends upon it, is that we must often put up with the *thing,* rather than the idea of the thing. If the thing is painful the response will be pain, or, in many cases, a barrier of detachment raised by the viewer to spare himself pain. This is not to say that the actor's acted grief will grieve us, but that often the sight of the actor's blood, realistically represented, will touch our stomachs instead of our hearts. In one recent filmed version of a novel there was a shot of a dead woman lying in a ditch with a baby wailing at her breast. This was an image straight from the book, and in the novel it had been very moving. In the film it was partly embarrassing, partly disgusting, partly distracting. I reminded myself, in self-protection, that the pretty lady with her bodice so cunningly disarranged was not really dead, that the baby, whose mother was not really dead, was being looked after by a nurse just off camera, and that the rain falling upon them was at body temperature. The film's point of view was lost in an emotional short-circuit; the spark sprang directly between viewer and *real* pathetic spectacle. What had been illuminating in words—manageable as an idea—became distracting in a picture.

Sight is the most literal of senses. It abhors ambiguity and multiple value. In the experience of optical illusion, for example, the eye squirms and writhes to escape ambiguity and to find a single, firm image. The film can construct a kind of multivalence—a limited kind—through montage: the succession of visual images piling up their meanings, transferring their values, and informing one another by juxtaposition, cutting rhythm, and so forth; but montage lacks the most important quality of verbal multivalence: simultaneity. The ear can entertain many meanings, suggestions, and overtones, all raying out from a single verbal stimulus, simultaneously; furthermore, it can do this while somehow hanging on to a controlling literal sense of the word. How can montage, operating over a period of time, hope for the striking power of the word or the verbal image, with its tremendously compressed variousness?

What about symbolic values? I have seen a couple of filmic excursions into pure symbolism, and I have seen some excellent use of symbolism in the detail of good films. For all that, the best director could take the best cast to the best possible location, and not all their sweat would ever turn a real, literal river into the river which flows, in Conrad, out of the Heart of Darkness. Conrad said that he aimed ". . . to make you see," but it was with words that he made us see, and his words can make us see more than any picture ever will, simply because they *allow* us to see more. It is true enough that Moby Dick is a good symbol only because (and *after*) he is a good whale, but it is as the idea that he becomes a symbol—as a thing he remains several tons of blubber. (Here I resist a lengthy digression on Captain Ahab Huston versus Moby Melville, except to remind you what happened to the Pequod.)

Now, the limitations of film that I have suggested are serious ones only so long as the values

and achievements you ask of the film are the values and achievements of literature; yet it appears to me that these are precisely what you and your reviewers are asking for. Perhaps the film can do something other than tell a story, but that, nonetheless, is the role it seems fated to play at present. A picture exists over a period of time and in that time it has to *do* something. If it doesn't tell a story, what will it do? McLaren and others have striven for a kind of visual music; experimentalists have attempted to make of film a poetry of associative images; documentarists have turned the camera toward education (and have done their best work in a dramatic vein). A true "art of the film" may lie down one of these avenues, and the prospects are exciting; but in point of fact most of the film footage exposed in this world is story-telling film. What almost anyone means by "a movie" is a fiction film, and critics spend most of their time thinking about such films. But telling a story is the thing which film is, by itself, so poorly equipped to do. Then the film purists compound the mischief by regarding language, the resource which *can* lend literary value to film, as a kind of shameful excrescence.

Perhaps this contempt for language is related to the current (and vague) notion that the literature of our time is "realistic," the way a film is realistic. But the exclusively realistic elements of our literature, like the exclusively realistic elements of any art at any time, are only its bones—or less. Sometimes they are no more than its skin. Realism is never sufficient, and not always necessary.

You say ". . . no one can deny that films are talking too much and moving too little and too slowly." They may very well be moving too little and too slowly, but as for the talk I have a feeling that it is too silly, too poorly written, rather than "too much," and I think the filmmakers' conviction that "Keep it visual" answers all questions is partly to blame. The dialogue of any pretty good novel or play these days is vastly tighter, vastly sharper, vastly *better* than that of any but the very best films. We need a little less of this worship of the visual, and a little more respect for the power of the word.

There may be an art of the film. What is certain is that there is art *in* the best films. It may be the art of a Keaton, of a Gielgud, of Michelangelo, of Bach, or Shakespeare. When one film is better than another it is never purely, or even mostly, because one is more "cinematic" than another. It may be because one is more brilliantly scored, or more imaginatively decorated and costumed, or more skillfully acted or directed. And sometimes, but not often enough, it is because one is more literate than the other.

The last case may not be *"du cinéma,"* but we need more of it.

—Jackson Burgess
Albany, Calif.

Author Replies

Mr. Asheim's statement that the Hollywood film, as a derivative art, is nonresponsible seems to me—to use his word—irrelevant. Responsibility should, as in the law of slander, lie with the repeater as well as his source. The world is full of garbage: why smell—or use—it? Besides, in the case of *The Brothers Karamazov,* Mr. Asheim is just plain wrong. Dostoievsky had considerable acumen in matters of Tsarist criminal procedure. He was himself convicted as a defendant in the Petrashevsky purge trials of 1849. The vulgar errors in the film all belong to scriptwriter Richard Brooks, not Dostoievsky.

—Herbert Feinstein
Berkeley, Calif.

A Note on Back Issues

Many back numbers of the *Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television* (our predecessor) and the *Hollywood Quarterly* (its predecessor) are still available from the University of California Press, Berkeley 4, California, at $1.25 per copy. Arrangements have also been made to provide copies of out-of-print issues on microfilm or in xerograph facsimile copies from University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan.