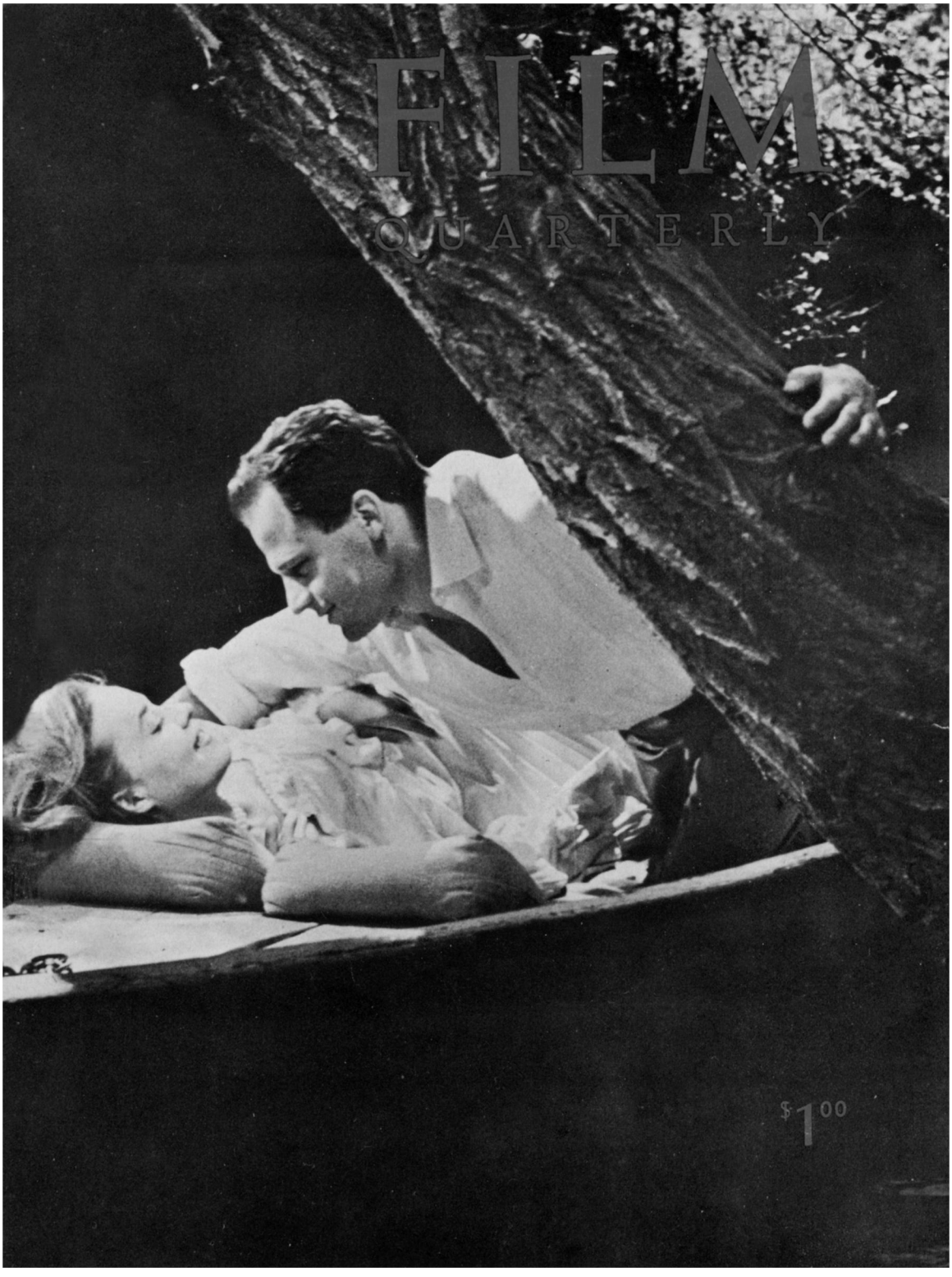
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THE COVER: Jeanne Moreau and Jean-Marc Bory in *Les Amants* (The Lovers), a film by Claude Chabrol.

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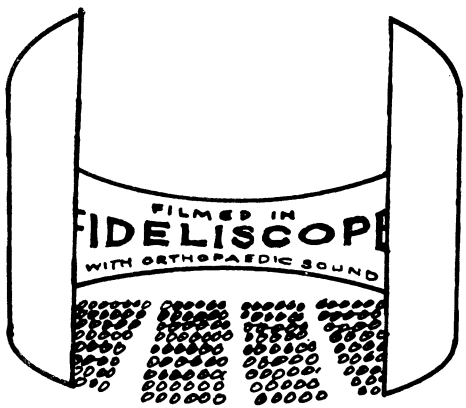


Editor's Notebook

Film Quarterly is a journal primarily dedicated to film criticism as a discipline. As such it is a catholic publication, printing articles and reviews based upon differing philosophical, political, and aesthetic positions in an attempt to establish a body of work that would be intelligent and stimulating if not consistent. To do so, though not an ideal achievement, would be at least a useful one.

Nonetheless, there has been a certain tendency in the journal's contents—aspects of which will be referred to below. Although some readers have felt that the journal was a totally open forum, in actual fact the selection of articles and reviews has of course reflected the editor's views: partly his views as to the way film criticism should be done "in the abstract," as well as his views on the assumptions on which film criticism should be based. (He has sometimes printed material with whose assumptions he personally disagreed; and he has not insisted on conformity of views among the editorial staff of the journal.) As successive issues have appeared, however, it has seemed increasingly apparent that film criticism today, as found in the wide net *Film Quarterly* has thrown, shows little consistent direction or focus. Several issues back, the Editor's Notebook listed some of the theoretical problems that film criticism, in the editor's view, ought to be addressing. Several articles, since then, have in one way or another dealt with some of them. It remains true, however, that there is not much focus of debate in current film thinking. What follows, therefore, is a statement of the editor's general position, put forward as a statement intended to stimulate discussion, on long-range, fundamental, theoretical issues, through which areas of agreement and disagreement may be established, and in the hope that other writers may be encouraged to come forward and debate the course here set forth—in articles or, on a smaller scale, in our "Correspondence & Controversy" section.

It must be emphasized that these are the editor's personal views. They are not shared entirely at present by any of the other editors associated with the journal, whose opinions are diverse and vigorous; they are not, therefore, "the policy of the magazine" but a first approximation to what such a policy ought to be.

We live today in a period when many of the familiar assumptions of film writing have manifestly become untenable. The collapse of the assembly-line system of production in Hollywood, while it has led to a pattern of "independent" production, has utterly failed to free the creative well-springs and bring forth any significant number of good pictures. (Some moviegoers can even be heard to bemoan the good old days, "before movies got better than ever.") The institution of Soviet production under noncapitalist conditions, after a brief spurt of activity in the twenties, has resulted, with a few recent exceptions, in films as routinized, falsified, and deadened as anything from Hollywood. The virtual abolition of censorship in the U.S. and the weakening of the Production Code have brought no bold new thematic trends. The divorcement of theater holdings from the vertically integrated giant film corporations has been followed by a modest increase in art houses and a catastrophic decline of theaters generally. The attempt to make of documentary an art form viable in public competition with ordinary the-

atrical fare, even with specialized audiences, failed; and those film-makers who command most serious attention today (Bergman, Bresson, Fellini, Ray, say) are almost all dealing in what Vernon Young called "the world of the nonliteral event."*

We are both fortunate and cursed, thus, to confront a situation where many of the usual beliefs of film's previous partisans have been proved either false or insufficiently sophisticated to cope with the real state of affairs. We face the alternatives of creating a new body of doctrine that will serve us better, or of ceasing to imagine that we are taking films seriously. We must develop new critical vocabularies and methods to cope with styles that cannot be dealt with in the old terms. We must learn a lot more than is now known about the reasons for the making of bad pictures and the nonmaking of good ones. We must clarify what we want from the cinema, in terms of films, and we must understand the means required to get it, in terms of political and economic organization and of cultural climate.

Now some working hypotheses may be advanced which, taken together, constitute a general position on these matters. It is the business of articles to explore the usefulness and accuracy of such views in detail; but it is worthwhile to examine over-all statements also.

The reasons why bureaucracy and commercialism destroy films (and film-makers) are several. When an art-form becomes controlled primarily by managers or entrepreneurs, and not by the artists doing the work, it is to be expected that the product will suffer because it is treated as a commodity or as a tool, while to a genuine artist the work must (perhaps *also*, but in any case *must*) be an end in itself, to which *he* devotes himself as a positive act. In both the capitalist and noncapitalist film worlds the process of denying artists free access to their means of production has been carried very far indeed—on the one hand through fear that profits may suffer, and on the other through fear of political deviation. An individual making a film under such circumstances is acting as the agent of someone else, someone else whose major concern is *not* that the film be a good one, but that it be profitable or instructive.

Moreover, when a culture in general is decaying, its artists are likely to be thrown into a state of confusion. Since the culture we usually identify with Western Europe has in the past several decades lost most of its impetus, our artists in film as in other media flounder for want of something they really mean to say; hence they have no drive to formal innovation. Today, the economic patterns of western capitalism are disintegrating, sometimes through a local collapse, sometimes through hidden erosion. Its heritage of ethics and morality, largely wrongheaded and hypocritical as it is, sinks toward affectlessness. Its art, when it exists at all, becomes art of decadent though perhaps delicious satire, of social and psychological narcissism, of elegant doubts. The society ultimately to be born from this womb may prove the monster we all sometimes imagine, or it may prove less hideous, perhaps even delightful. In any case, the outlook for the next couple of decades, during which the bureaucratized, highly industrial cultures of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. are due to prevail over half the earth, is that the most vital arts will be "beat," precisely to escape the collapse on the one hand and the dead weight of official views on the other: poetry, jazz, odd novels, certain semi-underground types of inexpensive films; even, save the mark, things like rock 'n' roll—whatever can evade the controllers or the puffers.

The film is not, unfortunately, in a terribly good position for this contest. It is expensive; worse, it virtually demands collaborative effort. It requires organization—of production facilities and staff, of exhibition places, of financing—in order to exist at all. But it is, like drama generally, a very resilient art; it has something that we need and want, and must try to get.

And the price even at present, after all, is plenty high. In the theater, partly because of its faint but still existent "tradition," and partly because of the nature of a play, the writer can

* *Ansiktet, FQ*, Fall 1959.

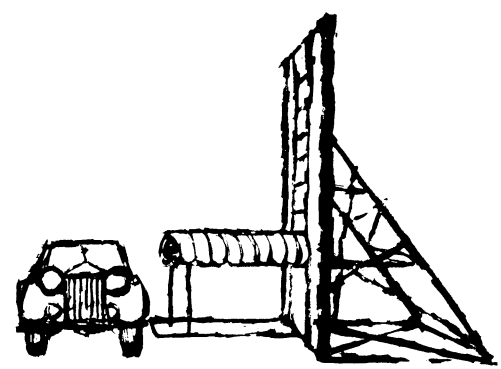
yet control the script. In film, the director usually cannot even control the script or choice of actors, and in most cases the producer cannot either—for the banks who put up the money call the tune.

It is not surprising, then, that the output of Hollywood, since *Film Quarterly* began publication in the fall of 1958, has run approximately from *Dragstrip Riot* to *The Nun's Story*—that is, from sensational commercialism to careful gloss. Nobody is making films that cut to the heart of the human condition—because it is dangerous and because nobody with the power to *wants* to. (As Colin Young showed in "The Old Dependables,"* even the established directors have no sense of direction, though they can to some extent do the films they wish; and as he showed in "The Hollywood War of Independence,"† the young men, lucky enough to have family money to start out on, like the Sanders brothers or Stanley Kubrick, tend to be more concerned with the depressingly precarious question of obtaining finance than they are with the points of their films.) We do not even have the occasional satisfactions of the 'thirties and 'forties when a seasoned director, having established a reputation for commercial safety, would seize the main chance when it came; it has been a long time since *The Informer*. And nobody even dreams of another lucky set of circumstances that might let somebody loose with a camera and some actors to make a *Citizen Kane*.

Now it is hard *not* to play safe with two million bucks riding on your back; it may probably be assumed that nowhere in the world is a film going to be made costing even a million which will also be worth looking at twice. A film involving that much industrial investment cannot possibly possess the impact, the personal directness, the humanity if you like, of a work of art. It may be very cleverly assembled, but it is the cleverness of a guided missile, not a poem.

Thus we can say that the cinema of the future must be drastically cheapened so that its creators have some reasonable chance of controlling it. But this, I believe it will be found, is an enterprise that cannot be carried out except by lucky accidents within the framework of Hollywood and the patterns of distribution and finance associated with it. Whatever else it is, Hollywood is linked with peculiar directness to the major financial interests of the country. If one wishes finance, one obtains it under conditions designed to return profits, not conditions designed to facilitate artistic film-making—which indeed, given the world serious film-makers would be trying to confront, would frequently be unfriendly to profit-making. And the conditions which will reliably return profits today are primarily either those of the vacuous big-budget film or those of the assembly-line quickie. (We hope to have articles on both distribution problems generally and the juvenile-delinquent quickies for next time, incidentally.)

The conclusion, certainly, seems clear: short of a destruction of capitalist control and its rationale in the film industry, the American creative film-maker's lot will be an impossible one, and it is one of the prime duties of film critics to point this out.



It is always easier, of course, to say what we do *not* want than what we do, since what we don't want is all around us. Looking back over the dismal recent years in Hollywood, however, we may at least note many muffed chances; and in the analysis of muffed chances lies another

* *FQ*, Fall 1959.

† *FQ*, Spring 1959.

of American film criticism's main tasks today. (Most of *Film Quarterly's* attention to the Hollywood product has been of this sort, as far as reviews go.)

It is always instructive to survey failures for what they can teach us. And the recent record is, in one sense, an intriguing one; for, unlike the European cinema, Hollywood has an odd tradition of attention to "social problems" in which enormous resources of drama lie. It raises such problems with shoddy technique and in order to evade them, true enough; but perhaps more people have a skeptical eye for the upshot than we suspect. Lots of fundamental and potentially electrical dramatic issues have come up in postwar Hollywood films. From *The Pajama Game,* a novel and musical which used union-management conflict to structure a perfectly delightful and yet terribly poignant little situation, Hollywood constructed a sloshy and mystifying boggle in which everything is all right—except that drama never arises when everything is all right. From an idiotic but lively novel, *No Down Payment,* trying to cope with middle-class suburbia, one of the most massive social developments on the American scene since the war, Hollywood produced a trivial melodrama. From the percolation of Freud into popular culture, Hollywood produced *Spellbound,* and other pictures equally likely to bring on neurotic collapse in serious critics. From the incredible complexity and grinding reality of American urban political corruption Hollywood produced *The Last Hurrah,* with kindly Uncle Spencer Tracy. From America's persistent obsession with sex, and America's endeavor to escape the worst features of the Puritan morality, Hollywood made *The Moon Is Blue,* a paean of triumph to the professional virgin which by some incredible misunderstanding was denied a Production Code seal. From America's involvement in two of the bloodiest wars in history, Hollywood produced on the one hand things like *Battleground,* and on the other *Pork Chop Hill,* an aborted pseudopacifist picture which ended, like the Korean War itself, in a dither of irresolution. From the slow growth of Negro political and social influence on the American scene, Hollywood, as Albert Johnson showed in our last issue,* abstracts the titillating glamor of miscegenation and welshes even on that, or, as in *The Defiant Ones,* turns to abstract melodrama.† Only in easily saleable films of corruption and brutality can American films make honest statements, it begins to seem: it is not by accident that Kubrick first made murder thrillers, that *The Wild Ones* takes on the look of a minor masterpiece, or that *Odds Against Tomorrow* is framed in terms of a bank robbery.

And from such thinking, perhaps, the social shape of the films we want begins to emerge. (This does not have any *necessary* connection with their aesthetic shapes—except that artists usually only find formal innovation compelling if they direly want to "say" something.) They would be frank and would have strong points of view, not bald but implicit, and recognizing corruption and oppression and exploitation and the lies that go with them. They would be sensual and honestly sexual, dealing with the human animal as he eats and drinks and makes love and defecates and goofs off and gets himself into scrapes. They would abjure the "official" culture, with its neatly concocted stories, its stereotyped characterizations, and would deal in the ambiguity of life: the terrible, as in *Rashomon,* or the everyday, as it peeped through *Anatomy of a Murder.*

They would sometimes be inflammatory; they would sometimes be funny.

They would be cool.

They would be turned-on.

Now, with such hopes and confronted with such a domestic situation, the critic may do several things. He may, first, turn to the world outside, and perceive Bergman making startlingly good films—in a certain sense films that belong to an old, theatrical, and somewhat worn tradition, but films with astounding verve and intelligence and a real feel for the moving image. But these are not films that would be made in America if we were free to make them. Or he

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* "Beige, Brown, or Black," *FQ,* Fall 1959.

† Gavin Lambert, *The Defiant Ones, FQ,* Fall 1958.

notes Bresson, making sombre, ponderous, mystical works, turning the film into a kind of anti-cinema: admirable enterprise, perhaps, but one we would not wish to share. Or Fellini, with his peculiarly personal and intense romantic vision; or Ray, with his straightforward compassion. Yes, they are all good; they are artists; we applaud them; but they are not *our* artists and there is not really much we can learn from them that is of direct pertinence.

Or, confronted with such a situation, the critic may, as Gavin Lambert noted in our first issue,* hunt general enthusiasms elsewhere—the Poles, say. He may find that the Polish films are not in truth terribly good, but they are encouraging as a sign that worthwhile things may be done under state control—that the throttle grip of private finance capital, which stifles significant production throughout the capitalist world, may indeed be broken.

Such reactions are very well; but they do not go to the heart of the matter, which is that the films we want, here among us, are part and parcel of the society we want—not some kind of magically separable phenomenon which can be achieved out of the blue. (The sources of films, because they cost so much, are irretrievably earthy, in fact.) The films we want are "committed," not to humanity or art per se, but to a rather particular vision of the way men ought to live: a democratic, humanist, socialist society, the only type of regime under which, in terms of the next century, say, we can achieve an end to the threat of imminent atomic death, freedom to remold our culture as we wish it, and political stability. And, except for lucky chances, they can only be produced in numbers under such a regime.

As should be clear from what has been said before, this is a far cry from the "agit-prop" film theories of the 'thirties, when it was thought that the duty of the film-maker was to help bring somebody to power. Films may have such effects, though it seems extremely doubtful. But the real duty of the film-maker in any case is still, as it has always been, to illuminate the human condition with every artistic resource he has the talent and opportunity to control. And the reason is that this is what arts should be for in a decent human society, not that it serves some useful strategic purpose.

To carry out this task now involves a rejection of most of the polite conventions, as well as the political prejudices, of present society. It requires a viewpoint far sharper, also, than that of the British documentary school and its descendants, who have evaded more real social issues than they raised.**

It also requires a new sense of "realism" in the film. As the films of Bergman, Bresson, Fellini, Cocteau, and others have amply shown, not to mention the great tradition of American comedy,† the supposed realism of film is deceptive to a considerable extent, though it remains true enough that film tends to be an opaque instrument, more at ease with actions than speeches. (Its introspective capacities at least, contrary to what is sometimes written about things like *Lady in the Lake*, are slight; the failure of *Red Badge of Courage*, for instance, did not spring merely from the idiocies chronicled by Lillian Ross, but also from an error of judgment—for all his apparent "visibleness" of style, Crane is really dealing almost entirely with interior processes.)

But the main force which pushes film incessantly toward "the way we live now," the world as it is and as we wish it, lies in our hunger for the visualization of change: for displaying new situations, new lives, new motives and reactions, new ways of thinking and feeling. There has always been the vulgar appeal of change in class level: through the movies shopgirls may ride in limousines. There is a parallel obvious appeal in new fashions and manners generally. But in a deeper sense film tends to reflect the major energies of its audiences. In the United States now, this means films about sex, for it is

* "Good-bye to Some of All That," *FQ*, Fall 1958.

** Ernest Callenbach, "The Understood Antagonist and Other Observations," *FQ*, Summer 1959.

† See, for instance, Christopher Bishop, "The Great Stone Face," *FQ*, Fall 1958; Ernest Callenbach, "Classics Revisited: *The Gold Rush*," *FQ*, Fall 1959.

in this area, where old conventions have broken down and others are being experimented with, that Americans find most new that needs to be visualized, with questions of violence not far off and indeed somewhat mixed in. Race is coming up strong. (But in the days of Ince, our films showed, naively but appealingly, the struggle of the rich and the poor.)

Thus also, in revolutionary Russia questions of politics held dramatic sway; in prewar Japan, medieval pictures glamorizing traditional virtues; in pre-Hitler Germany, films of fascination with violence; and so on. Though such national psychologizing can easily get out of hand, it must nonetheless be remembered that directors do not spring out of attics script in hand; cameras and film do not grow on the palms of California; and distribution and exhibition systems do not return costs for films no one wishes to see.

The results of such processes, as Robert Brustein has pointed out,* can be surprising. Hollywood heroes, instead of being entirely lawyers, cowboys, architects, gangsters, or respectable middle-class persons without visible means of support, have begun to include dope addicts, juvenile delinquents, labor hoodlums, psychopaths. Hollywood's interest in such types is sensational rather than serious, and the films are saying nothing of what should be said—*On the Waterfront*, for instance, richly deserved the come-down Lindsay Anderson gave it in *Sight & Sound* after its acclaim from "liberals." Such a development shows, however, that the official culture, the *Saturday Evening Post* or *Ask Any Girl* culture, is cracking and that there is a certain interest in the individuals revealed as it does so; the audience, we may guess, will in time be ready for *good* films about them.

In practical terms, however, not only is there no means of securing production conditions for such films; there are no reliable means of distributing them if we had them. Both lacks indicate revolutionary tasks for film people, since the solutions to both will frontally threaten the present pattern of property relations in the industry. But, properly conceived, arriving at solutions is not a hopeless task.

It is supremely important, on this score, not to entertain illusions of a "solution for the cinema," as if by some stroke of inspiration, or a series of lucky accidents, the whole weight of capitalist industrial organization could be pushed off. The proper pushing off of that weight, for film as for all "cultural industries," is possible only, if the expression may be pardoned, by the working class. It is worth recalling what Stalin once said, with somewhat sinister simplicity: "The technical intelligentsia is not a class." Thus, if we propose the end of capitalist relations in film (and that is in simple fact what giving freedom to the film artist now means) we must realize that such a task can be accomplished only by genuine, protracted, revolutionary mass pressure capable of removing old institutions and generating new ones, as the masses in their search for simple diversion first created the cinema we have known heretofore. (We can discern some tentative outlines that such new institutions should have for the cinema: having observed what the totalitarian collectivism called Stalinism did to Eisenstein and the Russian cinema, we know that the abolition of capitalist relations to the productive means is not enough. We know that the ensuing problem is intricate, and that we are the first political generation to be able to confront it concretely, sharing with the Poles and the rest their question, "What now?" We may suppose that some form of what the Yugoslavs call workers' control is required, and must be experimented with; we know, certainly, that even rational and economic bureaucratic control tends to corrupt the interest of the creator in his work. We know, also, that the creator and his group must somehow risk themselves with their public, whether through a box office or some other means.)

It is well, of course, to push wherever and whenever possible for particular possibilities of freer production, and to take advantage of any flukes in the control patterns. But there has been too much separatism in film thought, imagining that the general problems of film could be dealt with piecemeal and apart from those of other arts, and it too often resulted in an amateur and

* "The New Hollywood: Myth and Anti-Myth," *FQ*, Spring 1959.

useless political stance on the part of those too intelligent to embrace Stalinism. The impasse in film-making and in film criticism is essentially the same as the impasse in radical thought. In both, old traditions have run their course. In both, the enemy seems overwhelmingly powerful. In both, vague and unsystematic new stirrings have begun. In both, there is a reluctance to propound ideas with the maniacal glee necessary to serious work. In both, there is fear and trembling because of the very possible consequences of anything new, which is bound to be upsetting. In both, there is a lack of the beautiful desperation that precedes creation in any enterprise.

In such a context it is tiresome to hear talk of "commitment" without talk of its political concomitants, to imagine that film people can escape politics in all its grubby factionalism, its harrowing particularity, its drawn-out losing fights. No: we must not imagine that by some ingenious device we can avoid a break with the existing society, and with the means it has developed for controlling film-making.

Now the implications of such views, for film as for the other arts, ought to be the continuing concern of an independent general cultural journal for the United States. It is hoped that such a publication will be started soon. In the meantime, however, more limited journals such as *Film Quarterly* can make a substantial contribution by showing that films are still worth serious attention from a variety of viewpoints, by stimulating controversy, by exploring certain of the fundamental issues that must be met, and most of all by doing away with the sacred cows that have accumulated in the development of film criticism—thus leaving the field free for the new ideas that must come.

About our contributors: EUGEN WEBER teaches history at UCLA; he is now engaged on research in Paris. NOEL BURCH is a film critic resident in Paris, who is now making a film himself. COLIN YOUNG is our Los Angeles Editor. ABE MARTIN ZWEIBACK is a graduate student in Theater Arts at UCLA. RICHARD HODGENS is a graduate student of English at New York University.

New Periodicals

The Screen Actor, published by the Screen Actors Guild, AFL-CIO, 7750 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles 46, California, began appearing in August. It is not narrowly confined to the problems of actors and has printed general articles on the film industry, including Dore Schary's advice to young actors, an editorial on pay-TV, an article on the writer's role in Hollywood, and an article by George Meany on the current anti-union drive. *Variety,* in straight prose, suggested that the Screen Directors Guild and the Writers Guild should also revive their publications, "in order to broaden and stimulate thinking about the art and the commerce of films," and we heartily concur. $2.50 per year to members; $5.00 to others; 50 cents per single issue.

Perspective: Quarterly Review of Progress [*in*?] *Photography, Cinematography, Sound & Image Recording* is published in Britain at 31 Fitzroy Square, London W.I.; it is available in the United States from Focal Press, 303 West 42nd Street, New York 36, N.Y. The first number contained various technical articles and "self-portraits" including one of Man Ray; a special section of the journal deals in brief with new developments in research, new products, new methods, and market trends. $7.50 per year.

CLASSIFIED SECTION

The Nouvelle Vague: Two Views from Paris

In the following pages we present two articles on the "new wave" of young French film-makers, whose reputations have already reached the United States, but whose films are only beginning to be seen here. These men include Alexandre Astruc, Marcel Camus, Claude Chabrol, Georges Franju, Marcel Hanoun, Louis Malle, Jean-Daniel Pollet, Alain Resnais, Jacques Rivette, François Truffaut, and Roger Vadim—though their roles in the "movement" are subject to a good deal of discussion. The two articles differ markedly in their basic assumptions and their evaluations of the intentions and merits of these film-makers. We present them both in the hope that, as the films themselves become available here, a useful critical debate will ensue. In our next issue we plan to run detailed reviews of several of them which are now entering the theaters in this country. Neither article represents the opinion of the journal's editors, who await these much-heralded films with great interest, and are likely to arrive at still another position on them.

An Escapist Realism

EUGEN WEBER

La Nouvelle Vague? said a friend about their films. *Vous n'allez pas vous marrer.* He was right. There is nothing gay about them, they are not much fun, yet they cling to mind and one returns to them, to dress down the director for a slip, to wonder what he could have meant at a certain point, to interpret for the umpteenth time motives and gestures and shots that remain illogical, unexplained and open, as they so often do in life.

What is the *Nouvelle Vague*? It is the name a Parisian weekly, *l'Express,* has given to those young directors who in the last few years produced, usually with little money and a lot of independence, films without (or usually without) stars, films moreover which were well received by the public. The list is a varied one; the newcomers, generally in their thirties, are not as new as all that (some of them have made documentaries in the past, some of them came up as cameramen or assistants), and their films of the last five years run the gamut from detective, adventure or horror stories (Franju, Malle), through romantic love (Camus, Malle) and social realism (Chabrol, Truffaut), to the most delicately brutal essays in a new cinematography (Resnais).

The contents of their films are generally their most negligible part. It is the construction, the treatment, that counts. Thus, Astruc's badly

entitled *Mauvaises Rencontres* is the banal story of a young woman come to Paris from the provinces to make a career. Questioned by the police about an alleged abortion, she recalls in a series of flashbacks the men she met in the process: the failure she was sorry for, the successful one whom she loved and lost, the lost dog she befriended and helped, the world-weary doctor who helped her and to whose death she would contribute. A thin script, rather uncomfortably interpreted by Anouk Aymée, Jean-Claude Pascal and Claude Dauphin, leaves one with little beyond the impression that the girl was a bit of an ass and that society (is it not significant that society always expresses itself through the police?) is an even bigger ass for interfering with a woman's right to choose whether she wants to be a mother or not. But this is not Astruc's purpose. All he tries to do is to tell the story from the inside rather than from the usual omniscient outsider's point of view. Interior monologue replaces dialogue as often as possible and serves to link the various scenes, the spectator knowing no more about what goes on next door than the central figure herself. In spite of its rather commonplace techniques, muddy though interesting photography, and moralizing assumptions, or perhaps because of them, this unintelligent film won a prize at Venice in 1955. But Astruc's work is the least interesting of the group. I mention it because some still think of him as the first of the few. The first, not the best.

Things, however, soon improved and whatever else might be adduced against the works that followed, lack of intelligence cannot. Camus took a long time in Brazil to translate the Orpheus myth into a story of love and death during the Rio carnival. Orfeu, a tram conductor, and Eurydice, a peasant girl, both beautiful, both young, meet, love, and lose each other when she dies pursued by a mysterious figure of death. Orfeu, stunned and unbelieving at his loss, seeks her through hospitals and police stations, in empty offices where piles of lifeless papers stare him down, through the hell of a voodoo-like ritual in which he thinks to hear her voice and, finally, in the morgue where he finds her body. In the dawn, past the sweepers that wash away the remains of carnival, he carries her back toward his shack above the bay of Rio, is hit by a rock from the hand of an abandoned mistress, and falls over the cliff to his death. But his beloved guitar passes to a little boy and, as Orfeu and Eurydice lie reunited once more in death, the boy strums to make the sun rise upon another day.

It cannot have been easy to tie together Orpheus myth and Rio carnival in something more than just another thinly disguised travelogue. And Camus' work is far from perfect. But while the symbolism seems sometimes limp and sometimes too farfetched, the film remains remarkable for its poetic beauty. Without poetic license, without the willing suspension of disbelief, without surrender to the magic that Camus' images wield even when they wield it imperfectly, some scenes might seem senseless and others overdone. Fairy tales are not for the skeptic, but to my taste the failures of this romantic fairy tale are only those that await us all when we try to invent and interpret the uncommunicable.

In a way, Louis Malle may be said to have succeeded better than Camus when he chose to interpret love more summarily, less allegorically, in *Les Amants*, even though the film suggests an allegory. It is not hard to see why this beautiful and simple tale has caused shock and indignation, not only in professionally virtuous circles but also among more literate and broad-minded people whose romantic sympathies tend to be shocked by its matter-of-fact amorality. The heroine is a rich little provincial goose (well played by Jeanne Moreau). Dissatisfied with a husband too intelligent, too taciturn and too preoccupied for her (Alain Cuny), she seeks something better in Paris, where her girl friend's parties and the attentions of a polo-playing lover seem to provide occupation but without satisfaction. The husband, suddenly suspicious of her long and repeated absences from home, insists on inviting both her girl friend and the man he thinks to be her lover for a week end in their house. Unable to avoid this unpleasant situation, she drives back from Paris to host the odd

LES AMANTS: *Judith Magre, Jeanne Moreau, and Jose-Luis de Villalonga.*

party, her car breaks down on the way, and a young man in a small, tinny Citroën gives her a lift home. Her husband invites him to stay the night. It is summer. After dinner, in the garden, in the moonlight, the two almost-strangers meet, talk, touch, and love. They spend the night in her room (the love scenes there have received much comment—some passionate, some merely intrigued) and, at dawn, they depart in the young man's tinny little car, leaving behind her infant daughter, her husband, her lover and her life, in a magnificent and romantic *coup-de-tête*.

As with *Orfeu,* my account here concerns the surface of the plot, not its substance—which is elusive—or its subtleties—which are many. The film could have been scabrous; it is simply beautiful. Dialogue is almost nonexistent: it is replaced by the very haunting music of Brahms (from the Third Concerto for Cello and Violin), and by the touch of the camera which almost fulfills the ideal Astruc once expressed of using the camera as one uses a pen. And it is true that, in their descriptive quality, these films are more literature than theater; but they are also more cinema than literature, and more cinematic than cinema used to be here only a few years ago. Their makers have seen the films of the *Cinémathèque*; they have learned the lessons of the great Russians, lessons which the Russians themselves went on to forget. They have progressed from the generalizing realism dear to the 'thirties and the 'forties, to a realism in which detail is significant and the camera does not hesitate to abandon the *gros plan* for seemingly arbitrary yet essential close-ups of hands or gestures, looking, as it were, no longer with the synthesizing, generalizing eye of a man, but through the eyes of a woman, so much more sensitive to detail.

This new emphasis seems to parallel certain similar tendencies of the modern novel in which, less and less, the author seeks to show the logic of an action or an attitude, but leaves the reader to draw his own conclusions from the surface picture of reality he presents. To *Le Monde* (August 12, 1959) Alexandre Astruc has declared that young directors are moving toward a certain "de-theatralization." They show characters but do not explain them, and their films have nothing to do with any dramatic construction. Thus, the camera, no longer forced to tell an artificially coherent tale, now becomes an eye, confused and irrelevant as in real life, confused by the irrelevant as in real life, ignorant of the real sense of what it perceives, faced by objects and events whose only coherence, really, is furnished by the beholder.

This is very much the manner of Claude Chabrol, whose first two films, made on a shoestring, help to illustrate the strength and the weakness of this approach. Everybody knows by now that *Le Beau Serge* was made with a few million francs that Chabrol's wife inherited one fine day. It is no better for that: the sound, which some people find truer to life, is distinctly odd; some of the characters, hired on the spot, are remarkably wooden (but are not all peasants that way?); and the simplicity of the script provided by Chabrol amounts at times to indifference. Indeed, the essence of it seems to be that it is pointless. A young man returns to his village in the Corrèze to try to regain his health

after a lung illness. From the moment of his arrival he is fascinated by the fate of his childhood chum, Serge, once the village's young man most likely to succeed, who has gone down the drain in his absence, married his mistress when she was going to have a child (born Mongoloid and dead), and taken to drink. His wife pregnant once more, Serge now drinks harder than ever, haunted by the fear of another little Mongol, symbol of his utter futility and failure. The convalescent friend sets out to save Serge, first by freeing him from drink (he fails), then by freeing him from the wife who seems to have driven him to drink (he fails), then by freeing him from the wife's sexy young sister, who also gets a tumble in a while (he fails miserably), and lastly by doing his best to help the baby be born and Serge (who has become a complete sot as a result of his attentions) to see that all is not lost. In this he succeeds at the cost of heroic exertions and, it seems, of his own recovery. Serge, still half drunk, joyfully contemplates his newborn son while his friend slowly collapses by the door. And that is that. But there is no adequate explanation for the obsession, the Serge-fixation, that has led the young hero to so many strenuous and ill-rewarded efforts on his behalf; nor, indeed, of the reasons why an ailing young man should seek his recovery in a dull and dreary village where he has no relative left, where only snow interrupts the rain (or almost), and amusements range no further than from alcohol to alcove.

The photography, which is excellent, shows the place in its unutterable dreariness, heavy skies lowering over drab streets and leprous houses, a world whose liveliest spot is the cemetery. But it is true that men often act for no good reason or none that they can understand; that the explanations we give ourselves and choose to believe are not, as a rule, any stronger or more convincing to the outsider than those of Chabrol's characters; that the heart has its reasons which reason does not know, and that in life "motivation" is often no more than a rationalization after the act. This, Chabrol never forgets and does not intend us to forget—or, rather, since most of us have not thought of it, this is what

LE BEAU SERGE: *A saint (J.-C. Brialy) among the infidels (Bernadette Lafont, left, and Gérard Blain, middle).*

he wants to demonstrate without ever actually having to say so. Like François Reichenbach, author of so many documentaries on the United States (*New York Ballad, Impressions of New York, New Orleans Carnival, America Through French Eyes*), Chabrol believes in the possibility of making others feel what he feels himself. It is a difficult enterprise, and one that can hope at best only for partial success.

In his second film, *Les Cousins,* Chabrol has, however, done much better, and his greater measure of success is due in large part to a 37-year-old script writer, Paul Gégauff, who bids fair to become the Paddy Chayefsky of Paris. Before working with Chabrol on *Les Cousins,* Gégauff had written a play and four books that nobody noticed. Now he is suddenly in great demand: he has just finished a script for René Clément, prepares one with Chabrol and another with Vadim, and envisages—again with Chabrol – the screen adaptation of an Ellery Queen mystery. The story which has brought him public notice concerns two cousins who live together while studying in Paris. One is a wild, smooth, madly social *aficionado* of wine, women and sports cars; the other is square, solid and a swot, a dull but decent lad just up from the country who writes long letters home to mother, works hard and, instead of tumbling the girl he likes, writes her a poem and clumsily declares his love. As we expect, the girl ends up in dissolute cousin's bed while solid one plods grimly on to show his worth in the finals. But he does no

better there, for dissolute cousin blinds his examiners with brilliant prattle while he himself, confused by too much reading, fails to pass. In the end, the gun with which he tried to kill his irritatingly lucky cousin goes off while the latter fools with it, and kills the unlucky square on the spot, while we are left to wonder how the poor dissolute will ever get out of this mess.

A morality tale in reverse, but one too intelligent to qualify mere inclination as either virtue or vice. People do what they do because they are what they are: we get no more indication why they are as they are than we would in real life, far less than in Hollywood psychologicals where the development of murderous rapists logically follows from the failure of a nurse to respond to their infant advances; the frigidity of a lovely woman dissolves on the revelation that she was frightened by a *bidet* at the age of three. People are a mess, and the tricks life regularly plays on them and to which they as regularly succumb are an even bigger mess. Though this does not leave us with a particularly illuminating view of life, it seems less confusing than the explanations of more serious and long-winded theorists. Less confusing but, of course, no less confused.

The one who has gone furthest on the road of a new realism in which the screen seeks to reflect the confusions of human mind and comprehension, and who in the process has produced the most important and affecting of the new films, is Alain Resnais. Resnais is known already by his terrible and controversial film on German extermination policies in action, *Nuit et Bruillard*, and by his short films on *Van Gogh*, *Gauguin*, *Guernica*, and other—usually artistic or literary—subjects. In *Hiroshima, mon amour*, Resnais has told with extraordinary evocative power the meeting of two human beings, two strangers—a French actress and a Japanese architect who picks her up one night in a Hiroshima bar. It is impossible to tell the story of this film (the script is by Marguerite Duras) as it is impossible, when asked what one is thinking, to re-create with any meaning or coherence the images passing through one's mind. During the war, during her girlhood at Nevers on the

LES COUSINS: *Gérard Blain and (background) Jean-Claude Brialy and Juliette Meynel.*

Loire, the woman had loved a German soldier. The soldier had been shot at the Liberation, she had been punished and humiliated for un-French behavior but, worse, she had suffered most terribly in the loss of her love. All this comes back to her in the arms, under the questioning, of her Japanese lover, and the story cannot be said to be told in flashbacks since the moments of past time which she fleetingly recaptures are woven into the Hiroshima night, just as the image of her German lover merges with that of her present one and the sounds of Hiroshima provide the background for her visions of Nevers. As she tries to tell of what had been, she realizes with horror that the memory of those days—of the happiness, the suffering, the horror, the pain—that all this had waned and paled, become as nothing, become as vague and strange as her present love will become under the lash of time. The realization that experience is not only subjective but temporary, that it deflates and withers in time, makes the present seem meaningless and unreal, and fills her with terror.

Like Orpheus, like all of us, she discovers that she cannot look back without dispersing even the pale image of past living and past love, and this seems to question the use of any and every experience. It questions, or merely suggests, other things as well: our human talent for complicating with artificial prejudice and hatreds lives in all conscience difficult enough; the fu-

HIROSHIMA, MON AMOUR: *Emmanuelle Riva.*

tility of war in which human—i.e., personal—realities are more than ever threatened by public nastiness and stupidity; the meaninglessness of racial barriers, as of national ones, when confronted with the real (even though passing, even though condemned) emotion of love. And it leaves one wondering whether the capacity of the human spirit to triumph over most extraordinary difficulties is not itself a function of its shortcomings, of this wearing away of experience.

Hiroshima is a troubling, a subversive, film: insidiously, it suggests the futility of public values, the worth and the worthlessness of private ones, the meaninglessness of the most sacred prejudices (nationality, race, emotion, integrity, love), a terrible overweening doubt of everything . . . and yet, in spite of it all, the tremendous importance of the meaning with which we endow every moment. And it says all this in a new language, compounded of camera and commentary, but a commentary that does not run smoothly and logically on as in a travelogue, a commentary that is a dialogue of camera and mind responding to each other in disjointed phrases—disjointed, yet with a coherence of their own, something like that of our thought and our vision, something like what the cinema must try to work out if it wants to go much further than it has gone already.

Do the films of the *Nouvelle Vague* have anything in common? If their highest common factor is the excellence of their photography, the lowest common denominator so far has been the thinness of their scripts. Camerawork becomes more than ever the keystone of production, and its predominance explains much else: the insistence on detail, the artistic sensitiveness, the sketchiness of scripts which leave many situations hanging or unexplained, the relative lack of dialogue ("Les Amants," for instance, hardly say a word in fifteen minutes or more), and the heavy use of interior monologue and expressive music. The use of young or unknown actors reflects not principle or prejudice, but the economic conditions under which these beginners began their work some years ago and under which cheap actors were all they could afford.

But most of these once-cheap actors are pretty good and, just as Vadim has made Bardot the only real star in France, so the films of the new directors have revealed new faces destined for success. Most striking among them are Gérard Blain and Jean-Claude Brialy, who act in both of Chabrol's films, and Emanuele Riva, who plays Resnais' heroine with sensitiveness, passion, and a voice that penetrates from mind to marrow.

Even so, as everyone remarks, the stars of the *Nouvelle Vague* are the directors who have gone a long way toward the "cinéast's" dream of being writer-directors and—at least for the moment—when not the producers, then at least the real masters of their work. This may change as success brings capital to their doors and, with it, the little surrenders that cost so much; but for the moment there's no mistaking who's master. The public knows it, too, and no longer goes to see a film with ——, but a film by ——. This has, of course, made for a new sort of snobbery, but it offers an excellent opportunity for "cinema" men, who have grown up with the cinema, who speak its language and have sufficient command of its technique to envisage its development and theirs, it offers the best opportunity they have had yet to do something, to express themselves or, at least, to try to work out means of expression in keeping with an increasingly sophisticated and analytical art.

Certainly the *Nouvelle Vague* is not as new as its publicity has suggested. Its members know better than the public how much a part they are of the general development of the cinema, and how unextraordinary their films really are. *Hiroshima* alone can be called revolutionary in what it tries to do and in what it achieves. There is nothing new in social realism as such, well received by the public a long time ago; also in films long on talent, short of money and, often, short of stars. The difference, though, and it is important, between, say, the films made in Italy after the war and these French films of the last few years is that the former are vivid social criticisms, while the latter (*Hiroshima* again excepted) are more in the tradition of the *roman de moeurs* and make no social, economic or political comments whatever. Their most noticeable attempts at social documentation concern wild young things who do too much sleeping around (here we might add Marcel Carné's very slick *Les Tricheurs*, the story of amoral and unhappy golden youth living it up to its own destruction), the inhumanity or incomprehension of man for man or man for child (Astruc, Chabrol, Franju, Truffaut), and the private passions of young and old. None of this is new in itself. It is well observed and one discerns an occasional touch of social satire (though neither *Les Tricheurs* nor the films of Tati, where this is most obvious, properly belong to the group); but it makes no comment—certainly none of a political nature. Realism, too, can be escapist. In its self-imposed limits, that of today is very much so. There are, understandably, no films on North Africa, except for a romanesque phantasy, *Goha*, by Jacques Baratier, which I have not seen. But there are none, either, on underpaid workers and shop assistants, nothing like *Umberto D.* on the tragedy of the old and unwanted, nothing like *Miracolo in Milano* about the housing problem, never an attempt to guy the Army let alone to question its pretensions and assumptions, nothing but the most conformist nonsense about an establishment (police, judiciary, etc.) whose competence, gentleness, and sense of justice are hardly beyond question.

The films of the *Nouvelle Vague* keep away from what has become forbidden ground, and in this they reflect a society which has abandoned its decisions to others. Life is incomprehensible, and politics even more so. We concentrate on the immediate, the private, the local, and even there we call chance "fate" and face it with the fascinated acquiescence of a bird dominated by a snake. Man is too small and stupid to do more than look on at what, if it is not his own destruction, must be a sort of pathetic farce. In the end, there are always defeat and death. In adopting this point of view, the new directors, as I said, unwittingly reflect an attitude which, for being more advanced in France, is no less noticeable elsewhere. Indeed, it is hard to say whether the popular simplicity of certain Anglo-Saxon "explanations" is not more dreadful than

the abdication of any right to explanation at all. It may be that the concentration on action and technique, at the cost of explanation and motivation in the work of French directors, is itself a sort of avoidance of content, a begging the question even, and that on this plane they meet their less advanced brethren elsewhere.

But it is characteristic that, of all of them, the one who had most to say about forbidden things like war and peace, atom bombs and human suffering, is also the one who has, in effect, said most, and most interestingly, in (and about) the cinematic idiom itself. Perhaps what Resnais understood (consciously or not) is that the problem today rests in the synthesis of man's personal and social concerns. Social criticism is good for a book, and so is adultery, and so is first love. But in life they go together, mixed as the elements of a cake; for those who live them are men and women, complex and complicated, hungry and happy and apprehensive at the same time, working and loving and buying a newspaper and shooting a glance at a passing blonde all at the same time. A slice of reality—since that is all the artist can hope to cope with—a slice of reality is a slice of a mixture, not the artificial isolation of one of its many components.

Qu'est-ce que la Nouvelle Vague?

NOEL BURCH

Originally, the term *nouvelle vague*, as popularized by the snappy, left-wing weekly *l'Express*, did not refer to the cinema at all, but to the generation of forward-looking youth (mostly professional people, business men, and students) who were supposed to gather 'round Mendès-France and bring new ideas into French political life. Subsequent events have, unfortunately, emptied the phrase of most of its social and political meaning, leaving a handy catch-word in the air when it came time to put a label on the truly remarkable movement which began in French films last year—in the sudden rise of a sizable number of amazingly young directors (the *average* age of the directors discussed in this article is 32). In films, however, the new wave is primarily a commercial phenomenon, and only incidentally an idealistic one. At the Cannes stock-market last spring, the French producer who did not have his young Frenchman to sell was simply wasting his time; foreign distributors were interested in almost no other commodity, and they paid some pretty fancy prices. One is reminded of the run on Italian neorealism just after the war. But, unlike the first neorealist films, those of the new wave are just as popular at home as abroad: a half dozen of the biggest first-run houses in Paris have been tied up fairly regularly for the last six months by the new generation. Just how, one may wonder, did this state of affairs come about?

In the first place, the older generation was undoubtedly beginning to show serious signs of fatigue; their films were costing more and more and, with a very few brilliant exceptions, were bigger and bigger flops; moreover a certain generation of actors no longer interested the public. (In France the tendency to use the same actors over and over again is stronger, perhaps, than in any other country—a tendency to which the new directors are no exception.) In the face of this situation, a few producers and a few young directors (most of them with private fortunes) decided that the time was ripe to start making those films that they (the directors, of course) had been wanting to make for so long, *and to make them cheaply.* As in every Western country, film-making in France is far too costly; it is an industry which tolerates a form of conspicuous consumption and even downright waste which simply could not exist

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in any other commercial enterprise. The reasons for this are multiple, and beyond the scope of this article, but the remedies are so simple that a bit of good will is all that is required to apply them in France. Not that all the young directors drastically cut the costs of their films, but while few of them cost as little as Chabrol's first feature, *Le Beau Serge* (35,000,000 francs or $72,000), most of them cost less than 100,000,000–$206,000, whereas previously the average "quality" film–with the foreign distribution guarantees that this word generally implies–cost at least half as much again.

Who are the *nouvelle vague* directors? One of the most striking features of this generation is that almost none of them has behind him the career as assistant-director or short film-maker which hitherto were *sine qua non* conditions to becoming a director in France. As we shall see, however, this "fresh approach" has major disadvantages. Another striking fact is that at least six of these young men belong–or belonged–to the staff of France's leading film monthly, *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*. In this respect, the *"nouvelle vague"* bears an interesting resemblance to the *"cinéma d'art"* movement in the nineteen-twenties (Epstein, Delluc, *et al.*) who also came to films directly from journalism. There is, however, a basic difference between these two generations, for whereas the critic-turned-director in that heroic age of cinema was primarily concerned with aesthetic problems–which was all to his credit even though his solutions were less interesting than the Russians' or the Germans'–his 1959 successors are primarily concerned with *moral values*. A recent consensus of opinion taken among the staff members of *Les Cahiers* revealed that for many, though not all of them, the greatest film of all time is Hitchcock's *Under Capricorn*, while another film high on their lists is Rossellini's *Journey to Italy*. Now I know it will be hard for intelligent Americans to understand why two such insipid, mediocre films should be so highly prized by the *Cahiers* group–that is, by a goodly portion of the "forward-looking" new wave. Briefly, one may say that they are fascinated, on the one hand, by the "moral" (read "Christian") themes treated in these films–the idea of sacrifice in the first and of redempion in the second–and, on the other, by their rather crude and, in the case of Rossellini's film, frankly awkward technique; for, above all, these young, intelligent critics, though they probably know more about how films are really made than the critics of any other country, nevertheless somehow feel that technique is a dangerous thing–perhaps because they see it as leading to academicism or, far worse, to what they would call formalism.

One of the most typical films of this "school within a school" (because it sums up neatly the whole *Cahiers* attitude toward the function of film art) was Jacques Rivette's short, *La Coup du Berger*. This film may also be considered the first manifestation of the new wave, as it preceded Malle's and Chabrol's films by a couple of years. I can best describe it to English-speaking readers by saying that, dubbed into English, it could easily have been used to make *Quartet* into a "Quintet." The story–a husband foils his wife's attempt to make him believe she found a fur coat given her by her lover, and avenges himself by filching the coat and presenting it to his mistress–is an almost perfect pastiche of Somerset Maugham, and is just about as profound. Its French literary origins, however, are more significant: if not actually an adaptation of a Diderot tale, the form and spirit of *Le Coup du Berger* are those of an eighteenth-century

LE COUP DU BERGER: *Virginie Vitry and Jean-Claude Brialy.*

conte moral. Here, I feel, lies the key not only to Rivette's attitude but to Truffaut's and Chabrol's as well. They look upon films as an instrument with which to comment upon the mores of Man and Society—to "philosophize," that is, in the sense that Diderot and D'Alembert gave this term. Now, when one recalls Diderot's attitude toward form in art (his feeling about the relative merits of Chardin and Greuze, for example) one is not too surprised at the formal indigence of these young men's work.

Actually *Le Coup du Berger,* though deliberately academic in both form and texture, does display considerable economy of means. Rivette, alone among the *Cahiers* group, seems to have acquired a real mastery of academic film technique, practically without ever having set foot on a sound stage, and this is certainly to his credit. He is now completing his first feature, but unfortunately I do not have the impression that he ever intends to transcend this technique and set out to discover the truth of films, as several of his contemporaries have had the courage to do .

Aside from his relative technical proficiency, Rivette has the added merit of having shot two films, one short and one feature, on practically nonexistent budgets (I say "shot" because producers have stepped in to finance the post-synchronization and cutting of both films, which proves that his shoestring methods pay off). Claude Chabrol, on the other hand, has money, and there is no doubt but what his approach to films is somewhat that of a dilettante. Chabrol was "never anyone's assistant" either, and is terribly proud of the fact. I'm afraid he has no cause, for the total lack of formal unity displayed by his films shows that the years spent at the *Cinémathèque* taught him nothing save what I expect he calls a "healthy" contempt for academic technique. This contempt, however, is healthy only for those who have assimilated—and thoroughly assimilated—the secrets of this technique, who know *why,* for example, two shots of the same field meant to be matched in the cutting-room should normally be shot at angles separated by at least thirty degrees. Unquestionably, true film art lies *beyond* this and other rules, but only for those who know how and when to break them; when Chabrol breaks them out of hand simply because *il s'en fout,* the result is merely jarring and, above all, *amorphous.* For, though it is only fair to point out one interesting formal contribution in Chabrol's *Les Cousins*—an inventive apartment set handled with a certain sense of spatial ambiguity through camera movement—the word "amorphous" is, I feel, the key to both his and Truffaut's films. They want at all costs to avoid the slick textural and structural academicism of their hated elders (Autant-Lara, Becker, and the rest) and make a conscious, though by no means sustained effort to reject tried and true solutions, but when it comes to replacing these with solutions of their own, they fall down completely. Chabrol has nothing to offer save an occasional stroke of "genius" which is never less than incongruous (his cutting to a reverse-field shot with short, gratuitious, lateral dolly movements on either side of the splice was meant, I suppose, to underline a rather trivial declaration of juvenile love, but it is not everyone who can invent convincing neologisms). Truffaut's substitute for a personal style is even weaker: it consists of "quotations" from film classics (*L'Arroseur Arrosé* in *Les Mistons* and *Zéro de Conduite* in *Les 400 Coups*) and other extra-

LES COUSINS: *"Minne" (Claude Cerval) sowing the seeds of doubt in the mind of "Brunnhilde" (Juliette Meyniel).*

LES 400 COUPS:
Zero for conduct.

cinematic effects. And though this first appearance of allusion to film-history in films themselves may be an interesting token of the art's new-found sophistication (as are the pastiche sequences in some of Bergman's films), it is fully as gratuitous as the systematic Siegfried parallel in *Les Cousins*, or the "quotations" found in the worst neoclassical Stravinsky. For the rest, Truffaut takes care to plug his pals' films; the protagonists of *Les Mistons* attend a showing of *Le Coup du Berger*, those of *Les 400 Coups* go to Le Gaumont Palace (!) to see Rivette's forthcoming *Paris Nous Appartient*.

On the level of subject matter the films of Truffaut, Chabrol – and even Rivette – have another trait in common which merely confirms their immaturity and amateurism: all are frankly autobiographical, and have that undisciplined quality of first novels by second-rate writers. And while autobiography per se may not necessarily be a hindrance to art, even great art (see Proust and Joyce), in the hands of minor talents it generally serves as a means of avoiding structural problems and, above all, the problem of *choice* inherent in any true creation, by substituting ready-made, "real-life" situations for the artificial and therefore more demanding ones of art. Both Truffaut's short, *Les Mistons*, and his feature, *Les 400 Coups* are autobiographical, and while the former, it is true, is an adaptation of a short story by the slickly superficial Maurice Pons,* the latter is an almost literal account of Truffaut's difficult childhood (resembling a poor man's watered-down version of *Death on the Installment Plan*). Chabrol's scripts are less literally autobiographical, and more frankly moralizing; they deal with such simplistic situations as "the country mouse versus the city rat"

* It is, I feel, a further indication of the way their minds work that the writers whom the vast majority of these young directors choose to adapt or collaborate with are among the most inconsequential and aesthetically conservative in France: Pons, Roger Nimier, Louise de Vilmorin, Georges Schéhadé, Paul Gégauff, Marcel Moussy, Roger Vailland, and Sagan. One might imagine that such "daring" directors would be more interested in enlisting the aid of men like Beckett, Ionesco, Robbe-Grillet, Audiberti, Vauthier, or even Genet.

(*Les Cousins*) or "a saint among the infidels" (*Le Beau Serge*) (which ultimately constitute, nevertheless, a devastating portrait of Chabrol's intellect). The strictly autobiographical character of his films is betrayed by his choice of incidents, milieux, props, and locations; one feels that a particular piece of bric-a-brac or a particular variety of card game have been thrown in because they are part of Chabrol's everyday existence and not by virtue of any aesthetic necessity.

I do not think that Chabrol and Truffaut have deliberately sold their souls to the devil, as certain young left-wing critics, and certain young film-makers less fortunate than they, have claimed; they are probably making the films they want to make, but anyone who claims that theirs are any better or, above all, any more "advanced" than, let us say, the highly respectable *Diable au Corps*, is simply deluding himself. It is true that in so far as they choose "serious" subjects—most of their films deal with youth in a far more sophisticated way than Carné's lamentable *Tricheurs*—they are not disgracing the French cinema and have, in fact, slightly raised the average *intellectual* level of French films; but it would be pure hokum to claim that these young men are working any kind of aesthetic revolution, for technically—and, above all, poetically—their films are a good twenty years behind the time.

LE BEAU SERGE: *The final "Calvary" scene. Jean-Claude Brialy and Gérard Blain.*

Much of what has gone before can be applied to Louis Malle, whose film *Les Amants* was the first big commercial success of the new generation; it was he who first made the producers sit up and take notice. Malle, however, never wrote for *Les Cahiers*, and he had had some professional experience prior to making his first film, *Ascenseur pour l'Echafaud*. He is the only member of the new wave to have graduated from the official French film school, the IDHEC. After that, he spent two years on the *Calypso* with Commandant Cousteau making underwater films, and though this activity may seem rather far afield from studio direction, almost any prolonged contact with the film medium is enough to give an intelligent artist (and Malle, I think, is one) insight into its essential mechanisms. His first film, though frankly a stylistic exercise—it was based on a particularly trashy suspense novel—contained real promises. The scenes showing the hero trapped in an elevator-cage were almost Bressonian in their intense treatment of minute gesture, and Jeanne Moreau's long walk down the Champs-Elysées by night was unquestionably an excellent mood piece. The film was rigorously put together, and though marred by a few incongruous bits of bravura (such as a police interrogation shot against a black backdrop) it nevertheless gave high hopes for the future of this very young director (he was not yet twenty-five at the time). Unfortunately those hopes were utterly dashed by the incredible, academic formlessness of *Les Amants*. Knowing that Malle was absolutely free to direct as he chose, I cannot understand how he could feel that this unbelievably flat film, hardly redeemed by a rather sympathetic but aesthetically tame love scene, constituted an improvement over *Ascenseur pour l'Echafaud*. Either Malle simply decided to play it safe—an attitude which would be reprehensible in view of his particularly privileged financial situation—or else he too is contemptuous of form, and the experimentation in his first film was merely a way of amusing himself

until he was free to choose his own subjects. (A similar attitude on the part of a Hollywood director once produced a minor masterpiece: Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me, Deadly,* which its author disavowed when he began making his dismal "message" films.) In any case, if we argue, as I think we must, that only through a conscientious concern for form is it possible to make a vital contribution to film art today, Malle must be written off along with Chabrol and Truffaut.

As I have implied, Chabrol and Truffaut are not the only *Cahiers* critics who belong to the new wave. Alexandre Astruc, though chronologically not a bona fide member of the movement—his first film dates from 1952—once wrote for that journal too, and while he has since broken with it, he still shares its preoccupation with moral values in cinema. His first two films —*Le Rideau Cramoisi* and *Les Mauvaises Rencontres*—are hardly worth recalling, but his recent adaptation of Maupassant's *Une Vie,* though rather openly inspired by *Senso,* did have some of the "melodramatic rigor" of Visconti's masterpiece. Astruc bears serious watching (even though his latest project involves a script by—Françoise Sagan!).

Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, current editor, and Jean Luc-Godard and Eric Rohmer, both regular contributors to *Les Cahiers du Cinéma,* round out this magazine's participation in the new wave. Though all three have made a number of shorts, those I have seen are worth little discussion; while anything is possible, of course, I doubt that the three features they are now completing are likely to prove very exciting.

Far more promising, I find, is the work of the youngest member of the new wave, Jean-Daniel Pollet (he is 23). Although his short subject *Pourvu qu'on ait l'Ivresse* (literally: "Provided there be drunkenness") was formally as banal as *Les 400 Coups,* its ferociously realistic description of a provincial dance hall betokened genuine artistic talent and a real need to create—whereas one vaguely feels that Truffaut and Chabrol make films because it has become the thing to do. The film is a microscopic study of an extremely ugly boy's inner sexual torment as he tries to summon the courage to ask a girl—any girl—to dance, and Pollet's direction of an extraordinarily talented but completely unknown actor makes this one of the most penetratingly humanistic films of recent years. To what degree the dance-hall atmosphere is unstaged, it is hard to tell, but occasionally Pollet's handling of it displays great emotional—if not formal—discipline. At other times he lapses into rather self-indulgent and conventional orgies of fast cutting—particularly in the over-long sequence depicting a Negro band—and the last part of the film, in which the hero dons a mask at a wedding ball and has a brief moment of joy dancing with the pretty bride, is a bit facile. But the film's over-all discretion and sensitivity make it far better than such dance-hall films as *Mambo Madness* and *Momma Don't Allow,* or the dance-hall sequence in *Amore in Cittá;* despite its formal conventionality, *Pourvu qu'on ait l'Ivresse* gave considerable hope for Pollet's future.

His first feature, *La Ligne de Mire,* was almost finished this summer when the producers decided that much of it had to be re-shot. Whether this is because the film was in fact "uneditable," as might well be the case with a novice director unfamiliar with film grammar, or whether Pollet simply overstepped the bounds of fake audacity as they have been laid down by Chabrol, Vadim, and Malle, we will probably never know. In any case, the film will certainly not be ready by the time this article goes to press.

Had they not inexplicably been graced with the grand prize at Cannes this year, Marcel Camus and his *Orfeu Negro* would never have been mentioned in this article. Camus has absolutely nothing in common with the full-fledged members of the new wave who, whatever their failings, cannot be called hack directors. Camus is 46, and was France's number-one assistant for over ten years before making his very unremarkable *Mort en Fraude* some four years ago. His prize-winning film is a dull, vaguely detestable mixture of symbolism á la *Joe Macbeth* and trumped-up local color. The only unexpected thing about it is its technical ineptness (aimless pan shots, superfluous cuts, and amateurish frame composi-

tion)—Camus, after all, has ghosted the technical direction of a great many French films, some of them signed by "name" directors.

Although Roger Vadim has made two films which I feel are on an even lower level than *Orfeu Negro*—both of them with Brigitte Bardot—he has made two others, *Sait-on Jamais?* and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses,* which do display a quality I have found lacking in the work of all the men discussed so far: a thoughtful concern for cinematic form. In *Sait-on Jamais?*, his second film, his tricky, "calligraphic" handling of the Cinemascope frame was far more inventive than Ophüls' clumsy masking in *Lola Montez.* The superbly baroque color photography and the sumptuous set were highly *coordinated,* a rarer occurrence than one might suppose when virtuoso set-designers and camera crews get together. And although the brilliance of the film remained, for the most part, on a purely visual level, with all the limitations this word implies, it did attain the stature of authentic poetry in those scenes describing the heroine's sexual obsession for the villain. However, Vadim's attempt to transfigure melodrama through studied formalism—highly laudable in itself—ultimately failed through lack of consistency. On re-seeing the film one realises that there are far too many moments so flat that one had forgotten them, and which might almost have been the work of some other director.

SAIT-ON JAMAIS: *Franco Fabrizzi and Françoise Arnoul.*

Vadim's latest film—an adaptation of Laclos' masterpiece but now called *Les Liaisons Dangereuses 1960* because of an absurd legal squabble with a society for the protection of French literary traditions—is of course far more ambitious but also far less successful than *Sait-on Jamais?* The film will probably not be shown outside of France for a long time to come, since the Fifth Republic feels it would give foreigners the wrong idea about French morals (the French Right has always smarted at the idea that tourists come to Paris because of Pigalle) and has banned it for export. American connoisseurs of Laclos need not, however, feel overly disappointed, for as was to be expected Vadim failed in the near-impossible task of adapting that splendid epistolary novel. The chief reason for his failure is that he insisted, not only on doing the film in modern dress—which, *a priori,* had much to recommend it—but on laying Laclos' story in an ultrarealistic, socially defined, contemporary setting. Now, the key to Bresson's extraordinarily successful adaptation of a Diderot tale in *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* was that, although the characters *seemed* to live in modern France, they were completely abstracted from any realistic environment. There were not dozens of extras crowding up every outdoor shot, none of Vadim's stilted references to UN and UNESCO, no tape-recorders; instead, an object as modern as the telephone became a timeless, almost disembodied means of communication. And while Clouzot's adaption of *Manon Lescaut* took, of course, quite the opposite tack, he and Jean Ferry retained only the one driving element in Prévost's tale which was in fact universal: passionate physical love, and replaced the eighteenth-century moral code with more neutral twentieth-century values. Vadim's characters, on the other hand, seem to be members of some improbable club who, for obscure reasons, strive to apply to modern society a set of moral values borrowed *in toto* from the salons of the Directtoire. The result is a feeling of strained, meaningless artificiality. Vadim, I believe, holds that these eighteenth-century libertines would be just as diabolically subversive today as in 1790; in other words that they still are rebels in the

sense that Camus feels Don Juan was one. In reality, however, Vadim and his dialogue-writer, Roger Vailland—called by some "le Montherlant de la gauche"—are merely indulging in a form of public masturbation, dreaming of a fantasy-world in which the mechanics of love are all—a world which bears a striking resemblance to certain exhibitionistic playgrounds of southern France (or California), than which nothing is less rebellious or more bourgeois.

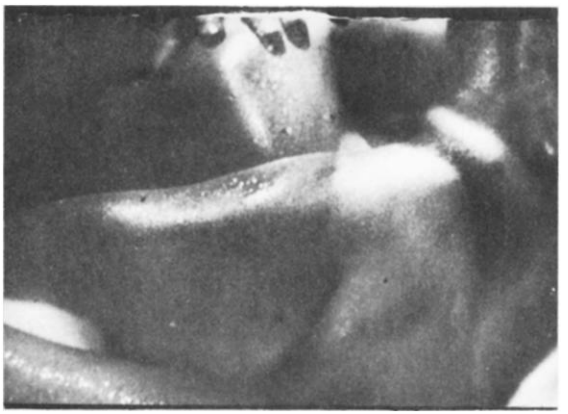
However, this film does represent a consistent—though anarchic—attempt to create a modern approach to the baroque in film. Such tricks as a zoom-shot which passes *through* a baby-carriage (I am afraid this is the only way to describe it) do unquestionably suggest new dimensions in film technique, and the scene in which "Valmont" seduces "la Présidente" while his voice, off-screen, analyses his technique in a letter to "Madame de Merteuil" does achieve a kind of spatial irony which is both effectively disturbing and original. For the most part, however, Vadim's search for a new language—which I have no doubt is the one sincere aspect of his art – boils down to a where-shall-we-put-the-camera-next? attitude, and though the results are often provocative, they do not as yet reveal any basic coherence.

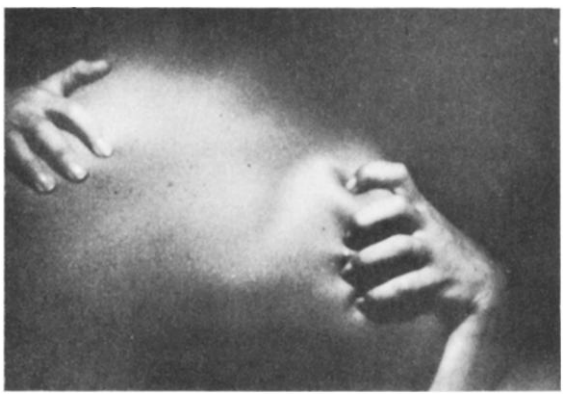
As for Vadim's approach to eroticism, its only interest lies in his having managed to make a lot of supposedly sophisticated people take seriously the sexuality of the Varga girl; it was he who invented B.B., that "epitome of mediocrity," in the words of producer Carlo Ponti, Sophia Loren's husband. (The trouble with obsessional art is that unless one is Lautréamont or Artaud it tends to be completely uncommunicable.)

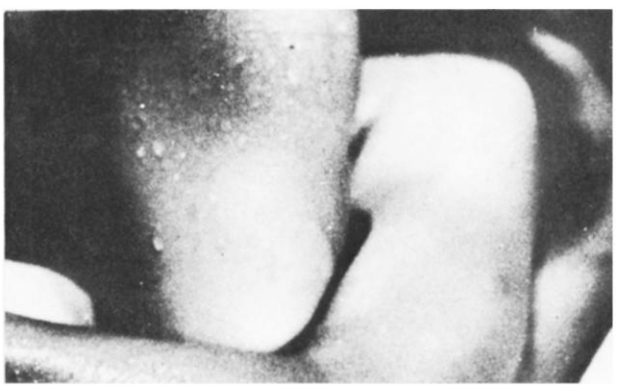
If the new wave has had a part in affording Alain Resnais and Marcel Hanoun the opportunity to make their first feature films,* then we may easily forgive it for fostering some fake prodigies also. For these men have made a solid contribution to the development of the cinema as an independent art form; they have really broken new ground in the same sense as did the Russians after the First World War and Bresson and Welles during and after the Second.

I have already had occasion to write at length of Alain Resnais in these pages, [*FQ*, Fall 1959] and some of my readers thus know the high esteem I have for this director. I was therefore not surprised when, for the first five or ten minutes of *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, I was firmly convinced that I was about to see the greatest film ever made. A shot of the enlaced bodies of the two lovers, photographed to look like a semi-figurative high-relief and intercut with a highly stylized documentary sequence on the horrors of Hiroshima while the heroine's voice chants, off-screen, Marguerite Duras' curiously ritualistic commentary, struck me as one of the most perfectly successful attempts ever made to convey, by purely cinematic means, a sense of utter timelessness. Now the two naked bodies are spattered with sand, now rain washes the sand away: one might almost be witnessing a stage of the Creation. The woman's voice drones on, in insistent alliteration, telling her Japanese lover what *she* saw in Hiroshima; "Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima" is his reiterated, deadpan reply. Up to this point the hypnotic brilliance of the film had held me literally spellbound—though actually the seeds of the film's basic failing were already apparent. There followed, however, the return to "real" time; the lovers sat up in bed and began to talk things over in more everyday terms. But what is this French actress doing in Hiroshima? Why, she is playing the role of a nurse in a film on Peace. And lo and behold, the next sequence, which might have been extracted from a Japanese Communist film, shows us a mass demonstration against the atom bomb staged for the purposes of this film-within-a-film. It is tastefully done, of course. Resnais is incapable of doing anything vulgar. It is so tasteful, in fact, that a few generous minds have been able to find ironic intentions here, but if these do exist, they are a bit oversubtle for this critic. The tragic thing about *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* is that Resnais seems to have tried to incorporate into this, his first feature film, *everything* that he cares about: film form at its most abstract, peace, the atom bomb and, as we shall see, the French Liberation and

* I understand that Jean Rouch, for whom I also have considerable respect, is being dealt with elsewhere in this issue, so I will omit discussion of his very remarkable work.







From the opening of HIROSHIMA, MON AMOUR
[*Special photos courtesy Pathé Overseas.*]

the stupidity of the provincial bourgeoisie. There is absolutely no commensurability between the conception of the first section of this film and the content—it has no precise conception—of the second. Similarly, the overwhelming mass tragedy of Hiroshima — a veritable hiatus in human history, which can be dealt with only on its own terms (as the admirable *Children of Hiroshima* has proven) — is incommensurable with the very intimate tragedy of this girl who loved a German soldier during the occupation of France and had her hair shaved at the Liberation because of it. Perhaps Resnais was attempting to establish a contrast and/or identity between microcosmic and macrocosmic suffering, but this simply does not come off. The joint suffering of a French girl and a married Japanese, as they live through a few hours of "impossible" love, merely serves to underscore the incompatibility which destroys the film's cohesiveness: the girl's experience at the Liberation and this couple's frustrated love (as well as her tragic love for the German soldier) belong to the realm of contingency, whereas the unique Hiroshima tragedy simply does not. I doubt that Resnais, even with his somewhat confused political allegiances, would deny this explicitly; but he does so implicitly by the way in which he juxtaposes the different levels of subject matter. In this light the parallel, contrast, or "essay on forgetfulness" that he had in mind becomes hopelessly arbitrary.

After the Peace parade, the couple spend the rest of the film wandering through Hiroshima together, while she tells him, by bits and pieces, of the great tragedy in *her* life, the persecution to which she was subjected after the war. It is the telling of her tale which constitutes this

film's contribution to cinematic art; without the slightest wipe, fade, or dissolve, we are suddenly transported to Nevers, France, fifteen years earlier. The first sequence evoking the girl's past in this way shows her cycling through wintry woods, followed, through a telescopic lens, in a seemingly endless pan; finally she coasts down into a glen, hundreds of yards from the camera, to meet her waiting lover. This is one of the most beautiful sequences I have ever seen, and like all the material shot in France it is greatly enhanced by the absolutely breathtaking, pale grey photography of Sascha Vierny, who in this film has shown that he is the top French cameraman of his generation (the Japanese photography was done by someone else, and though competently "Japanesy" it is far more conventional). The intermittent flashbacks to France that follow in the course of the film appear not only without warning, but *without any respect for time sequence.* Thus, though actually the girl was first shaved, then shut up in her room by her parents, until her hair should grow back, then in the cellar because she made too much noise, then sent back to her room, we first see her in the cellar, then we see the shaving, then back to the cellar, then to her room, and so on. The order of events on the screen follows the stream of her impressions and associations as she talks to the Japanese—though sometimes, and this I feel is especially original, the flashbacks seem absolutely unmotivated by the dialogue: at one point, in particular, there is a brief flash of a pavillion standing on a hill, which though poetically shattering in the context of the film, seems to have *absolutely no meaning in that context;* only much later does the attentive spectator realise that this pavillion overlooks the spot where one day the girl came upon her German lover writhing in agony, a partisan's bullet in his belly. The freedom with which Resnais handled this part of the film is probably without parallel in the history of cinema; not since Carné, in *Le Jour se Lève,* first made the flashback an organic element of film structure has such original use been made of this device.

Once the girl has gotten her Nevers experience off her chest, however, the film becomes rather laborious, despite Resnais' unerring visual taste and his sense of spatial ambiguity and tempo. The girl decides not to remain in Hiroshima with her lover, although he follows her about for hours on end, from one empty nightclub to the next, trying to convince her to stay. These scenes are very sober and quite lovely, in their way, but lack the poetic tension of the film's best moments. The last major sequence is a series of dolly shots in which the camera-eye alternately explores Nevers and Hiroshima, and although beautifully photographed, this device (an attempt, it would seem, to prepare the spectator for the film's final moral) is ultimately clumsy and old-fashioned. Having finally agreed that it is impossible for them to remain together, the two lovers nevertheless prepare to make love one last time, thus returning to the film's point of departure; before they bed down, however, the Japanese mouths the film's last line and, presumably, its moral: "Tu es Nevers et je suis Hiroshima." One is appalled to think that Resnais has spent all that time, effort, and money to tell us that East is East and West is West; my own feeling is that his intellectual confusion—already apparent in some of his shorts—is such that he was not sure what he was trying to say. Nothing at all, perhaps? But his film is far too deeply imbued with an atmosphere of sentimental "significance" for one to take it at face value as an *objet d'art* devoid of intellectual meaning. The great pity is that a director with such an extraordinary feeling for the film should still be dragging about the ball and chain of his "progressive" upbringing and feels the need to convey messages—albeit ambiguous ones (his inversion of traditional left-wing values, as concerns the Liberation merely reflects, I think, Resnais' habitual taste for paradox). *Hiroshima* has many other, secondary, virtues: the remarkably well-integrated music of the Italian composer Fusco (who has done the music for Antonioni's best films) and Marguerite Duras' much discussed dialogues which, though a bit had-I-but-known, are nevertheless extremely cohesive; their high degree of stylization represents an interesting attempt to solve a problem which has never been adequately

tackled since the introduction of sound. But no matter how much the technician in me may admire *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, the most brilliant film seen in France since Bresson's *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*, the fact remains that the script's intellectual confusion prevents an organic marriage of form and content and ultimately makes the film stick in one's craw.

Were it not for Marcel Hanoun's *Une Simple Histoire* I would probably look upon *Hiroshima* as the new wave's most substantial contribution to film art. *Une Simple Histoire*, however, is such a thoroughly revolutionary film that not only does it defy comparison with any postwar French film, but I doubt that any single film in the history of cinema has ever attempted such an immense forward leap. It is hard to know where to begin an examination of this film, outwardly so simple and inwardly so complex. The story on which it is built is slender indeed: a woman has left her native provincial city and arrives in Paris with her little girl; in her purse is a small, precise sum of money; as the days go by, the money dwindles; the woman is unable to find work, has great difficulty in finding a hotel room and when she finally has found one, her money runs out; she and her little girl spend the night in an empty lot, and the next day they are taken in by a kindly woman whose apartment overlooks the lot in question. What could be simpler . . . or more neorealistic? It reads like the ideal Zavattini plot. In his treatment of it, however, Hanoun situates himself at the opposite pole from neorealism and attains a degree of formal stylization without parallel in film history. This stylization can be defined in terms of two dialectical relationships and of the interplay between these two relationships. The most striking of these dialectics associates dialogues and commentary: the woman's voice tells her own story, off-screen, and often goes so far as to repeat the words she or her interlocutors have said, are saying or are about to say on-screen. This process, which insensitive ears find merely redundant, aroused really violent protest on the part of the few art-house audiences that have seen this film, and to my knowledge no critic has gotten the point either. Once the surprise produced by this device has passed, however, one begins to realize that the relationships between commentary and dialogues are constantly and cunningly varied. At times the commentary may repeat verbatim a phrase spoken by the characters on-screen (but the time-lag between the two is always different: commentary can precede dialogue by one, two, three or more words, or follow them by an equally variable length). At other times the commentary rephrases, inverts or otherwise scrambles the word-order of the dialogues, and the fact that the two almost always overlap to some degree made it possible, among other types of patterns, for a secondary word in the commentary to drown out a key-word in the dialogue—which is taken up a second later by the commentary itself, thereby creating a kind of three-dimensional word-space. Hanoun also played with the various levels of acoustical intensity of the two verbal parameters. The limits within which this highly complex, dialectical counterpoint evolves are defined by a set of unique moments: only once does the commentary tell us what is being said on-screen in the absence of any dialogues (the camera is looking through a window); only once do we hear dialogues without any repetition from the commentary, only once does the commentary wholly precede the dialogues and only once does it wholly follow them. Hanoun has found the first really elegant solution to the problem of *words* in film; the redundancy of the process —for on the level of meaning it *is* redundant— serves to reduce the anecdotal character of each word to a minimum (this is also achieved through the "uselessness" of everyday speech); the word becomes a transparent object—*not* mere sound, of course, but a *concrete abstraction*—which modern mixing techniques allow to be manipulated as precisely as musical notes; the result, however, is not music, either; it comes, I feel, as close as it is possible to come to *pure cinema*, for to my mind *the essence of cinema is the abstraction of the purely concrete, the integration of the elements of "everyday," concrete reality into elaborate, artificial, and abstract patterns in such a way that these elements lose their "significance" without losing their identity.*

UNE SIMPLE HISTOIRE: *Elizabeth Huart and Micheline Bezançon.*

Hanoun intuitively applies this precept to the other dimensions of his film, in a dialectic between anecdotal time and visual time. The only scale we have for measuring the time that has elapsed since the woman's arrival in Paris is the amount of money left in her purse and, in a sense, the gradual diminution of this sum becomes our—or her—calendar. In and out of the warp of this more or less regular progression of abstract time, however, Hanoun has woven a far more complex progression of visual time, based upon a use of space-time ellipsis the freedom of which is unparalleled in films. His cutting ellipses can cover any length of "real" time, from five seconds to twenty-four hours, and are often both textural and structural; their intimate relationship to frame-space and to the commentary and dialogues attests to an incredibly high degree of formal elaboration. At one point, for example, the woman's off-screen voice tells us that she had gone to a factory in answer to a help-wanted ad and left her daughter in the care of a neighboring café waitress. While these words are being spoken we watch the woman enter a café alone; her daughter is sitting at a table waiting for her. "The job was already taken," the commentary continues. The woman sits down next to her child and, looking over toward the camera, orders a cup of coffee. Now we cut to a close-up of the woman, shot from the same angle, and she *immediately raises the cup of coffee to her lips.* "Suddenly I realized that Sylvie was no longer beside me," says the commentary and the woman looks up from her cup. Cutting back to the previous frame, we see her *dragging her child back into the shot* and returning with her to their table. Now, a "veteran" film-maker, whose name I will not mention, condescendingly remarked after a screening of the film, that Hanoun would learn not to make this kind of mistake when he had spent more time in cutting-rooms. And the fact is that this kind of ellipsis, never before consciously attempted in films, defies all the academic laws of editing. Hanoun, however, is no tyro; he is fully aware of those laws, knows them so well that he knows how to break them, and what positive effect a given violation may produce; here he has created a new and, above all, infinitely fertile approach to the space-time relationship which is at the heart of cinema. As can be seen from the foregoing example, the commentary-dialogue relationship can also enter into this play of ellipsis,

by anticipation or retrospection, and this constitutes the link between the two dialectical processes described above.

It should be further pointed out that this double set of dialectics and the dizzily complex set of relationships to which it gives rise cannot —or should not—be "justified" in the way that critics generally feel it necessary to justify film form, in terms, that is, of story, content, psychology, and the rest. It is essential to realize that by its *absolute cohesiveness* this formal fabric *suffices unto itself,* imposes itself as a musical structure might upon the attentive spectator as the work's basic substance; it may, in fact, be said to determine the development of the "action." This inversion of the usual approach to film aesthetics—form justifying content—is not entirely new (cf. Antonioni's *Cronaca di un Amora* and to a lesser extent *Ivan the Terrible*) but *Une Simple Histoire* is the first film in which its necessity has been made evident. Those who, like the director cited above, feel that Hanoun's svntax is merely a lack of syntax excusable in view of the difficult conditions under which the film was made, are merely displaying their inability to distinguish between the isolated, haphazard technical fluke and systematic, meaningful innovation. Hanoun's inversion of the usual relation between form and content is undoubtedly hard to take, but for anyone with the proper experience and understanding *Une Simple Histoire* should be a shattering film. Such a person will be moved not by the plight of the penniless woman, but by the relationship of the artist to his work.

I could cite many examples of the highly intellectualized texture of this film, such as a cut from a close-up to a medium close-up which embraces an entire night, or Hanoun's startling rehabilitation of the zoom lens (instead of trying to do ersatz dolly-shots with it, he quite frankly enlarges or reduces the frame with amazing poetic results) but it is like trying to analyze a piece of music one has heard three or four times but of which one has never seen a score. Indeed, *Une Simple Histoire* is the first film I have ever seen of which I would like to possess a "score" (and I do not mean a script), in order to see *exactly* how the dialogues are linked to the commentary or to analyze the precise relationships between a given set of ellipses.

The film is not, of course, without its faults. Hanoun's errors—and they are very few—generally involve a return to conventional "affectivity" and even to a kind of social criticism. At one point the woman has insomnia and is whiling away the night hours with an illustrated magazine depicting the sentimental adventures of people who "do nothing all day long, drink whisky, drive fancy cars and are all good-looking." At this point she lowers the magazine and we see her rather plain face in a particularly cruel light; never throughout the rest of the film does she seem so ugly. It is understandable that Hanoun could not resist airing one of his pet grudges, and my feeling is that this sort of thing will not recur, since his attitude toward affectivity throughout the rest of the film is in absolute contradiction to facileness of this kind. In particular, he attenuates the sentimental side of the woman's plight by starting the film at the point when she is taken in by the sympathetic old lady, and telling the film in a single flashback (which never returns to the present but is left "hanging" on an extraordinarily ambiguous final shot) thus destroying in advance any possible "suspense." (This is like what Bresson did in his *Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé,* the title of which totally eliminated the suspense element before the spectator had even bought his ticket, allowing him to concentrate on the more abstract elements involved in the tale; Bresson, of course, is Hanoun's direct precursor, but he is only that, for until now his concern for abstraction has always remained secondary, partly because his primary interest is mystical; this is why even a masterpiece like *Le Journal d'un Curé de Campagne* contains such formal dead spots as the long conversation between the two priests in the summer house.) Hanoun's gravest error, because one of conception rather than detail, stemmed from his decision to add music to his film once it was completed. A film as highly and elaborately structured as this requires all its elements to be under the direct control of its author; the addition of music as complex even

as Vivaldi or Cimarosa to such a delicately balanced organism was an obvious error, and though it may have rendered the film more palatable for some audiences (may even have helped it obtain the Grand Prix de l'Eurovision at Cannes this year, which, on one level, would amply justify it) this "background music" remains an irritating flaw in a work of art which is otherwise almost perfect. (Hanoun, by the way, is aware of this flaw; the feature he is now shooting will contain absolutely no incidental music.)

Hanoun's achievement justifies, I feel, in fact demands henceforth a redoubled severity on the part of the film critic. This film's very existence, which proves that the seventh art is capable of a discipline and a degree of abstraction comparable to that of contemporary painting or music, no longer allows us even to pretend to tolerate the enlightened amateurism of a Francois Truffaut, let alone the "professionalism" of a Minnelli or a Preminger. In this respect, Hanoun's revolution may be likened to Webern's, for it is above all by his *attitude* that the director of *Une Simple Histoire* has broken new ground. Like the Viennese master, his art involves a rigorous approach to *all* the parameters of his art; for Hanoun no element of a film may remain "unorganized." Just as Webern was the first to incorporate silence into music as a positive element, so too Hanoun incorporates its cinematic equivalent into his film: *boredom*. For minutes on end *absolutely nothing "happens"*: the woman makes chocolate, reads a newspaper, stands looking out the window, etc. Hanoun is not, of course, the first to include stretches of this sort in a film, nor even the first to attempt to use boredom structurally; extremely interesting precursory examples of this are found in Dovjenko's *Earth* and, above all, in Tati's *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot*; but while these were far more orderly attempts at a *bon usage de l'ennui* than the absolutely haphazard use made of it in *Umberto D.*, for example, they remain, I feel, incidental, almost decorative, whereas in *Une Simple Histoire* boredom (the spectator's boredom, not the character's—a space of "silence," or inactivity, which prolongs and defines the "music," or activity, about it like the seemingly arbitrary stops and starts in Webern's instrumental pieces) becomes an indispensable part of the film's fabric.

Until now I have said nothing of Hanoun's background, nor of the way in which he made *Une Simple Histoire*. Like Truffaut and Chabrol, Hanoun was never anyone's assistant, but, unlike his more illustrious rivals, he has been working in films for a good many years, and has made a number of documentaries, one of which —on Gérard de Nerval—had the honor of being booed off a Champs Elysées screen by spectators who were bored by Hanoun's first, somewhat tentative experimentation. *Une Simple Histoire* was made practically singlehanded, and aside from facilities provided by the French television network (on the basis of the apparently "documentary" nature of its script, a misapprehension which has earned the film a good deal of ludicrously irrelevant critical praise, as well) cost around 300,000 francs, or $625! The film was made on 16 mm, which in France is the equivalent of 8 mm in the United States so far as laboratory work and special effects are concerned; it is simply not a professional format. The fact that Hanoun was able to achieve the unprecedented degree of rigor displayed by this hour-long film with a wind-up camera, a zoom lens and a few cheap spotlights, that working all by himself he was able to do very acceptable photography *and* direct an extremely talented actress named Micheline Bezançon with such pre-

UNE SIMPLE HISTOIRE: *Micheline Bezançon.*

cision, the fact that he is lucid enough to be aware of the faults—and, above all, the special merits—of his film, indicate that we have seen only the first act in this stupendous, one-man revolution. And though Marcel Hanoun probably would have made his film independently of any new wave, it is probable that his prestige as a young director would not have been what it is without the present movement, and only too probable that he would not now be shooting a feature film with a 60,000,000-franc budget which, judging by the shooting-script, bids fair to be as exciting—if not as revolutionary—as *Une Simple Histoire*.

A Brief, Tragical History of the Science Fiction Film

RICHARD HODGENS

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
And burned is Apollo's laurel-bough,
That sometime grew within this learned man.
Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall,
Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise,
Only to wonder at unlawful things,
Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
To practise more than heavenly power permits.
—DOCTOR FAUSTUS, *Epilogue*

Some of the most original and thoughtful contemporary fiction has been science fiction, and this field may well prove to be of much greater literary importance than is generally admitted. In motion pictures, however, "science fiction" has so far been unoriginal and limited; and both the tone and the implications of these films suggest a strange throwback of taste to something moldier and more "Gothic" than the Gothic novel. But the genre is an interesting and potentially very fruitful one.

Science fiction publishing expanded spectacularly in the late '40's, and dwindled again in the early '50's. Science fiction filming as we know it today began in 1950 with *Destination Moon*, and has continued to the present, hideously transformed, as a minor category of production. Earlier examples, like Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* and *Frau im Mond*, H. G. Wells' powerful essay on future history, *Things to Come*, and such nonsupernatural horror films as *The Invisible Ray*, have not been considered "science fiction," although they were. One of the many painful aspects of most of the recent films involving space travel, alien visitors, or earthly monsters which have followed *Destination Moon* is that they *are* considered "science fiction," although most of them are something peculiarly different from the literature of the same label.

Motion picture adaptations have ruined any number of good works of literature without casting a pall, in the public mind, over literature in general. The science fiction films, however, seem to have come close to ruining the reputation of the category of fiction from which they have malignantly sprouted. To the film audience, "science fiction" means "horror," distinguished from ordinary horror only by a relative lack of plausibility.

Science fiction involves extrapolated or fictitious science, or fictitious use of scientific possibilities, or it may be simply fiction that takes place in the future or introduces some radical assumption about the present or the past. For those who insist upon nothing but direct treatment of contemporary life, science fiction has

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DESTINATION MOON: *Chesley Bonestell's lunar landscape.*

little or nothing to offer, of course. But there are issues that cannot be dealt with realistically in terms of the present, or even the past; and to confront such issues in fiction it is better to invent a future-tense society than to distort the present or the past. And in a broader sense there are few subjects that cannot be considered in science fiction, few styles in which it cannot be written, and few moods that it cannot convey. It is, to my mind, the only kind of writing today that offers much surprise—not merely the surprise of shock effects, but the surprise of new or unusual material handled rationally. And conscientious science fiction, more than any other type, offers the reader that shift of focus essential to the appeal of any literature. Often too it presents a puzzle analogous to that of the detective story, but with its central assumptions considerably less restricted.

Science fiction, as most science fiction readers define it and as most science fiction writers attempt to practice it, calls for a plausible or at least possible premise, logically developed. The most damning criticism one can make of a work of science fiction is that it is flatly impossible in the first place, and inconsistent in the second. To say the least, many things are possible; and readers may accept a premise that they believe impossible anyway, so long as they do not consider it "supernatural." Often, the distinction between science fiction and fantasy is simply one of attitude; but an impossible premise must at least not contradict itself, and it should be developed consistently in the story.

Science fiction films, with few exceptions, follow different conventions. The premise is always flatly impossible. Any explanations offered are either false analogy or entirely meaningless. The character who protests "But that's *incredible*, Doctor!" is always right. The impossible, and often self-contradictory, premise is irrationally developed, if it is developed at all. There is less narrative logic than in the average Western.

Although antiscientific printed science fiction exists, most science fiction reflects at least an awareness and appreciation of science. Some science fiction, it is true, displays an uncomprehending faith in science, and implies that it will

solve all problems magically. But in the sf films there is rarely any sane middle ground. Now and then, science is white magic. But far more often, it is black, and if these films have any general implications about science, they are that science and scientists are dangerous, raising problems and provoking widespread disaster for the innocent, ignorant good folks, and that curiosity is a deadly sin.

The few exceptions to this bleak picture are the first three sf films produced by George Pal: *Destination Moon, When Worlds Collide,* and *War of the Worlds.* Perhaps there are one or two others. *Destination Moon* may be considered a good semi-documentary, educational film, although today its optimism is rather depressing. Despite its accuracy and consistency, and the extent to which the stereotyped characters were forced to go to explain it, most criticism indicated that the critics did not understand it. The special effects were the film's main attraction, and except for a few shots of the apparent size of the ship in space, and the appearance of the stars, were exact and superb. In a fascinating article about the technical problems of this film, Robert Heinlein credits its director, Irving Pichel, with saving it from an arbitrary addition of musical comedy and "pseudoscientific gimmicks which would have puzzled even Flash Gordon."*

Those who hoped that the financial success of *Destination Moon* would lead to equally convincing but more sophisticated science-fiction films were bitterly disappointed, for nearly everything since has been unconvincing and naive. There was a flood of "science fiction" on the screen, but it followed in the foosteps of *The Thing,* and it was unbelievably and progressively inane.

Pal's next two productions were satisfactory, however, and although they are not very impressive when compared with a film like *Things to Come,* in comparison with their contemporary science fiction competition they seemed masterpieces. In the '30's Paramount had considered *When Worlds Collide,* a novel by Edwin Balmer and Philip Wylie, for De Mille, and *War of the Worlds,* by H. G. Wells, for Eisenstein. Pal's films modernized the sources, but respected them. Unlike *Destination Moon,* however, both have themes of menace and catastrophe—the end of the world and interplanetary invasion. It appeared that even Pal had decided that sf films must be, somehow, *horrible.*

In *When Worlds Collide,* models were used extensively, and while many of them were not completely convincing, the only major disappointment to most people was the last shot of the lush, green new world, after the single escaping space ship had landed in impressively rugged territory. H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* is a good novel, and difficult to ruin. If *War of the Worlds* had been filmed as a period-piece, as Disney later treated Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea,* it would still have been effective. The story was carefully modernized, however, as Howard Koch had modernized it in 1938 for Orson Welles' Mercury Theater of the Air. One unnecessary modern addition, though, was an irrelevant boy-and-girl theme because, Pal apologized, "Audiences want it."†

The theme of Wells' memorable "assault on human self-satisfaction" is still valid, if less startling. No one today expects to be visited by intelligent Martians, but granting this premise the film was quite convincing. The Martians' fantastic weapons were acceptable as products of a superior technology; the Martians themselves, though more terrestrial in appearance than Wells' original conception, were probably the most convincing Things to come from Hollywood, and they were used with surprising restraint and effectiveness—one brief glimpse and, at the end, a lingering shot of the hand of the dying creature. About half the film was painstaking special effect, and the models were nearly perfect.

These three films were spectacular productions, and if the scripts contained moments

* "Shooting *Destination Moon,*" *Astounding Science Fiction,* July 1950.
† Filming *War of the Worlds,*" *Astounding Science Fiction,* October 1953.

rather similar to more traditional spectacles, they still contained powerful images that had never been seen before: after take-off, virtually every shot in *Destination Moon*; the red dwarf star nearing the doomed Earth; and the deadly Martian machines, like copper mantas and hooded cobras, gliding down empty streets.

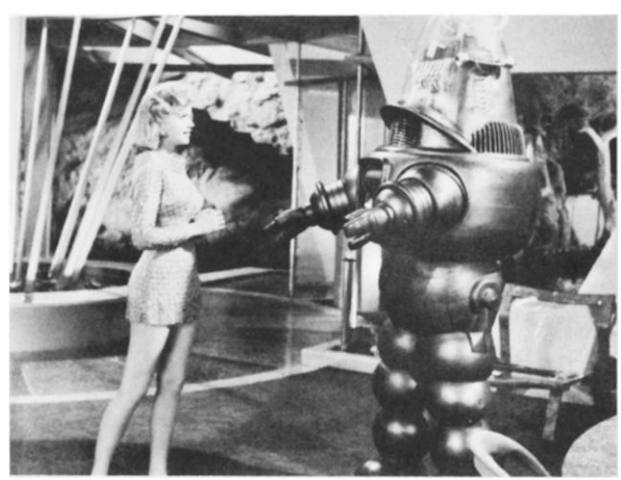
I do not mean to imply that everyone was pleased by these films. Those who like plots with villains were bored by *Destination Moon*, and people who knew nothing about space travel, and did not care, were baffled. *When Worlds Collide* drew harsh words for its concluding shot and its models, and some people seem to have been irritated by the undemocratic survival of the interplanetary Ark. And of *War of the Worlds* I heard someone say, "That Orson Welles always was crazy, anyway."

George Pal's last science fiction production, *The Conquest of Space*, was disappointing. Again there were some visually impressive shots, but unfortunately that was all. The script attempted to "enliven" a subject that called for serious treatment; the result was an inaccurate, misleading film ending with a miracle which, unlike the "miraculous" end of *War*, was impossible and pointless. It was an expensive production which could have contributed to the salvation of science fiction in motion pictures. But the monsters had taken the field, and the facile *Conquest of Space* merely seemed to prove that monsters are always necessary.

What the movies were likely to do with science fiction was already evident when *Rocketship X-M* was released in 1950 to compete with *Destination Moon*. An expedition sets out for the moon. The ship's course is altered by the close passage of some noisy meteors, however, and the explorers land on Mars, where they learn that atomic warfare has destroyed Martian civilization. The Martians appear to be entirely human—at least, if memory serves, one savage female was beautifully human—but radiation has bestialized them. The girl scientist and the boy scientist escape from Mars, but, lacking fuel to land on the frantically spinning Earth, they endure a stoic martyrdom. Though *Rocketship X-M* seemed ludicrous, it was level-headed and superb compared with what followed.

The great villain was *The Thing From Another World*, which appeared in in 1951. *The Thing* was based on a short novel by John W. Campbell, Jr., the editor of *Astounding Science Fiction*, where it appeared in 1938 with the title "Who Goes There?" The story is regarded as one of the most original and effective science fiction stories, *sub-species* "horror." Its premise is convincing, its development logical, its characterization intelligent, and its suspense considerable. Of these qualities the film retained one or two minutes of suspense. The story and the film are poles apart. Probably for timely interest, the Thing crashed in a Flying Saucer and was quick-frozen in the Arctic. In Campbell's story "it had lain in the ice for twenty million years" in the Antarctic. In film as in source, when the creature thaws out it is alive and dangerous. In "Who Goes There?," when it gets up and walks away, and later when it is torn to pieces by the dogs and still lives, the nature of the beast makes its invulnerability acceptable. But there is little plausibility about the Hollywood Thing's nine lives. Since this film, presumably dead creatures have been coming back to life with more and more alacrity and with less and less excuse. Instead of the nearly in-

FORBIDDEN PLANET: *Girl meets mechanical man in the first film to use electronic music (by Louis and Bebe Barren) on its sound track.*



soluble problem created in Campbell's story, this Thing is another monster entirely. He is a vegetable. He looks like Frankenstein's monster. He roars. He is radioactive. And he drinks blood.*

Probably Campbell's protean menace was reduced to this strange combination of familiar elements in the belief that the original idea—the idea which made the story make sense—was too complex. This was probably incorrect, because monsters since that *Thing* have imitated the special ability of Campbell's Alien, although with far less credibility (*It Came From Outer Space, Invasion of the Body Snatchers*), and there is no indication that anyone found them difficult to understand.

Incidentally, the most stupid character in the film is the most important scientist. The script did its best to imply that his tolerant attitude toward the Thing was his worst idea. And the film ended with a warning to all mankind: "Watch the skies" for these abominably dangerous Flying Saucers.

The Thing is a most radical betrayal of its source, but since the source was generally unfamiliar, and since the idea of a monster from outer space seemed so original (though the monster itself had blood-brothers in Transylvania), the film earned both critical approval and a great deal of money.† In addition, it fixed the pattern for the majority of science fiction films that followed, for it proved that some money could be made by "science fiction" that preyed on current fears symbolized crudely by any preposterous monster, and the only special expense involved would be for one monster suit.

Not all sf films since *The Thing* have been about monsters, but the majority have. *The Day the World Stood Still,* also released in 1951, was almost, but not quite, a monster film. It was not a story of catastrophe as the title suggests, but of alien visitors. The screen-play deprived another popular science fiction story from *Astounding,* Harry Bates' "Farewell to the Master," of its good ideas, its conviction, and its point. *The Day* substituted a message: Earthlings, behave yourselves. Again, probably because like *The Thing* the story was novel but could be understood without much effort, *The Day* earned good reviews and good money. Whatever reservations one may have about the film, in comparison with *The Thing* and its spawn, *The Day* has a comparatively civilized air, at least.

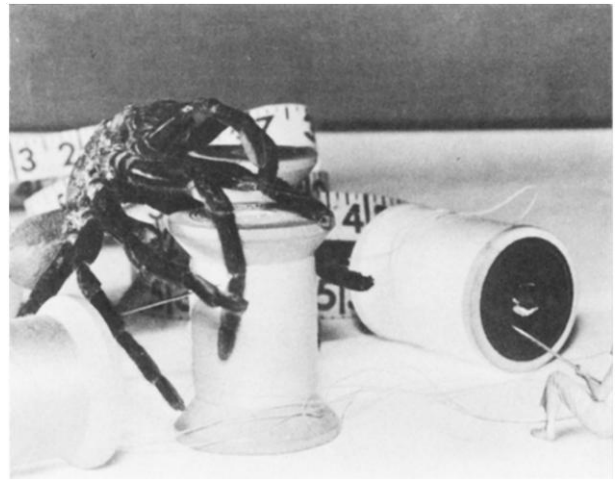
It Came From Outer Space was another rare exception that appeared rather early in the cycle. One of the virtues of *It Came From Outer Space* is that It is here by accident, and wants to go home.

Following the precedent that *The Thing* set, *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* and *Them!* established major variations of the monster theme. *The Beast,* a foolish fancy of Ray Bradbury's to begin with, was an amphibious dinosaur. I cannot remember whether nuclear physics was responsible for its resuscitation or its final destruction, but probably it was both. *The Beast,* like *The Thing,* thaws to life, but it was a menace of terrestrial origin. This simplifies the filmmakers' problems. *The Beast* has been followed by several monsters revived, we are told, from the distant past, and all of them instinctively attack populous cities. (*King Kong,* unlike these "atom beasts," had some sort of motivation.) *Them!* were giant ants, also dangerous, in the sewers of Los Angeles. Impossibly large insects with a taste for human flesh have appeared in *The Deadly Mantis, The Spider,* and others. The milder *Creature from the Black Lagoon* proved so popular that he himself returned for *Revenge,* but of all the earthly monsters, only *The Magnetic Monster,* with a script by Curt Siodmak, displayed much originality and consistency.

The Incredible Shrinking Man created its

* It may be pointed out that Wells' Martians shared this improbable habit; but they were not vegetable bipeds, and that was about fifty years before.

† Vague approval of this film is found even today, when its "novelty" is no excuse. For instance, Frank Hauser, although aware of the fiction of Bradbury and Heinlein, makes this wild understatement: "The film, unfortunately, was not entirely successful." (In his "Science Fiction Films," in William Whitebait's *International Film Annual, No. 2,* New York, Doubleday, 1958.)



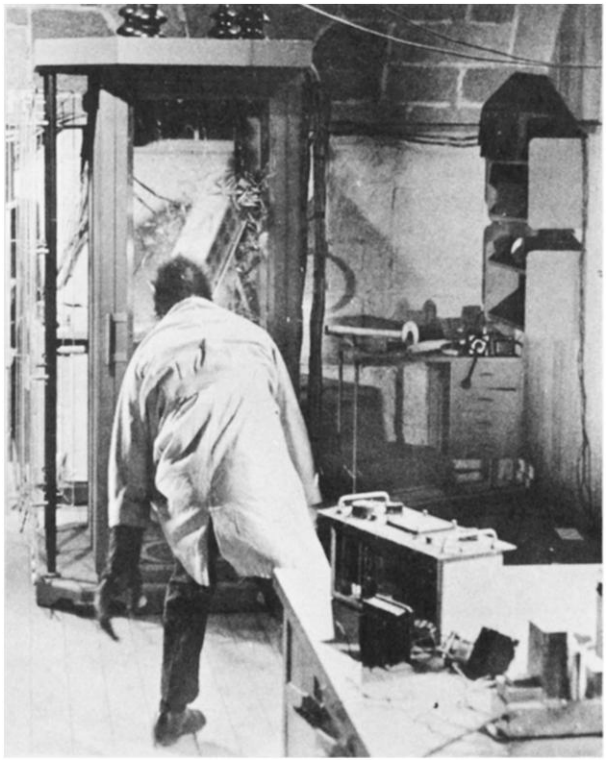
bloated-insect horror by shrinking the hero until an ordinary spider became typically perilous. The unfortunate young man of the title passes through a strange cloud while sunbathing on his cabin cruiser and begins to shrink—evenly, all over. The screen play, by Richard Matheson from his own novel, is a protracted and occasionally amusing agony. Soon the incredible shrinking man is too small to live an ordinary life. He finds brief happiness with a beautiful midget, but he breaks off their relationship when he discovers that he has become too short for her. He is plagued by reporters. When his wife walks downstairs, the doll house in which he lives shakes with unbearable violence. The cat chases him. He gets lost in the cellar. Then the spider chases him. Although the premise of the story is impossible, the end improves upon it, for the incredible shrinking man does not die because "in the mind of God there is no zero." Even God, in the science fiction films, is a poor mathematician. *The Shrinking Man* began its own minor series of increasingly poor films about people who are too small or too big.

In a persuasive review of Matheson's novel and Frank M. Robinson's *The Power,* Damon Knight* argues that these works are popular successes precisely because they are irrational and antiscientific—considering, for instance, the inconsistent diminution of Matheson's hero, one of the novel's faults that is not repeated in the film, where one wouldn't notice it much. Knight goes too far, however, when he remarks that "Spiders don't scream, as even Matheson might know; but gutted scientists do." *The Shrinking Man* is certainly unscientific, but this sinister implication Knight suggests in the impalement of the screaming, "symbolic" spider does not follow. In many of the sf films, though, such sinister implications are conventional.

Invasions from space did not cease. *The Blob* came in color, and Martian Blood Rust sprouted in black and white in *Spacemaster X-7.* When Japan is invaded by *The Mysterians* the aggressors' one insupportable demand is intermarriage with human females "because there is so much strontium-90 in our bones." If one can safely judge by title and advertising, *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* involves a similar unlikely prospect, and takes the same attitude toward it. This is like expecting the Thing to pollinate Godzilla, but monstrous union is in line with this sort of film, and, considering the attitude they display toward almost every Thing in them, an intolerant view of mixed marriage is to be expected. The Mysterians, incidentally, look very much like human beings, except that they melt. Space travel is rare in sf films now, but we have discovered human beings native to Mars, Venus, and various nonexistent planets. Sometimes space travel and monsters are ingeniously combined, as when *The First Man into Space* returns a monster. *The Forbidden Planet* and *This Island Earth* were expensive color productions which involved space travel and managed to have their monsters too. In *Forbidden Planet* it had something to do with the Id, but it might as well have been Grendel. *This Island Earth,* an unbelievable adaptation of a somewhat less unbelievable novel by Raymond F. Jones, included a horrendous Thing called, of all things, a "Mutant."

The most recent big sf film is *The Fly,* in CinemaScope and Horror-color, and popular enough to call for a *Return . . . . The Fly* is not from the short story of that title by Arthur Porges, originally in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction,* but from another story of the same title by George Langelaan, originally

* *In Search of Wonder: essays on modern science fiction,* Chicago, Advent, 1956.



The matter-transforming machine in THE FLY.

in *Playboy*. Porges' story presents an interesting situation which could not be filmed without expansion and, inevitably, ruination; and it would be called *Invasion of the Atom-Fly from Another World*. Since Langelaan's story is impossible to begin with, is inconsistent anyway, and is a horror story as horrifying as the most horrible sf films, one might expect that it could endure motion picture adaptation. The film, however, managed to be more impossible and less consistent, to add clichés and bright blood, and to contrive a happier ending with some morally repugnant implications.

Even if one accepts, for the sake of entertainment, the initial premise that Andre Delambre has built, in his basement, a working matter-transmitter, nothing else follows. The machine behaves differently each time it makes a mistake. The molecular structure of a dish is reversed. A cat, with a pitiable wail, disappears entirely. Finally, Andre himself is somehow mixed up with a fly. The result is a handsome young scientist with ". . . the head of a fly" (and an arm, too) and "the fly with the head of a man!"* Of course, there is a certain ingenuity about the accident: it creates two "monsters" instead of one. But why is Andre with the head of the fly still Andre, and why does his fly-leg have (evidently) a fly's volition? Why was the part of the fly grafted to Andre enlarged to fit him so well? How does he eat? Breathe? Why does he gradually begin to think a bit like a fly, and why is he then tempted to maul his poor wife, Helene? Why destroy the lab? The series of physical impossibilities in the script is not helped by the psychology. After squashing the man with the head of the fly in a hydraulic press, Helene neither commits suicide nor is she confined, as in the story. Helene is saved from grief and inconvenience by Commissaire Charas who, at the last minute, notes the fly with the head of a man, and squashes it with a rock. What else, indeed, could be done with it? Although it is clear that Andre's death (i.e., $Andre_1$, in the press) was suicide in which Helene cooperated, the script chooses to ignore the moral problem presented by the suicide, or the mercy-killing, or whatever it was. Instead, the issue is that Helene killed a mere Thing. After all, it is not improper to kill a Thing, and one may safely kill a man if he is no longer entirely human. This follows repetitious dialogue about the Sacredness of Life, but apparently they meant natural, original life-forms only, and the cat is more sacred than Andre in either combination. In the last scene of the film, Andre's surviving brother delivers a little proscience speech to Andre's son while Helene listens, smiling sweetly. Father, the boy's uncle tells him, was like Columbus. What will be remembered, of course, is that Father was like a fly.

The Fly, like most sf films, has a rather strange, very old moral. A search for knowledge or any worldly improvements may go too far; it

* In the story, Andre attempts to rectify this error and merely mixes himself with the vanished cat as well as the housefly; this explains why the author did away with the cat, if not how. No doubt the makers of the film considered this too complicated, but retained the cat's disappearance for the unique poignancy of the scene.

may be blasphemous; and one may be punished with an unnatural end.*

The premises of sf films are all antique, and carelessly handled. Twenty years ago, the matter-transmitter in the present-day cellar might have been almost convincing; but now one would expect it in a more credible context, and expect it to function with some consistency. Most sf films, however, do not take place in the future, where such an invention might be acceptable. *1984* is a rare, recent exception; but if Orwell's novel had not forced the date, it would have been *1960*.

It is true that magazine science fiction developed and exploited the stereotyped mad scientist and the evil bug-eyed monster. But that, again, was about twenty years ago. Giant insects, shrinking men, and dinosaurs can be found in science fiction of the same period. It is true that some science fiction stories are as unoriginal, illogical, and monstrous as sf films; but you have to know where to look in order to find many of them.

Apart from such incidental lessons as the immorality of attempting to prolong life and the advisability of forgetting anything new that one happens to learn, there are two vague ideas that appear in sf films with some regularity. Sometimes, the menace or the Thing does not merely kill its victims, but deprives them of their identity, their free-will, or their individual rights and obligations as members of a free society. In *Attack of the Puppet People*, for instance, the combination doll-maker and mad superscientist who shrinks the people he likes is a sort of pathetic, benevolent dictator. Many sf films derive whatever emotional effect they have from their half-hearted allegorization of the conflict between individuality and conformity. Usually, the conflict remains undeveloped, and although the characters tend to resist such menaces, their reasons may often be that the menace is a slimy, repulsive Thing, or that they would resist any change, even one for the better. *1984* is the only sf film that took this conflict as its subject, although it is common in science fiction novels.

The other vague idea is that atomic power is dangerous. The point has been made again and again, ever since the Geiger counter reacted to the presence of the first Thing. The point is indisputable, but these films rarely show any awareness of the ways in which the atom is dangerous. The danger of atomic war is explicit in Arch Oboler's *Five*, the recent *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil*, and the forthcoming *On the Beach*. These films are not only exceptional, they are not generally considered to be science fiction. In the ordinary science fiction film, atomic bombs raise dragons and shrink people. Even *The Fly*, which had nothing to do with the effects of radiation, real or imagined, was advertised as if its poor monsters were the realistic, possible outcome of fall-out on flesh. It may be argued that all the atomic monsters of sf films are symbols, and I suppose that they are, but they are inapt, inept, or both.

If the creators of monster films had intended any comment on the problems raised by the atomic bomb, or even on feelings about it, as some kindly critics have assumed, they would not have made their monster films at all. The most obvious advantage of science fiction, and the three films mentioned above, is that one can deal with such problems and feelings by extending the situation into the future and showing a possible effect or resolution. There is no need for indirect discussion or for a plot with a "symbol" as its mainspring. A twelve-ton, woman-eating cockroach does not say anything about the bomb simply because it, too, is radioactive, or crawls out of a test-site, and the film-makers have simply attempted to make their monster more frightening by associating it with something serious.

One should realize that, like them or not, the invaders in Wells' *War of the Worlds*, the stranded Alien in Campbell's "Who Goes There?," or the parasites in Heinlein's *Puppet Masters* (clumsily parodied by *The Brain Eaters*, who are complex parasitic animals that evolved when there were no hosts for them) are a different sort of monster from those of most sf films. They may be symbols too, but first

* In *The Return of the Fly*, the same thing happens, and the moral is the same.

they are beings. Campbell may invent a creature that evokes a complex of ancient fears—fear of the ancient itself, the fear that death may not be final, that evil is indestructible, and fear rising from the imitation motif, fear of possession, of loss of identity, all the fears that gave rise to tales of demons, ghosts, witches, vampires, shape-shifters. But in "Who Goes There?" it is a realistically conceived being that evokes these fears and creates the suspense, not an impossible symbol; and the story is not hysterical, but a study of man under stress.

The sf films abuse their borrowed props and offer nothing but hysteria. The films resemble unpleasant dreams, but rarely resemble them well. One cannot condemn an attempt to make a film suggesting nightmare illogic, of course. But surrealism is not what the makers of these films have in mind.

Fantasy and science fiction are not convincing if they are not consistent. Convincing the audience to accept the initial premise of the story may be difficult enough, without violating that premise in each scene. Expensive and careful treatment of a careless script cannot overcome the script's bad logic in science fiction or anything else. And while careful sf scripts are rare, careful treatment is even more rare. Most of the special effects in sf films, for instance, would not deceive a myopic child in the back of the theater—not even all the third-degree burns and running sores that have become so popular. The films convey the impression that everyone involved is aware that he is working on something which is not only beneath his talent but beneath the audience as well. It seems that even the make-up department, called upon by the pointless turns of a morbid plot to disintegrate a bored actor, has neither the time nor the heart to waste any effort, and produces something that looks like the unraveling of an old vacuum-cleaner bag. Perhaps this is a good thing. But it is strange that if you hire a group of talented people and ask for another science fiction–horror, you will get a film that is not merely abominable in conception and perverse in implication but half-hearted in execution.

Reginald Bretnor's symposium, *Modern Science Fiction* (New York, Coward-McCann), contains an interesting article by Don Fabun, "Science Fiction in Motion Pictures, Radio, and Television," a detailed examination that concludes with this hope: "In time we may see the modern literary form called science fiction legitimately married to novel and exciting techniques of presentation, a combination which should bring us fresh and exciting entertainment superior to what we see and hear today." That was in 1953. Today, there seems little cause for hope from the present level where "science fiction" is indistinguishable from "horror," and "horror" from sadism. An audience for good science fiction films probably exists, but it is unlikely that producers will take that chance now. During the period when it seemed reasonable to expect some good sf films, the only chances that producers were willing to take with unfamiliar material were with material from contemporary life—"unfamiliar material" only in their previous films. With science fiction, everyone has followed the easy examples of a few successful horror films, in cheaper and cheaper productions that plagiarized their poverty of ideas and their antiscientific tone. Perhaps the problem of producing good *sf* films is more difficult than that of producing simply good films. Complex, individual, and intelligent films are rare, and films of this quality with unfamiliar, fantastic subjects are few indeed. *Things to Come, Caligari, Orpheus,* or *The Seventh Seal* are uncommon individual achievements; probably, good science fiction films will appear only in the form of such unusual achievements.* For the rest, if sf films continue to be produced, they will take the easy way of the scream instead of the statement, and continue to tell their increasingly irrational and vicious stories of impossible monsters, evil professors, and helpless victims. ("See a strip-teaser completely stripped – of flesh!" invites the latest poster.)

A possible explanation for the impossible, self-contradictory creatures and plots of these films is that their creators do not think it could matter to anyone: the monsters are unnatural—or un-

* Despite his success with *Beauty and the Beast,* Cocteau had trouble in obtaining backing for *Orpheus.*

naturalness—anyway, and the calculated response is "Quick! Kill it, before it reproduces!" (Poor Andre, poor Thing.) The assumption may be partially correct; and if many people like this sort of entertainment, the clear impossibility of creatures and plots may help ease the conscience. If the monsters are anything, they are evil conveniently objectified. But the "evils" that they represent, while sometimes pain and death, are just as often man's power, knowledge, and intelligence. Their part used to be played by the Devil or his demons. The destruction of the Things and of the mad scientists, and the senseless martyrdoms of the more rare "good" (if not "sane") scientists, resemble nothing so much as exorcism and the burning of witches and heretics.

Unfortunately, science fiction films have associated science, the future, the different, and the unknown with nothing but irrational fear. There are enough dangers; in these films the dangers are not natural, but impossible and monstrous—of the same character as those that one was believed to risk when, in another time, one forsook the True Faith for the Black Arts. What the equivalent of the Black Arts is imagined to be is often all too clear in each film. But the True Faith is never plainly shown, perhaps because if it is anything at all it is simply an absence of any thinking.

Going Out to the Subject

COLIN YOUNG & A. MARTIN ZWEIBACK

This article discusses new films seen at the recent Flaherty Seminar—films that are going into hitherto little-explored territory with a new approach. Included are works by Jean Rouch, the Free Cinema film-makers, Michel Brault and M. Groulx, the Puerto Rican documentary group, John Chapman, John Marshall and Robert Gardner, and Aaejay Kardar. In our next issue we will discuss more films of this sort, notably The Savage Eye ***and*** Come Back Africa.

"Les yeux d'un étranger sont grands ouverts mais il ne voit que ce qu'il sait." (A stranger's eyes are wide open but he sees only what is in his mind.) —GOLD COAST PROVERB.

Film criticism, generally, suffers from want of examples, and writers on the development and achievements of the cinema have often been forced by habits formed elsewhere into premature judgments and generalizations. Some of the younger directors charged last year with selecting the best film of all time from the Brussels twelve confessed that in many cases they were seeing the films for the first time. It is a continuing problem for film-makers, as it is for the writer on film, to gather together sufficient examples of the work of any one school or period so that judgments can be made and lessons learned.

In the United States it has been difficult enough to keep abreast of the *contemporary* product from Europe—without attending distributors' private previews in New York—and it is no better with films from Asia. Shiro Toyoda's *The Mistress* (known in England as *Wild Geese*, from the novel *Gan*) was produced in 1953, De Sica's and Zavattini's *The Roof* (*Il Tetto*) was produced in 1955, and yet neither was shown in Los Angeles until November of this year. The situation is much the same within any European country since, despite the festivals, no one has the time or the energy to attend them all. Last year the San Francisco Festival received the official sanction of the International

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Federation of Film Producers, and with its continuance this year it remains the only opportunity for most people in this hemisphere to see a sampling of the year's work from most of the film-producing countries of the world, and not surprisingly the most promising of its titles are those which have been collected from the European festivals.

Recently, however, the universities have been providing an opportunity for the screening of current and retrospective "collections." The late Harold Leonard may be considered to have started the tendency, in the spring of 1956, with a festival of Japanese films on the U.C.L.A. campus. Three years later Ernest Rose and Nick Cominos presented a selection from the Polish revival. Collections of this sort at best represent little more than samplings, but they begin to provide the means by which we may remove discussion on the cinema from a parochial level.

Thus, slowly, the pattern is being set for the feature film and, to a lesser extent, for the short subjects which generally support features at festival screenings. It remained to do as much for the nontheatrical documentary feature and, in general, the film made through sponsorship, carved more often than not out of the air, made for audiences, but not usually those who come forward at a box office with their money.

In some countries the government is the source of capital for documentary filming—in Denmark, the Soviet bloc, Canada, Puerto Rico —while in France documentary units still provide more than occasional opportunities for young men who later go on to features. In the United States, as in Britain, the best "documentarist" can often be found in a private company operating out of a tiny office, trying to make the occasional film of personal interest while paying the bills with routine work for institutions and agencies. George Stoney (*All My Babies*) is an example.

But, until recently, there was little chance to keep up with all this activity, to see the work of Jean Rouch for the *Musée de l'Homme,* of the new young directors at the Canadian National Film Board, or of the young Puerto Rican group. But, increasingly, the Flaherty Seminar has been filling this gap. This summer, under the guidance of Hugh Gray and Philip Chamberlin of the University of California, and of Frances Flaherty, the fifth seminar of its type was held on the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California, and subsequently many of the films shown there were given public screenings at U.C.L.A. As a result of these showings it begins to be possible to formulate some impression of the developing contemporary nontheatrical film. It must remain sketchy, because again this was only a sampling, but it suggests that we must reconsider the traditional image of the documentary. The setting was appropriate. In his opening remarks Hugh Gray, quoting from Santayana, said, " 'To feel beauty is better than to understand how we came to feel it.' Nevertheless there is a time for communicating and discussing what we feel. This is such a time."

Perhaps the most remarkable films shown on these occasions were those of Jean Rouch, the 42-year-old Frenchman who has been making films, one way or the other, since 1946. He showed *Fils de l'Eau* (*Children of the River*), *Les Maîtres Fous* (*Mad Masters,* first-prize winner at the Venice documentary festival of 1957), and *Moi, Un Noir* (*I, A Negro,* also known as *Treichville,* winner of the Prix Louis Delluc for 1948).

Rouch first went to French West Africa as a civil engineer building roads, and moved gradually into anthropology through an interest in the men with whom he worked. Later he studied anthropology more formally at the Sorbonne, and spent a year at the I.D.H.E.C. in Paris. His work has now earned him the position of director of the Ethnological Institute at the *Musée de l'Homme,* which in turn has provided the support for the extremely odd films he makes.

Fils de l'Eau combines several separate subjects made over the period 1947 to 1951 on various customs of a tribe which lives along the Niger. It includes a record of a hippopotamus hunt, the rites of circumcision and burial, and a study of the rain-makers of the area. *Maîtres Fous* is partially a record and partially an interpretation of a curious and horrible ceremony

practiced by the members of a sect or society called Hauka in Ghana (at the time the film was shot, the Gold Coast). *Moi, Un Noir* is the story of three young men who come from the interior to the Ivory Coast town of Treichville looking for work.

Rouch's involvement with the subject of his films is total and this is in the main responsible for the peculiar structure and flow which result. Part of this is an effect of his influence on the people he is filming. The fact that he was making *Fils de l'Eau* convinced the members of the river tribe that the government took them seriously, and no longer considered them uneducated savages. (This *was* in fact partially the intention of the government.)

Rouch himself considers that the usefulness of the record for museum purposes is easily outweighed by the significance of the process for the Africans themselves. At first they had no understanding at all of what he was doing, of what any anthropologist did. "I was not a civil servant, since I did not ask them to pay tax. I was not a missionary, because I did not try to get them into another religion. I was not a merchant, because I had nothing to sell. I was not a doctor, because I did not try to vaccinate them. Thus at first I was nothing to them, a half-crazy man asking crazy questions. I was kind, not bad, because sometimes I gave them gifts. But it was not until I showed them a film I had made of them that they understood why I was there and what I thought of them. I think that is what is important for me, not to show my films to anthropologists and specialists but to the people themselves."

Superficially this is very close to at least one part of the task which all documentary filmmakers have assumed. And since Rouch has also said that his more general purpose in filming is to use the cinema as a device of communication which will cross frontiers, it is likely that more sophisticated audiences seeing his films outside the somewhat rarefied and uncommonly sympathetic atmosphere of a Flaherty Seminar will often be disappointed and find his films obscure, repetitive, and poorly formed.

Rouch, however, is primarily a humanitarian and in conventional terms only secondarily a film-maker. And if the conventional expectations of film audiences or producers interfere with his work, he feels it is they who must give way, not he. "The screen and the camera provide no obstacles to communication. But the price is very high, because we have to change our minds entirely about the making of films. Rossellini was the first to demonstrate that the major obstacle to the human approach in films was not lack of equipment but too much of it, with too much money involved." He speaks of the mounting reaction in many countries against costly, cumbersome studio production and identifies himself with the revolt and, to this extent, with the *nouvelle vague* in France. "Even the stars (in France) are changing their minds about the fees they can get. . . . I do not know how successful this movement will be in the long run, but for the moment many of us feel that we have to go back to the source."

It has already been indicated that Rouch becomes unusually involved in his subjects. It is not generally understood how far he is prepared to go in this. During the shooting of *Moi, Un Noir*, " 'Eddie Constantine' thought of himself as a superman in the film and in a palaver with the police one day he argued that he was better than they were—and ended up in jail for three months. 'Edward G. Robinson' was unhappy in the film and started to drink, and actually kept on drinking for about one year—dreaming of being a film star like the real Edward G. Robinson and being wealthy." In encouraging his actors to live their stories for his camera, Rouch in a way became responsible for their private lives. About this novel method of working Rouch now has mixed feelings. He remains, in some way, responsible for "Robinson" and retains him on his research staff. It is not, he says, an experiment which he means to repeat, but it already appears quite conservative in comparison with the one on which he has more recently been engaged.

"Last month," he said of the seminar, "I started work on a film about the everyday life of the college students of Abidjan. There are in the same classroom boys and girls, African and

Jean Rouch at the 1959 Flaherty Seminar.

European. I knew some of the students and it seemed interesting to me, at a time when the French government is speaking of the 'French community,' to show exactly what this community is, the African and the European together doing the same thing. . . . I had a very vague script, just enough to obtain authorization to make the film from the French government. And my idea was to show what were the relationships between the European and African, between the boys and the girls. And what I discovered was that there was absolutely no relation at all. Then there was no film. . . . They spoke of their relationship in class, but when they went outside they remained apart. I decided to make an experiment—to say to these people, 'Let us proceed as if there were relations. What would be your reaction if these relations existed?'

"At the beginning it was very difficult, but after some time something happened. It happened that an African boy and a European boy fell in love with a young French girl, and this was the beginning of a story. And what was very strange was that during three weeks in front of the camera all these people, who were together all the time, seemed to use the camera as a pretext. It was not exactly truth, it was not fiction. For when the camera stopped, it was like the scenes of holding hands in *Moi, Un Noir*: the action did not stop, but continued. . . . I made the film in this way. And for the first time I saw that the camera was not an obstacle to human relations, but was to the contrary a help. The people discovered that they were not strangers. I don't know if there is a film in this—of course I prefer if there is a film there—but even if there is no film, something happened, and that's very important."

This statement by Rouch is clearly the extreme view of an extreme film-maker. It reveals a passionate and complete commitment to his subject and only secondarily to his larger audience. And it demonstrates unmistakably that Rouch does not at present intend his films to be considered primarily as audience films (except in those cases where the audience is also the subject) so that in his terms it would be largely irrelevant to judge them by conventional standards. But again, quite apart from noting Rouch's sociological direction, for which there are few, if any, precedents, it is worthwhile considering what are some of the advantages and disadvantages of his method.

Rouch has said that he prefers to use a spring-wound camera, so that he is compelled to keep on the move, always changing to another angle, with no chance to fall asleep at the tripod. This gives his films an often abrupt, rhythmic cadence. In *Moi, Un Noir* the action rarely settles down, there are few moments of repose. His off-the-cuff method of shooting, with as little clutter as possible, allows him to keep close to his subject, and permits him unlimited flexibility. But, as he says, a film *may* result. And, as he could have added, the film as it is shown *may* be repetitive, or it *may* have the growth and development we expect, not only from a dramatic film, but from the intimacy which comes with time in human relationships. But as it is, *Moi, Un Noir* does not advance (*for us*) beyond a certain level of understanding, so that after a while we are seeing different things happen but we are not learning anything new. There is no growing revelation, only familiarity. And although this is considerably more than we started with, the film often appears too long for its material.

But contributing to this is the form of the sound track which Rouch assembled, which is

at once ingenious and limiting. In addition to the general narration which he himself contributes, the bulk of the commentary is by the actors themselves, recorded by them as they watched the film unreeling in a projection room, commenting upon it and, in Rouch's phrase, "attempting a kind of interpretation." The result is something as free as dialogue (which, however, left the original shooting as untrammeled as only silent shooting can be with our present equipment) but with the perspective of a second thought. Thus toward the close of the film we, in company with "Edward G. Robinson," come to the realization that in desiring respectability and a degree of comfort and ease, he is no different from anyone else. All of this is much more revealing than anything Rouch could have scripted, but again it goes only so far. On one occasion, following a screening of the film in New York, Rouch began to talk about "Edward G. Robinson," who, in the closing sequence of the film, describes and pantomimes to a friend his experiences in the Indo-China war. Rouch enlarged on "Robinson's" own account by telling his audience that "Robinson" had gone as a soldier with the French army from his home village, and by his combat experience had, to his own satisfaction, become a man. But because the French lost the war, his family considered him disgraced; on his return to the village, he found himself out of favor. It was then he came to Treichville looking for work.

No doubt, telling this part of "Robinson's" story was not Rouch's intention. The information which Rouch gave us might make a more interesting film than *Moi, Un Noir,* but more importantly it is information which on any accounting is necessary for an understanding of the character. And yet it is precisely the kind of information which Rouch's method of recording the "dialogue" is most likely to conceal, since it is the sort of disclosure that the character is unlikely to make in a recording session. However, this may give us a clue to Rouch's method of choosing his characters and the way in which he decides what stories he can tell with them. Undoubtedly his knowledge of "Robinson's" history helped him in shooting the film. But it is also curiously reminiscent of the reason he gave at Santa Barbara for liking Lionel Rogosin's *On the Bowery,* which was screened for the seminar. He said that he was very excited to discover that the leading character died a few months after the film was completed, and was in fact in the process of dying while the film was being photographed. This fact was not part of the audience's experience when they saw the film. But it did convince Rouch that the film was about something actual and important. (Rouch has said that *On the Bowery* influenced him considerably in the filming of *Moi, Un Noir.*) And it is this sort of actuality which Rouch will seek to approach in his future film work, quite independently, it seems, of the theatrical tradition in motion pictures. Since audiences as well as film-makers are conditioned to expect a conventional dramatic continuity, we must suppose that Rouch and the *Musée de l'Homme* are prepared to wait for a paying audience, or, if necessary, do without it entirely. In film as in architecture and indeed all the arts there is the age-old quandary—can artists invent for the future and still provide for the present? Rouch would say that they can since he is already satisfied with the response to his films in Africa, and appears optimistic about the future development of the cinema away from the studios.

This concern with subject, though with a different sort of commitment to it, is found also in the work of the Free Cinema group in London. However, transplanted from England to California, Lindsay Anderson's *Every Day Except Christmas* appears curiously one-sided to an audience unfamiliar with the popular image of the Covent Garden worker that Anderson seems anxious to displace. Many Londoners, connected with the market only through their local florist or greengrocer, often think of the young men of the market with some suspicion, considering them likely to go on strike or cause a disturbance just as the pears are ripening. Anderson goes behind this image to show the human beings on whose arms and backs the market rests, and has always rested. That is why, we must suppose, we are left with an

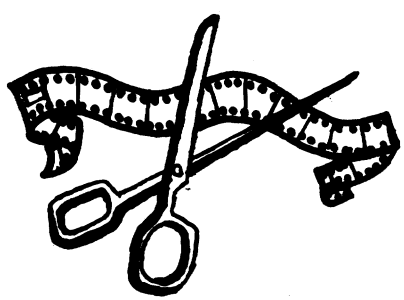
impression of (almost) everyone singing and whistling and smiling. It is the sound track which carries most of the telling information about the characters (apart from the fact that they seem to work very hard), not through the "official" narration but behind it in the delicious, spontaneous off-screen voices. But again these voices, being in the vernacular, and not being tied to a specific action on the screen, fail to make much impression on an audience not used to the dialect. But despite this flaw, and some repetition which slows down the film as a whole, the film often has a fine movement to it and is prepared at times to stop altogether to take account of some moment of insight. Among those which come to mind: the care with which a burly, bustling, fast-talking man suddenly attends to his flowers, folding paper around them for the best possible display; the sadness and apparent anachronism of the flower girls; the startling appearance of a man with nicotine-stained hands and eyes, one of the people who are always there and yet have nothing to do with the market. Some of this is the result of well-chosen candid photography, but the placing and timing of these scenes has also much to do with their effectiveness. In each of the cases mentioned, there is a contrast between the shots themselves and the scenes which preceded them. We are in each case taken by surprise and yet there is always the sting of truth. This represents the best kind of dramatic presentation.

Some of the work shown at the seminar and at Los Angeles from the National Film Board of Canada also made excellent use of the candid camera. *Les Raquetteurs* (*The Snowshoers*) was the most enjoyable. Filming somewhat illicitly on footage intended for another production, Michel Brault and M. Groulx put together their delightful, sympathetic film in the cutting rooms at night. It opens on a shot of some men shuffling along a provincial road in the country around Quebec, wearing snowshoes. On the screen appears the title *Les Raquetteurs,* followed by the explanation from Larousse. Thus we are told that, unlikely as it may seem, the French-Canadian still races competitively in snowshoes. The film then cuts away to scenes of a rally. Leading representatives of the racers' organization and of the town endlessly shake hands. Small boys and hot-rodders and shop assistants watch the parade, with strutting, uncertain majorettes, out-of-step bandsmen, and the unscheduled appearance of a train which cuts the procession in two. Meanwhile the snowshoers continue, pursued now by dogs, and awaited in the cold sports arena by a handful of frost-breathing, dedicated supporters. The incident is entirely outrageous and is taken in complete seriousness. One of the funniest shots in this short film is of the man who came in second —distraught, disgusted, entirely unnerved by his failure. The camera stays on him as he throws down his gloves and his cap and then immediately picks them up again, pans with him as he walks around between two seconds who have wrapped a blanket over his shoulders, and waits for him to reappear from behind a knot of people whose indifference to him is in fine contrast to his own dismay. There are other races, each taken as seriously as the last, until without warning the film is in the convention's dance at night. According to Brault, who accompanied the film to Santa Barbara, he lost most of his crew to the party within half an hour of its beginning. The film makes this quite understandable. Nothing since the films of Humphrey Jennings in England (for example, *Listen to Britain*) has come so close to the provincial scene. It is an entirely delightful little film, and the National Film Board's reported anxiety about it is somewhat hard to understand. And yet one man at the Santa Barbara screening rose to complain that it attacked the dignity of French-Canadian provincial life. It is impossible to please everyone.

Together, also shown at Los Angeles, is one of a group of films sponsored by the British Film Institute out of a fund established for the production of "experimental films." This fund has enabled young directors to make films as they wished, without pressure from sponsors and without concern for the usual conventions or hazards of commercial film-making. *Together,* directed by Lorenza Mazzetti and Denis Horne, bears evidence of both the strength and the

weakness of films in the Free Cinema group. Its story is of two deaf-mutes living in East London: their loneliness, their longings, their rejection and persecution. The film's strength lies in the simplicity with which it depicts their day-to-day existence, and the vigor with which it attacks the attitudes of society.

The film's weakness lies in its lack of concern for the craft of film-making, so that while Mazzetti and Horne were often successful in catching their audience emotionally, they were not always successful in consummating this involvement. Scenes built to climaxes which were never realized, and the free style of cutting, apparently an attempt to break away from the concept of master scenes, was sometimes striking and at other times confusing; striking, as in the introduction of the two deaf-mutes (though a steadier camera would have helped), and confusing as with several scenes in the house where the mutes were living. Some points in the film remained obscure. Why did the mutes leave the house in which they were living? Was the scene with the prostitute a dream, fantasy, or flashback?

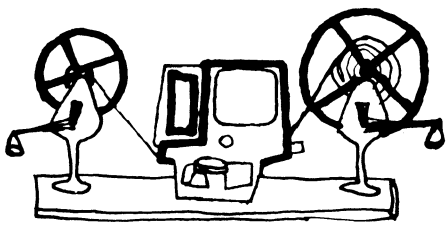


In what seems to be an altogether enviable position are the members of the Puerto Rican documentary group, organized by the government of Puerto Rico through its Community Education Division. Charged with taking to the rural people of Puerto Rico a deeper understanding of the values inherent in their local culture and customs and instilling in them a sense of pride, security, and direction, the 10-year-old unit has faced the classic responsibility of government-sponsored documentary, and has produced a number of films of merit. The "delegation" which attended the Flaherty seminar scored a personal triumph and their films were viewed with admiration and excitement.

Three films were shown. *Santero* (*The Saint-maker,* directed by Amilcar Tirado) is the story of an old man who painstakingly carves statues of the saints out of the local wood. He is unable to sell them against the competition of Church-approved, mass-produced, enameled plaster saints (there is a wonderful sequence on the manufacturing process, contrasted with the laborious, personal method of the saint-maker) until he is directed (rather unexpectedly) to a Museum of Native Arts whose purpose is to purchase and thus preserve the work of native craftsmen. The solution comes rather abruptly and without anything approaching a dramatic justification, but there is never any doubt of where the sympathies of the film-makers lie. *El Puente* (*The Bridge,* also by Tirado) reconstructs an actual incident. Faced with the hazard of periodic floods after heavy seasonal rain, villagers refuse to send their children to a school which lies on the other side of a river. As a result the community unites to build a bridge which allows all the children to attend school in safety. From our distant point of view, the most successful part of the film is the "construction" of a long, dramatic sequence during a storm, in which a boy comes close to drowning. The design of the montage in this sequence is derivative, undoubtedly, but the director has learned his lessons well. *Juan sin Seso* (*Witless Juan,* directed by Luis Maissonet and written by René Marquez) humorously takes up the plight of a man who believes all the advertising and propaganda he hears. He obeys the last instructions he hears, even when these contradict the ones he has just received.

Thus, in terms of talent, personal involvement, and commitment to their subject and to the power of film to accomplish their purpose, there is little to choose between the members of the Puerto Rican unit and those of the loosely knit Free Cinema group. Where the Puerto Ricans might be thought to have the advantage, how-

ever, is in the added discipline of directing their work toward a specific purpose for a specific audience, and in being able to judge the results in terms of the effect of their work on this audience. Jean Rouch remarked at the seminar following a screening of *Santero* that it was the first educational film of quality that he had seen, and that it should be used by film schools as an example of its type. This perhaps was a greater indication of its success than the disappointing reaction from the Los Angeles audience, a group neither concerned with the community problem nor fully aware of the purpose for which the films were made.



The work of John Chapman, presented more or less *hors concours* at Santa Barbara, provides examples of the personal, almost private film. *Quetico, The Seasons, Essay on Film*—each deals with Nature in such a way that one could well imagine Jean-Jacques Rousseau viewing them and bellowing gleefully, "Now do you understand what the hell I was talking about?" As with Rousseau, however, Chapman's difficulty will not be a lack of understanding or appreciation, but one of getting a public that is willing to be deeply involved. Chapman's personal involvement is evident and it is clear that he must now be considered with Arne Sucksdorff as one of the world's great nature photographers. *Quetico* shows the beauty of Canada's national parks, *The Seasons* has as its subject what its title indicates, and *Essay on Film*, the shortest, the most personal, and cinematically the best, is an ode to the harmony of Nature that any pantheist would have been proud to sponsor. The films are serene, contemplative, and personal, totally devoid of the forced dramatic structure or microcosmic orgies generally considered necessary to make Nature acceptable to a general audience.

A nontheatrical film which is consistently successful before audiences of various types is the 1958 Flaherty Award winner, *The Hunters*, a film, indeed, which begins to raise the prospect that anthropological subjects treated with imagination may yet find commercial release. (Leo Dratfield at Contemporary Films in New York has had some success with this film already.) Made by anthropologist John Marshall and Robert Gardner, and produced by the Film Study Center of the Peabody Museum, the film uses, in Hugh Gray's phrase, "the scientist's method and the poet's vision" to capture an image of a way of life which is slowly dying out. To this extent the Bushmen of a region within the Bechuanaland Protectorate in South West Africa receive the same homage as Flaherty paid to the islanders of Samoa in *Moana*. Audiences have been greatly impressed (again) by the filmmaker's attitude toward his subject, and the comment is frequently heard that "natives" are presented in the film, at last, as human beings. Part of a projected series of films dealing with various aspects of the life of the Kalahari Bushmen, *The Hunters* portrays the marginal existence eked out by the tribe, and relates in detail the 13-day hunt, not always very efficiently organized by the Bushmen, for a remarkably sympathetic giraffe. The climax of the film is the killing of the giraffe, a slow, agonizing process with primitive weapons.

John Marshall does an estimable job of reading some finely wrought narration which would undoubtedly have independent literary merit; it fits with surprising effectiveness to the slow unfolding of the hunt and of these people's lives. The material for other films of this sort has already been photographed, and Marshall and Gardner are waiting only for the financing to complete them. At present Nick Cominos has just finished editing the second one.

Undoubtedly the film among the present group which has caused most discussion is the feature from East Pakistan, *Day Shall Dawn*, directed by Aaejay Kardar, photographed by

Walter Lassally (*Thursday's Children, Every Day Except Christmas, A Girl in Black*) and with sound recorded and edited by another member of the Free Cinema group, John Fletcher. Kardar's film was completed in London and it was there Frances Flaherty saw it (on the advice of Marie Seton), and decided to have it shown at the seminar.

It is Kardar's first film and in many ways his apprenticeship shows through the too spectacularly beautiful photography. But it is an interesting film for many reasons, deserving neither the full-blown praise which has come its way during the California showings, nor perhaps the restless boredom from those who have already seen too many first films from as yet undeveloped talents in hitherto "undiscovered" lands. In addition to its being Kardar's first film, it is also the first feature to have been produced in East Pakistan, and at the time Kardar spoke at Santa Barbara it had received only two weeks' public exhibition in the Eastern region.

Kardar's family is in the film business and is in the habit of making and distributing more or less traditional films which do well at the box office but rarely come to the attention of the film public outside India. After ten years in the merchant service, Kardar passed some months in a Buddhist monastery but was asked to leave the order after a succession of too boisterous champagne parties. He then spent considerable time painting and writing poetry. Residence in the monastery had itself followed a period of six months in the family's Bombay studio. But in 1957, after Kardar worked his way to London, his father presented him with some money, and rather unaccountably, after years of studiously avoiding the issue, he decided to put this money into a film. Beginning with little more than a general intention of putting his experience as a seaman to some use, he traveled back to Pakistan.

West Pakistan, his home, has no tradition of seagoing, so instead he crossed to the Eastern territory, a region strange to him, and decided to make a film about one of the many fishing villages there. Speaking at Santa Barbara he said, "When I set out, my intention was to make

Day Shall Dawn

a film about the fishermen. I spent weeks fishing with them and in due course found that I was accepted by them. And just as I had decided to begin, I realized that any film showing how these people worked would in effect be little more than a fishing film."

Kardar then switched his attention to the customs of the villages, thinking that they would provide interesting material. Gradually he realized that what he wanted to accomplish was a film which "expressed the hopes and desires of the fishing community." It was then that he decided that a film of this sort would have to, as he said, "call upon the dramatic values inherent in the people of the community." At that time he was aware also of his total lack of dramatic training, but he was by now convinced that a film, if it were to touch these people and the way they lived, would have to be dramatic in nature. His unit, which had been assembled ostensibly for a documentary on fishing, advised him to abandon the project, and his brother, flying in from Bombay, suggested in effect that he would be better off to go back to the monastery. But by now Kardar was too deeply involved to withdraw and the film was made.

The story which he and his writers developed out of the raw material of the fishing village is at almost every turn recognizable—a young fisherman, living in a poor grass hut with his wife and children, putting money aside against the day when he can buy his own boat; the middleman who leases the fishing rights to the nearby waters and acts also as the unofficial banker of the fishermen's savings, interfering in a develop-

ing love affair between the young man's friend and the wife's sister; a man who dies as his new boat is delivered to him while his crippled mother sits helplessly by. Kardar fails to make this material always come to life, although there are many visually striking scenes in the film, which may of course have been caught by Kardar or by Walter Lassally, his cameraman.

Kardar's inexperience as a director could not have been helped by the fact that there is little tradition of drama in East Pakistan. Most of the people are Moslems, and suspicious of any theatrical activity. And yet, with one exception (the girl), Kardar cast his film with local people, most of whom had never seen a camera before. It is thus not surprising that, by Western standards, many of them are frequently rather wooden, almost statuesque.

But the most damaging criticism, if it can be made to stick, is of the sort offered, for example, by Richard Dyer McCann in his article in the *Christian Science Monitor* (August 25, 1959). He says that Kardar's "characters tend to appear and disappear without fulfilling their promise of individual development or of conflict with each other. In crossing the hazy line between documentary and drama, Mr. Kardar has wavered, unwilling either to complete his plot, or, like Flaherty, avoid plot altogether."

However, at Santa Barbara and again at Los Angeles, *Day Shall Dawn* was well received, some people comparing it favorably with Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali*. The Santa Barbara screening was applauded for several minutes, and Kardar was too moved to speak. It is apparent that the film is sincerely intended and that its foreword is as much a part of Kardar's experience as that of the people he was filming. "This is the path of the spirit, paved with thorns and stones; this is man's shadow, but dawn will come."

There is little individual protest in the film against the economic absurdities of the community's conditions of survival, but according to Kardar, to show any more would have been to misrepresent. Thus, for all its amateurishness, and the similarity of many of its sequences to ones we may have seen before, the audiences in California found that it was close to its subject, the humanity and dignity of the fishermen, and this was enough for them.

The marriage of a film to its intended audience must continually be stressed, or the lessons of the Flaherty seminar and the screenings in Los Angeles will be lost. A distinction must constantly be made between the involvement of a film-maker in his subject and the involvement of a general audience. Thus, while it may be legitimate to recognize talent in a nontheatrical film, it is often rash to expect for the film a successful theatrical release. According to Rouch, for example, his films *Fils de l'Eau* and *Moi, Un Noir* received theatrical release in France; but they have not had much commercial success. (It seems that sequences in the former film, for example the hunt, were shortened for the commercial version.) It would be interesting to know whether his successes at the festivals led him to expect success at the box office, and whether this in the long run will be an important influence on his work.

We may also conclude that it is not enough to use the standards and the conventions of the theatrical film to judge the deeply personal or substantially local documentary or educational film. Although festivals and special screenings may remain the only hope we have to see the work of a Tirado, a Rouch, or a Kardar, it is worth remembering that such conditions may only accidentally resemble the conditions under which the film was made to be seen. And we must consider whether such films, in honoring their subjects, staying close to real events, may not take themselves out of the reach of traditional criticism. The disrespect which Rouch has for theatrical convention is a calculated reaction against the limitations of the theatrical method. One alternative, the "lecture" method used in too many documentaries, is also discredited. But what are we to make of films, such as those discussed above, which are made for "use," not "art" or "entertainment," but which explore new forms and styles? Can criticism develop new formal terms to enable us to evaluate such films on more than merely sociological or utilitarian grounds?

In any case, we must remember that film has not always been theatrical; though deviations from theatrical method may make excessive demands on the purse of the producer or the imagination of the audience, there is nothing compulsory about the marriage of theater and film, only an easy habit and an uneasy ignorance of what lies beyond. These new forms of cinema may recharge the old by bringing them closer to the real event. Or we may be taken into entirely new areas. Certainly it is worth while waiting for them, looking for them, and supporting them.

Film Reviews

The San Francisco Festival

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Il Tetto

Il Tetto (The Roof) is the latest result of the fruitful collaboration between Vittorio deSica and Cesare Zavattini. It is only four years old but, except for its smooth technical finish, it seems much older. The story of a young newly married couple who are forced by poverty and family circumstances to join a squatters' colony (similar to the one in *Miracle in Milan*) which exists on the edge of Rome, it is, perhaps, too obviously the sort of material which might be expected to engage the sympathies of deSica and Zavattini. But there was no reason to expect it to be as disappointing as it is.

THE ROOF: *The newly-weds (Giorgio Listuzzi and Gabriella Pallotti) await the police.*

The curious failure of *Il Tetto* brings up once again the old fundamental distinction between art and life, if only because it is on a version of this distinction that Zavattini bases his artistic credo as a film-maker: "In most films, the adventures of two people looking for somewhere to live, for a house, would be shown externally in a few moments of action, but for us it could provide the scenario for a whole film, and we would explore all its echoes, all its implications." The actual facts of daily life become, then, not a premise for dramatic extension, but the drama itself. "All its echoes, all its implications" are therefore the perceptible social, economic, political, and moral reverberations which are revealed in the most ordinary acts of men and women. This philosophy of the film, which derives from an attitude toward life, Zavattini long ago christened neorealism. But whatever we may think of such "neorealist" masterpieces as *Shoeshine*, *The Bicycle Thief*, and *Umberto D.*, Zavattini as late as 1953 believed he had yet to make his first truly neorealist film—one in which technical canons and traditional artistic processes are swept aside in the direct observation of unchanged reality, its very face and voice. *Amore in Cittá* was perhaps the first film to suggest that what Zavattini means by "reality" is the statistical proof of some large ideological assumptions about the poor, and that what he calls "neorealism" is a vulgar solicitation of authenticity by means of tabulable names, dates,

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and places. As an example of neorealism, *Il Tetto* does not go the limit, and for Zavattini it may represent a certain concession to metaphor and to the tame world of fiction. But for deSica the descent from poetry to journalism proves almost fatal; he is unable to lift the level of *Il Tetto* above that of a human-interest editorial. The young husband and wife of this film are firmly established as to class, background, and métier. But as human beings they are never seen in their uniqueness, only in their generality. Zavattini would no doubt call this "solidarity" and go on to insist, not that people (meaning you and I) are like that, but that these are the very people. They are, therefore they are "true." "Life" is held to be superior to "art" and in every way more moral. "Reality" is the proper business of cinema, and the only tools of cinema are an inquisitive camera and a hand to crank it. The incredible *Amore in Cittá,* with its shameless tabloid exposures of personal tragedies and its dumb "documentary" parade of blinking citizens, achieved nothing but its own betrayal.

Il Tetto, to be sure, has the most honorable intentions toward its subject. Like *The Bicycle Thief,* it sets out to show what can befall a man who must sweat for the bare rudiments of existence—a job, a roof over his head. But to say this about *The Bicycle Thief* is to evoke nothing of its essence, whereas all the pathos of *Il Tetto* is pretty much contained in just such a synoptic description. Generalizations about the lives of the poor, the afflicted, the dispossessed are bad because they risk nothing beyond a nominal identification and thereby lose all power to persuade. What binds us to the poor is not their poverty but their humanity. The principals of *Il Tetto* have no interior life. They "typify," we are made to feel, the lack of personal differentiation which some believe is true of the lower classes. But if it is true, it is surely as vicious a social condition as the material poverty and not to be abstracted from that poverty as a sign of "simplicity" or "universality."

Universality, a sense of brotherhood, is what Zavattini naturally wants to convey. Any man, or—as he claims—Everyman, can be the hero of a Zavattini film. A puritanical distrust of "art," however, renders the hero faceless. It is the minor characters in this film who—briefly—live and, in one penetrating moment which deserves to stand beside the best of *Umberto D.,* deSica immortalizes a homely little maid who says she wants some perfume. But in the over-all quality of its encounter with life, *Il Tetto* seems like a cramped, compromised rehearsal for the big poetic liberation of the deSica classics. It fails, ultimately, because the two people it tells you it cares about remain merely a pair of pleasant-looking nonenities. Only art can tell us who they are.—ARLENE CROCE

The Eighth Day of the Week

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Alexander Ford: veteran Polish film director, in business for over thirty years, whose formative period—to judge from his work—was German expressionism. In 1936 he made a film about children living in the Warsaw slums, *Here We Are,* which built him something of a reputation. His more recent work (*Border Street, Five Boys from Barska Street*) is solid, careful, old-fashioned, and has its quota of orthodox propaganda.

Hlasko and Ford: collaborators on the film *The Eighth Day of the Week,* made last year in West Berlin, in a Polish and a German version.

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Hlasko and Ford: collaborators on the film *The Eighth Day of the Week,* made last year in West Berlin, in a Polish and a German version.

Zbigniew Cybulski and Sonja Ziemann in THE EIGHTH DAY OF THE WEEK.

Like the novel, the film was banned in Poland, and the version shown abroad is the German one. Ford directed it, and wrote the adaptation with Hlasko. The result is a hybrid, with savage whiffs of despair escaping, as it were, through the vents of overcomposed images.

Hlasko's story is of two young lovers in Warsaw, Agniezka and Peter, who haven't yet slept together. Agniezka lives in a small apartment with her family—her father (a bemused coöperative union official mainly interested in fishing), her hypochondriac and prurient mother, and her brother, an intellectual soaking himself in vodka to lessen the pain of living in the twentieth century—"when Isolde lives in a brothel and Tristan gets drunk with the pimps at the corner bar." Peter has only a wretched room in an overcrowded tenement building damaged during the war. Idealistic about her love for him, Agniezka refuses to begin their affair in a hovel or on a park bench at night; they must find a little apartment in which to live together; and so they search for it. But in spite of proud statistics from the government on its rebuilding program, they can't find one. In the intervals of searching, they try to be happy together and forget the shadows of a police state. One evening Agniezka wanders despondently into a bar by herself. A middle-aged journalist buys her several drinks and persuades her to come home with him; almost blotto, she lets herself be seduced in his comfortable apartment, and next morning sees him anxiously washing the sheets, because his wife is coming back from a visit to her parents. . . . When she meets Peter later that day, he's jubilant. He's just found an apartment for them. Sick with self-disgust, she tells him she can't see him any more. He goes off, down the tawdry street. Hlasko leaves her waiting, like everyone else, for the Eighth Day of the Week—the day, as she says to her brother, "that hasn't come yet. And won't come soon."

Apart from two bad lapses, the adaptation itself is well conceived. One lapse is the ending; after she's left Peter, Agniezka runs into her brother, who (of all people) gives her a lecture on self-pity and tells her to go back to Peter, who will Understand. In a last shot we see her running after him, presumably to a life together in the new apartment. The other is an episode against which Hlasko himself apparently protested. The lovers find themselves locked in a department store after hours, and spend the night in a model bedroom suite on display—chastely, because they first open a bottle of vodka and get drunk; and a color sequence is inserted to convey intoxication and dream. This kind of thing, unfortunately, seems to give the measure of Ford—who also frames the drunkard brother in low-angle shots with a highball glass magnified and distorted in the foreground, and through melodramatic lighting turns present-day Warsaw into *Joyless Street,* with pimps, crones, and drunks leering into picturesque close-up out of every back alley. Hlasko's Warsaw is raw and monotone, a gray unhappy city in the rain; and its occasional background detail —like the passing government car that spatters Agniezka and Peter with mud while a woman's voice blares through a loudspeaker—is wryly succinct. It needs a film style closer to that of *Open City.*

The power of the writing, however, still breaks through at times. The lovers' dialogues breathe an acrid poetry, and are honestly played by Sonja Ziemann and Zbigniew Cybulski; the sketch of Agniezka's family has a drab, vivid truth; and one sequence at least—Agniezka decides to overcome her scruples and visit Peter in his room, only to find the building has started to collapse when she arrives—is impressively handled.—GAVIN LAMBERT.

DONZOKO

Donzoko

Wind fluttering the ripped *shoji* paper; a confined setting (one long room and an adjoining alleyway and courtyard); more dilapidation and disorder than we have ever seen in a Japanese film. In this milieu an all-star cast lounge and lope about, poking at each other with somewhat cryptic or portentous remarks—the whole thing reminiscent of *The Iceman Cometh*. The camera poised quietly, but ready to spring abruptly after a character in an occasional burst of passion.

This is *Donzoko*: Gorki's *The Lower Depths*, now done by Kurosawa in a Japanese version, with a few echoes of the French but with none of its easy typing of characters—for the first reel or so, one is busy trying to sort them out: Mifune as Sutekichi, the thief who has been carrying on an affair with the landlady and now loves her sister; Isuzu Yamada (the first wife in *A Cat and Two Women*) as the landlady whose truly hair-raising jealousy is the motor of what plot there is—the sister (Kyoko Kagawa) is beaten, the landlord killed. Then there are the old man, voice of wisdom; the actor, whose brains have been pickled in *sake*; the tinker and his dying wife, whose cough is one of the sounds that make up the unnerving track of this music-less film, together with rain, wind, the tinker's rasping, the prostitute Osen's crying, the polite laugh of the old man, the odd chants in a strange, gay jam-session and dance. . . .

A brave enterprise: heightening rather than naturalizing, depending on speech for the main effects, putting oneself in the hands of the actors, and withal in a vehicle with deep marks of age in its romanticism about poverty. But one can see how it attracted Kurosawa and Hideo Agumi, who collaborated on the script: Gorki's attitude was close enough to one we find in other Japanese films – a meditative, "poetical" approach to matters that are in reality simply overwhelming and unbearable. —JAMES S. VANCE.

On the Beach

Stanley Kramer is an honest, admirable, well-meaning man, altogether a rarity in the world he inhabits: Hollywood. Moreover, he is again making films with serious themes. Let it be said at the outset, then, that I wish Mr. Kramer well. But I also wish that this picture were very different.

On the Beach deals with nothing less than the end of the world. It comes in 1964 as the result of an accidental nuclear war, which devastates the Northern Hemisphere and fills its atmosphere with radioactive particles; these particles are slowly drifting southward, condemning the inhabitants of the rest of the earth to a less sudden but no less sure death. The film shows how a hopeful theory of decreasing radiation is disproved by the voyage north of a nuclear submarine, and how the prospect of the end affects a group intimately concerned with this voyage: Dwight, the American captain of the submarine; Peter and Julian, his Australian liaison and scientific officers; Mary, Peter's wife; and Moira, an Australian girl who falls in love with Dwight.

The theme of the destruction of the world is not precisely a modern innovation, of course. ("It won't be water but *fire* next time!" goes the gospel song.) But the mechanisms portrayed as bringing it about have certainly become more up to date. In George R. Stewart's novel *Earth Abides* mankind is virtually wiped out by a mysterious plague, arisen from some obscure ecological imbalance, like the plagues which periodically afflict other species. The bomb has figured in Oboler's *Five* and Belafonte's *The*

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World, the Flesh, and the Devil (originally titled *The End of the World*) and it offers endless possibilities. But, unlike other destruction myths, *On the Beach* portrays an end which is a *complete* end—for the human race and, we are told, for most or all other forms of life.

A truly formidable death-wish?

Now the problem of war and human survival is the most immediate, if not the most fundamental, social and political question confronting the human race. It is a topic that has bred widespread cynicism and despair among ourselves, the victims of any future large-scale war.

Nonetheless, to make a film on atomic war for theatrical distribution in the United States is to buck every prevailing political trend of the past ten years. Or at least this was the case when Kramer, a year and a half ago, began *On the Beach*. That it appears now, when the Khrushchev-Eisenhower exchanges have brought a lowering of tension and the likelihood of some actual steps toward lessening armaments, will make Kramer's intrepidity seem less. This is all to the good for the nation; and it may prove all to the good for Kramer, whose picture will be received as part of a Trend. But the situation has not basically changed; the Soviet and capitalist orders still stand at missile-points, prepared in the end to commit social hara-kiri rather than allow the other to prevail.

As things now stand, it may well be thought that the moral of *On the Beach* is that small nations should be kept from having atom bombs. The moral, in any case, certainly has nothing to do with the real political task of our times: replacing regimes which undertake suicidal arms races with regimes that do not. And because the problem is therefore posed as one of accident-prevention, the film like the novel avoids the true human horror of our situation, and remains in the end a trivial diversion.

But that horror cannot really be escaped.

In a dream I sometimes have, I am standing on a high hill looking out over the San Francisco Bay area, which is my adopted home. It is dusk, the lights of the cities and bridges are beautiful, the air is soft. My eyes notice a glow to the north, somewhere on the far shores of the Bay—rather like the glow of a steel plant against the sky. But this glow suddenly becomes brighter, and expands. It looks, I tell myself curiously, almost like a bomb blast! And then, as it grows still brighter and larger, and begins to assume the mushroom shape, and boils upward, I realize that it *is* a bomb, and that it has all started. Sweating and paralyzed, I watch the neon signs and car lights far below, knowing that at any instant a searing glare will cook us, and that it is all over. . . .

Kramer and scriptwriter John Paxton have wisely sifted out some of the worst things in Nevil Shute's rather dreadful book: the terrifyingly naïve discussion of the beginning of cobalt-bombing between Russia and China over possession of Shanghai, a "warm-water port"; Dwight's various declarations of faithfulness to

THE NEW BLUE ANGEL

Joe's atmosphere was thick with fluff,
Marlene's legs and voice enough
To fill the angled bric-a-brac
With anguish. —Where Herr Doktor sank,
Crowing, to drunken self-disgust,
They've turned to pretty love his lust
For Lola—kindly modern miss
Who, gamboling, will send him back
To sober colleagues after this
Unfortunate diversion.

So Grandma, draw those wrinkles smooth,
And cameraman, lay on more gauze:
However she delights the eye
We cannot let this sweetie-pie
Update our nightmares! "No applause
For remakes," tell the banks—
Third-hand success they cannot buy.

—D. V.

his dead wife, and his habit of calling people "fella"; the continual attention to absurd status concerns; the overuse of comic relief provided by some venerable club members who try to drink up all the best sherry before it is too late; and they have improved the feeble physics of the book and updated its implications about fall-out and rocketry. They have also, however, taken out most of those matters which might have lent overwhelming directness and impact to the film: everything concerned with death in an immediate, biological, visible sense. Once, we see a man hunched on the curb, and "panic fright" seizes us; but he turns out only to be drunk, and idiot relief surges over us where horror should have been. (This is a microcosm of the film as a whole.)

Shute, for all his stiff-upper-lip approach, at least dramatized the realities people faced: they throw up in secret, they weaken, they grasp at life. When the sub puts in at devastated U.S. ports he tells us of the burnt and blasted houses there, and the bodies; while in the film, the efficiently photographed viewing through the periscope shows us a San Francisco entirely all right, except devoid of men. (In the novel Seattle is so described, but as an exception owing its good luck to its seaward antiaircraft missile defenses.) This curious pulling of punches extends throughout the film; in fact it is its basic strategy, and dictates the curious ending on a note of hope which will be discussed below. It is most worrisome in the exposition sequences at the beginning, which are intended to make a sense of doom and horror grow upon us, but only make us wonder how they can take it with such bloody calm. True enough, at a party people get drunk and argumentative. "If everybody was so smart, why didn't they know what would happen?" "They did." And someone else complains, "*I* didn't do anything." These scenes are excruciatingly didactic as well as wooden and unmoving. Psychologically, they are nowhere. (It should be noted, incidentally, that dutiful acceptance, with a tinge of derangement, is the uniform reaction portrayed. Nobody gets hysterical, nobody just sits down and stops functioning, nobody abandons usual inhibitions—nobody does any of those things which are in fact done in disaster situations. Nor is this odd calm suggested as the result of some guilt reaction, either political or theological.)

Now the explanation for the war offered by Shute is trivial and contemptible. But is the "accident" theory offered by the film any better? Is it not like saying that the explosion of a missile was caused by the failure of such-and-such a valve, when in fact the question is precisely how that valve came to be faulty? If we are all killed it is not going to be "because" of somebody's itchy button-finger or even because of a mistaken interpretation by the Commander in Chief of blips on a radar screen; it will be because of the total power struggle between Washington and Moscow, and because we have not been able to stop that struggle by transforming it into a struggle for the world we, and not the oligarchs on both sides, truly want. The logic of preparation for war leads to war, perhaps by accident but more often by design; and most people have heartily participated in this insanity. The likelihood of imminent death is *our* doing, and cannot be palmed off on some unlucky individual scapegoat. (*On the Beach* is peculiarly American in its supposition that by pointing to an immediate cause one can understand a phenomenon. This works well enough with simple machines, of the kind our folk heritage has been built upon: because of a nail in

From the ending of On the Beach.

the road, the tire was lost, etc., etc. But it is not very useful in politics.) If we in the United States continue to tolerate the kind of regime we have, we are practically *bound* to get killed, sooner or later, by their bombs or ours, or by some small nation to whom we have given bombs. The marvelous accident will be if the bombs are *not* set off.

The ending of *On the Beach* sinks deep into clichés. Dwight has his men vote on what they want to do; they decide to sail home to die. Moira's father looses his stock so that they can have a few more weeks of life. Julian, blessing the departed, seals his garage and guns his Ferrari. The admiral drinks to his devoted secretary. The billiard balls come to rest on the club table. At the very end, a haze seems to fill the streets; there is a crash on the sound track. But with them come more banalities.

And for a closing note of "affirmation," a Salvation Army meeting is shown—large at first and then dwindling, as people begin to sicken and die. Over the speaker and the band hangs a banner reading THERE IS STILL TIME . . . BROTHER, and as the crowd thins the camera closes in on STILL TIME and TIME. (The San Francisco preview audience, at least, showed that it had not lost its sense of reality: when the banner appeared, laughter broke out.) All this is not meant, I'm afraid, as the sickening irony that in reality it would have been, but as the voice of the film-makers pointing out, in case anybody has missed it, the supposed moral of the film. This moral, it will be considered by the good-hearted but politically unsophisticated, is that there is still time for men of good will to take heart and support organizations like the UN—that well-known bringer of peace which prevented the Korean War, the Indo-Chinese War, the Algerian War, and other troublesome details of recent times—when what is necessary is a fundamental change of our international policies.

Now Stanley Kramer [as FQ will explain in more detail in a subsequent article on established Hollywood directors] represents some of the best tendencies in recent U.S. production.

In *On the Beach* he has worked again with big stars, and the picture has suffered—less from Ava Gardner (who helps turn Moira Davidson from Shute's peculiar combination of drunk, flirt, and prig into a slightly puffy, reasonably appealing woman whose eyes are redder than those of the others because they see more) than from Gregory Peck, Fred Astaire, and Anthony Perkins. Peck, cast into a role asking him to be a submarine captain of impeccable efficiency, a man capable of living a fantasy life in which his dead family live on, and sometimes an intolerable ass in his relations with Moira, simply relapses into the familiar air of solid complaisance which doomed him to disaster in *Moby Dick*. Astaire, though stiff and excruciatingly unscientific, is less disappointing because we do not expect much; his lack of fire, however, is a serious defect to the film as a whole, for much of its background information is supplied through him. Perkins appears uncomfortable with his role in some odd way, perhaps because he did not think Donna Anderson, a "new discovery" who plays his schizoid wife, worth the fuss.

Cinematically, the film is straightforward, with something of an excess of unmotivated big close-ups (as in a scene of Peck and Gardner dancing). And there is a good deal of hoopla in the cutting at the end. Thankfully, the film is in black and white, and though the rest of the interior work is ordinary, it has some very nice passages in the sub's conning tower. The score, by Ernest Gold, is rather interesting in several places, though it suffers from tearful strings and too many variations on "Waltzing Matilda." This tune, incidentally, is sung toward the end, as Dwight and Moira spend one of their last evenings together at a trout-fishing resort. The comfortably human bravado of "They'll never take me alive, said he" has an irony seldom found in film music: shortly thereafter people begin taking their suicide pills. It is in this scene, too, that Kramer undertakes the gambit of a circular track shot going entirely around the couple as they kiss—a device which comes off better here than in Dreyer's *Ordet*, though it is used for emphasis rather than summary.

On the one hand, thus, *On the Beach* is

fatally defective as political thought (which does not mean that it is not still well above the ordinary American standard in these matters); on the other it is suspicious as psychology. Its aesthetic merits are negligible, and its over-all effect is weakened and jumbled in spite of the well-meaning rhetoric of the conclusion. It is a useful film to have around, since it may scare people into thought, and there is virtue in any new reaction in politics these days. But it will not scare them in any useful direction, really, except perhaps to strengthen anti-fallout and hence anti-bomb-testing sentiment. And, unfortunately, further testing is hardly needed to improve our chances of wiping each other out.

In the end I find my mind returning to the concrete images that the film omits: the dream, photographs of twisted Japanese cities and people, film records of bomb explosions, missles on the launching pads, the onset of symptoms that men have already suffered and are likely to suffer again. It has all been so scaled down and civilized in *On the Beach* that the end of the world seems like not such a bad show after all.

There might be one reason for holding bomb tests that no one has seriously mentioned: for educational purposes. Would it not be salutary to assemble several hundred thousand people periodically and let them witness, from the minimum "safe" distance, a modest nuclear explosion? Would this not put such matters into a human perspective unmatched by that of *On the Beach*? And would it not instruct us all in how the problems of our day must be dealt with on the screen? —ERNEST CALLENBACH.

The Devil's Disciple and *The Doctor's Dilemma*

The plays of George Bernard Shaw continue to attract film producers who have good, though not the best, intentions. Filming Shaw is risky business, the danger coming from being too literal and sentimental in the interpretation (Preminger's *Saint Joan,* for instance), or too fulsome in the production (Pascal's *Caesar and Cleopatra*). Two recent attempts to add distinction to screen literature with Shavian material have ended as not very worthwhile movie fare and as considerably more dubious Shaw. One version mutilates its original, while the other remains more or less faithful only to the shell of the play. But in both cases the real failure comes from a fear of Shaw himself, from a shrinking at the sound of his voice.

The Devil's Disciple in the Hecht-Hill-Lancaster version tries to be a movie in very obvious ways. Since the scene is New England during the Revolutionary War, what additions to the play could seem more appropriate than at least one sensational battle scene and some minor adventures involving a churchyard encounter at night and a stolen body? These would be all right but for the seriousness with which they are executed and the literalness with which the playwright's stock effects are interpreted. Shaw's avowed purpose is to use the hackneyed conventions and stage tricks of Victorian melodrama so popular in his day (and ours too, of course) — but to use them in a special way. These claptrap devices include such characters as the black-sheep son and the persecuted orphan, and such situations as mistaken identity, a military arrest and a heroic sacrifice, a court-martial, a gallows, and a last-minute rescue—all standard stage hokum. The playwright, however, means to go beyond these to make some observations about the melodrama in human relations, and he wishes through comic and dramatic discoveries and reversals to show the true nature of Puritanism and the religious man. Now, this clearly is what does *not* happen in the film. The film-makers might have profited from a careful look at Shaw's preface to *Three Plays for Puritans* where he explains all.

Richard Dudgeon, who calls himself the devil's disciple and is hated by his morally upright family, is mistaken by British troops for Pastor Anthony Anderson, arrested, and, after a court-martial before General Burgoyne, sentenced to be hanged. Richard is willing to give his life for the man of God, but his motive is wrongly taken by Anderson's wife, Judith, whose romantic nature leads her to conclude that the

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sacrifice is being made out of love for her. This, Richard denies, but the film cannot resist a vague suggestion of this possibility. But what the film fails to insist upon is Richard's need for religion as the true motive of the sacrifice. Consequently the central idea of the play is dimmed. When Richard has accidentally assumed the identity of the pastor he has in fact asserted his own true nature. And he has opened the way for Anderson to discover *his* real character too, for the holy man finds that his destiny lies in practical action: taking advantage of the mistaken identity, he has time to organize the militia for Richard's rescue. Then each begins in earnest on his true profession as Reverend Richard Dudgeon and as Captain Anthony Anderson.

But the film only lamely hints at this point, being content to exploit the melodrama for its own sake. Kirk Douglas as Dudgeon and Burt Lancaster as Anderson lend by their presence an uneasy expectation of a big showdown scene, Viking or OK-Corral style. And nobody seems to be bothered by the absence of an old-style villain, though an unsuccessful attempt is made to shove that responsibility onto the military. The real villain in Shaw's play is the hero's mother, Mrs. Dudgeon, but that part has been cut to shreds, leaving us to wonder what that fine actress Eva Le Gallienne might have done with the part.

The Devil's Disciple is a picture with a divided personality which neither screenwriters John Dighton and Roland Kibbee nor director Guy Hamilton could integrate. For this film has some curiously fine moments thanks to the presence of Sir Laurence Olivier as General Burgoyne, though he is a lonely figure in this production, dazedly doing the right thing and projecting the right quality as he wanders through the ruins of Shaw. The Burgoyne role is kept almost intact except for a natural breaking up of big scenes from the play into smaller, more cinematic scenes which find themselves transferred to unexpected places, where they lose the impact of the play's growing momentum. But Olivier's performance gets us over that loss by a brilliance and high style of saying the lines which reassure us that speech is not an art alien to the movies. In the favorable situation provided by a great actor, speech has movement and muscularity; it has color and excitement that cannot be minimized by the circumstances of its being filmed and recorded. The clenched-teeth sincerity of Kirk Douglas is no match for Shaw's lines, which have a soaring, singing quality quite beyond the naturalism of ordinary movie speech; many of Shaw's speeches are simply not to be recognized. To borrow for Shaw one of his own sentences about Shakespeare, "The ear is the sure clue to him."

That insight might have been more happily observed by the producers of *The Doctor's Dilemma* (MGM), which is peopled by a cast capable of doing the job well. But they fall short. Here is a film translation of Shaw that is faithful to its original but only listlessly so. From the standpoint of physical action, this play is less obviously film material and must rely for its movement on a form of drama that even stage directors blanch at: the discussion. The producer must simply be clever enough to recognize in the discussion Shaw's basic theatrical method. The plots are farfetched and the characters are reminiscent of *commedia dell'arte* figures. This particular play is made up of comic, fanciful discussion, with a curious note of tragedy which gives it a certain intriguing ambiguity.

Shaw bases his plot on a dilemma which could be escaped immediately if the situation were meant to be realistic. It is merely as a means of throwing his subject into high relief that Shaw places his newly knighted doctor, Sir Colenso Ridgeon, in an allegedly tight dilemma: having room for only one more patient, should he by means of his miracle cure for tuberculosis save the life of Louis Dubedat, a great artist but an awful cad, or the life of his friend Dr. Blenkinsop, a virtuous nonenity? His decision is made more agonizing by his secret wish to marry Mrs. Dubedat if she becomes a widow.

In these circumstances Shaw is able to examine the way in which men play God when they are severely hampered by limiting professional and personal interests. In the manner of

Molière, the play rips the medical profession for its manias and cure-mongering; each doctor in the cast is hilariously satirized for pushing a pet cure and its accompanying jargon.

The Molièresque quality should have been the cue for director Anthony Asquith to demand exaggeration in the performances so that they might match at least the high stylization of Cecil Beaton's costumes. Robert Morley and occasionally Alistair Sim approach that quality, whereas Dirk Bogarde as the artist is uncertain, and his death scene comes out more sincere and sentimental than ironic and cagey. Shaw's ingenious use of an illiterate newspaper reporter sent to "cover" the death scene is only partially retained in the movie. Thus the opportunity for balancing tragedy with hilarity is lost, though the sight of two or three doctors standing about weeping helps a little to recover Shaw's sense for the incongruous. Leslie Caron is undeniably lovely and sincere, though perhaps a little lacking in the mystery that floats around the character of Jennifer Dubedat. But it is the mystery and the magic of Shaw himself which this film misses finally. It is simply not an exciting event.

—HENRY GOODMAN.

*The Cry of Jazz**

This is the first anti-white film made by American Negroes, and it is fitting that it deals ostensibly with jazz, both in principle and because this will help it find an audience among whites. The film is badly made; but in its intentions it is exceedingly interesting.

The Cry of Jazz is fundamentally a lecture film, akin to the classroom variety; its visuals are deployed to drive home points made primarily through the narration. (It is based on a book by producer Edward O. Bland.) An attempt has been made to "frame" the lecture sections with scenes of a mixed group discussing jazz. As usual, however, this does not really help, and one is uncomfortably conscious of the shift into narration-gear when the discussion scenes are dissolved out. Worse still, the discussion scenes are oddly square, so that a curious feeling of distance arises between them and the subject proper of the film.

Thus the film's thesis *is* the film, very largely. Bland's view is that jazz is the cry of the Negro confronting the hazards and suffering of being a Negro in America; that jazz is now aesthetically dead; and that in a moral sense the Negro controls the destiny of America—for he poses to the whites their worst problem of conscience, which keeps them less than human. Like jazz itself, he says, the Negro can only become truly alive by the construction of a (vague) new America of the future.

One of the white girls in the discussion attacks this position as "black chauvinism." (The discussion, for all its bad acting, amateur photography, and square verbosity, is refreshing to anyone who has lived in Chicago and experienced the daily ration of race-thinking there.) The film's narrator-spokesman replies that it is black *Americanism*, and concludes the film with the point that the American soul is now a void; whites feel this, and attempt to borrow an immediate sense of values, of life, from Negroes—jazz, rock 'n' roll, and so on. If life in America is to be saved for anybody, thus, it is only with the Negro or *by* the Negro that it can be done.

This argument is put with some force, but it is verbal force. The visuals of the film are sometimes intriguing, but never take on the life of their own which we must demand of a film of this kind. Instead, they "illustrate" the argument—partly with shots of musicians, of which editor Howard Alk has made short lyrical passages; partly with shots of the appalling degradation of Negro life in Chicago—some made by that tempting but almost always unsuccessful device of the camera in a moving car. (Because of the incessant narrative, and to some extent also because of the photography, the editing does not do what ought to be done soon in a jazz film: contrive a *really* close interrelationship of image and music.)

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argument, in spite of their inherent anger and sadness, since they do not show the *emotional* hazards of being a Negro. True enough, hunger or dirt are hazards enough; but to convey their effects on the screen is an involved enterprise which this film wisely disclaims. Yet the human actions we lump as "discrimination" are not hard to portray; and they are at the root of the suffering that Bland is talking about. Nonetheless, on the screen we see none of this: in fact the film *shows* us Negroes and whites arguing heatedly but in friendship, while it *tells* us about the other things; the discussion even verges on an inversion of the usual discriminatory situation, for the whites protest (a little too much) that the Negroes are really just like them, instead of putting them down.

The film's musicological thesis, oversimple but intriguing, is that jazz springs—or sprang—from a conflict between freedom and restraint. Restraint arises from the forms and changes: the rules of the improvisatory game which cannot change without destroying the very possibility of improvising. (By *forms* is meant the tune with its patterns of bar-counts, repetitions, choruses; by *changes* is meant the harmonic and rhythmic underpinnings.) Freedom, on the other hand, arises out of melody, improvisation, elaboration, and swinging—reflecting the improvisatory joys the Negro is forced to rely upon generally.

After learning this, we cut to a contrasting set of shots of white life: trains, commuters, poodles, and in the background a soupy, unison-playing, phony-modern white band. Then we are back with the cockroaches and a small child in a slum apartment, and jazz as a cry of joy and suffering. Bland now treats us to a capsule history of jazz: New Orleans, swing, bebop, cool jazz (frowned on slightly, as perhaps an attempt to whiten jazz), and Le Sun Ra. To the ensuing question, *what now*? Bland's reply is *nothing now*: jazz is dead, has come to a standstill because all the possibilities inherent in its conflict between freedom and restraint have been explored. If the forms and changes were changed, the jazz spirit would be lost; if they are not changed, nothing new is possible.

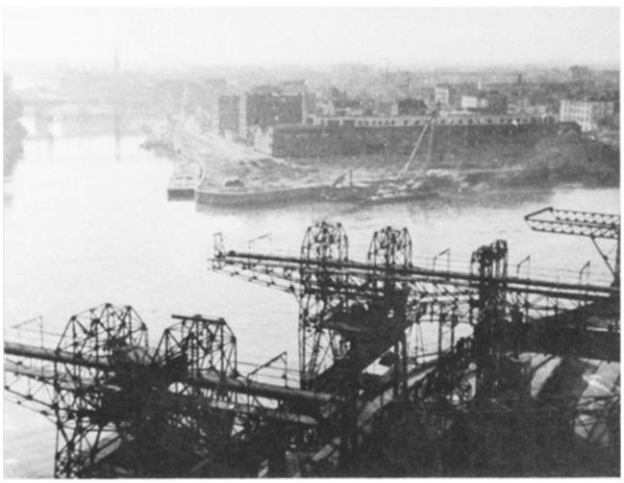
Now it is true that form in improvised jazz, or any kind of music, has limits imposed by the rhythmic patterns associated with time and by the harmonic structure. But in dealing with these matters, Bland the moralist and philosopher tends to overcome Bland the musician. A chord (cut to a close-up of a chord being struck on a keyboard) has limits: so many notes in such-and-such a pattern. A bass (cut to a string plucking a pattern) has limits. Now the limits of chords and swinging rhythm show themselves for the evil forces they are: the frustrations of the Negro jazz musician. And slowly the jazz of wailing sounds, independent yet swinging, full of pure soul, dies. The spirit of jazz remains, but the body of jazz as we knew it is dead.

Bland does not say, however, that on his terms jazz was doomed before it started. It was.

Music of any sort has melody, harmony, and rhythm. These qualities, of which rhythm is the most expendable, exist and are necessary to all styles of jazz that any of us has experienced. Jazz never had freedom; there is, strictly speaking, no freedom in music. (*Freedom*, a non-musical term, is ambiguous in any of its uses.) The musician is forever restrained, for instance, by the sound produced from his instrument, with its limits of timbre and range. But with these and other restraints all musicians learn to live—if they want to blow.

It is also necessary to examine the "political" attitude of *The Cry of Jazz*, since it raises the issue of the future of the Negro in this country. It seems evasive to pose this question as a moral one: 90 years of bad conscience on the part of whites have not had much effect, and future developments hinge on the degree to which the Negro himself can *enforce* his rights by making his political weight felt. In doing so he will become less "Negro" and more "American"—for worse or better. (The more successful this struggle, contrary to Bland's view, the weaker jazz is likely to become.) When legal and economic discriminations have been destroyed, and

only "social" ones remain, then problems of conscience will indeed be the major ones. But that day is still very far off; the organization and procedures needed to bring it closer have not yet been worked out or put into practice. It is instructive that the legalistic campaign of the N.A.A.C.P. in education is at a standstill—in fact may even have lost ground during the past year. The surge of sentiment around its internal debate on "self-defense" and a growing tendency toward direct neighborhood action in cases of Northern police brutality show that new ideas are beginning to be thought about, but no one yet knows the form they will take, any more than one can tell what line the next solo will take when a band is really blowing.



But in society as in personality growth, conscience is forced upon us; and the Negro must politically teach the new conscience to the whites. (The makers of *The Cry of Jazz* might well agree—though the film, being aimed necessarily mostly at white audiences, cannot say so.) In *The Cry of Jazz* we have a kind of prelude to this. It is in some ways an amateur film, but it is a brave one, an immensely significant one, and a film that everybody should look at with attention.

—Ernest Callenbach & Dominic Salvatore.

The Seine Meets Paris

Water and stone, the quais with their houses stained by the centuries; desolate, dusty suburbs that seem to rise nakedly from some old Carné film, or out of the sketches of his art director Alexandre Trauner; peaceful landscapes sliding by, busy docks far out from the city, heavy barges sinking deep into the water: somehow Ivens is suddenly near to Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante*, because like Vigo he seizes the different moods of the river and its banks.

Behind the poetry of his beautiful shots lies reality. And if some sequences make us think of impressionistic paintings, it is the bold stroke of a Van Gogh and the same human feeling for misery and struggle. The creator of *The Bridge* and *The New Earth* has not only shot this short film for a sort of peaceful recreation between work which he was asked to shoot or may shoot again like *The First Years* or *The Song of the Rivers*, where lyrical elements sometimes suddenly arise from political themes. Lyric emotion in the purest sense of its meaning is always attached to the reality Ivens seeks. And if we look closer, we find that the shots of the Seine film are by no means just arbitrarily strung together. Ivens, this born magician of editing, always knows why he places one shot or one sequence just at this spot and nowhere else: his feeling for rhythm and dynamism is never a formalist one, never forced by mere aesthetic considerations.

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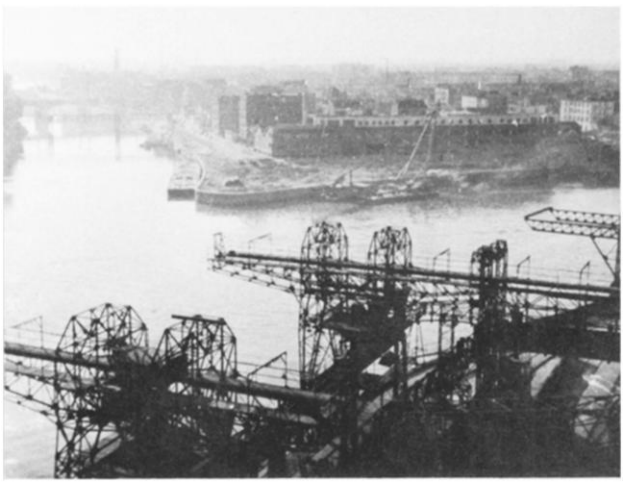

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like *Rain*? Ivens himself, when questioned, replies that he has never renounced shooting films which are combatant and humanitarian and that he thinks even his film about the life of the Seine is like this. Let us not put a label on films, as one does with insects in a collection.

The next film Ivens wants to make will be shot in the south of France, somewhere in Provence. It is going to be about the wind which animates this region, the famous mistral, sweeping vehemently over greyish-brown olive trees, dark cypresses, and flat roofs of white-and-pink houses under a hot sun. Again it is the changing of color which appeals to Ivens: the mistral transforms everything, bringing color along with it, restlessness, harvest, battle of clouds and winds; everything will be movement and shades and tinges succeeding each other.

"I have seen Arles," Ivens tells me, "ten minutes under the mistral, just like a Van Gogh picture with trees like green flames under the sun."

And again we shall meet people, get near their way of living, get under their skin—feel a country.—LOTTE H. EISNER

Book Reviews

The Image Industries, by William F. Lynch, S.J. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1959.)

This book is, so to speak, a double exposure. In the process of restating, with rare and admirable Christian charity, the shortcomings of the image industries (motion pictures and TV) it offers at the same time a somewhat bleak alternative.

It deplores the fact that the public imagination is today at the mercy of a monopoly. It contrasts the distorted and misleading fantasies of the world of the movies and TV with "reality." It criticizes the mass media for stirring emotions unworthy of our finer sensibilities. It regrets the shackling of the imagination to certain limited aspects of life—notably sex. It laments the sacrifice to a uniformity of subject matter of the enriching diversity to be found in regionalism. It makes a plea for the recognition of the mass media as popular arts in the true sense, questioning in this context the validity of the distinction between art and entertainment, between the intellectuals and the mass. Finally, it urges critics, artists, theologians, and the universities to recognize the seriousness of the situation and to bestir themselves, in concert, to do something to meet it, implying that there are men of good will within the image industries who would welcome such a move.

So far, very good. But what are the suggested remedies?

In the author's opinion the best chance lies in a close collaboration between the artist and the creative theologian. The latter, seemingly, is or should be a man not interested simply in wagging a warning finger at sinners, but rather one interested in life and all its positive activi-

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ties. However, the bringing together of artist and theologian in a state of creative harmony is apparently not an easy matter. The artist as artist tends to claim complete freedom from the restraints of morality. This dichotomy the author cannot accept, in spite of the weight of authorities like Maritain on the other side. He thus ignores the age-old distinction of Aristotle, the Thomists and neo-Thomists between Art and Prudence. Characteristically rejecting the metaphysical arguments for the more practical approach, the author refuses to accept the artist as artist. "The plain fact is that anything can become in us or for us a bestial force." Aware of this, the "religious mentality" really wants no part of the artist. Pursuing his *via media* in the interests of collaboration, the author chides this "religious mentality" in a passage the implications of which chill the marrow:

"The first necessity that the religious mentality on its part must face is that of removing from itself every exotic and nonhuman notion it has of the nature of art. If art is basically an exotic and nonhuman thing, if it is always potentially a beast that is beautiful but in danger of breaking out of its proper confines, then we already have a definition of it and a vocabulary about it which creates an almost insoluble problem so far as essential collaboration goes."

This, however, need not be. "Art when it is truly art is, in a sense, more truly moral than morality." However, when *is* it truly art? Supremely, it would appear, when the "Catholic Imagination" plays upon reality and gives us a truly life-size portrait of man, keeping, that is, to the proportions of reality "as God made them," eschewing fantasy and the "magnificent imagination," in freedom from fixation on sex.

"I like to think of the Catholic Imagination, to the degree that there is formally such a thing, as occupying a midway ground between two other imaginations, one of which loves to repress the strong reality of human feelings out of existence (being afraid to face them), the other of which has a secret passion for exalting these feelings to the level of monsterdom, the magnificent and the unmanageable. Both these forms of the imagination are forms of evasion. Naturally and for the moment, the Catholic Imagination has been strongly influenced by both, but historically and perennially it has always found itself on the side of that self-knowledge which believes that the human reality can be a successful and manageable home."

There seems to be some strange resemblance here between the ideas of processes of the Church and the U.S.S.R.—a sort of parallel between "socialist realism" and "Catholic realism."

Presumably, when it has ultimately thrown off the effects of the minimizing and the magnifying imaginations, the Catholic Imagination will set about its housekeeping—in a bleak house where passion is thermostatically controlled and the linen dirtied by the blood and grime of life will return from the laundromat snowy and cellophane-wrapped.

Further, are we to suppose that the Metro lion and the Pascal lamb will lie down together, tucked in the shelter of this home?

No. *Qui nimis probat nihil probat*—we must not throw the baby out with the bath-water. If I follow the author aright through the labyrinths of his odd style, his anxiety to be rid of the vulgarities of the cinema causes him to fail in his own way to distinguish, as do the image-makers in theirs, between size and dramatic intensity and between the excesses of the penny dreadful

and the grandeurs of poetry. I find it strange, too, that in view of his concern with fantasy and reality, he makes no mention of the realist drama on film. Or does he believe, with the image industrialists, that their product exhausts the uses of the camera?

As to the universities, a number are teaching film-making on the purely technical level, but others are teaching film-making and TV as part of a liberal arts education. Certainly in one of these, UCLA, the attempt is made to teach in a creative spirit, holding with Socrates (surely a part of the truly Catholic imagination) that "our greatest blessings come to us by way of madness . . . by a divinely wrought change in our customary social norms." There is no touch, here, of a post-Tridentine pallor over the imagination, but a desire to cope with that dynamic compound of the turbulent and the fabulous which is the heritage of the West, on-stage and off.

Despite the welcome efforts in this book, I am skeptical of any change in the image industries not dictated by the box office, where their treasure is. Meanwhile, in all the present greyness, an unexpected light shines. Perhaps the most constructive act in the world of the theater in many a decade was taken when Pope John XXIII announced that plays given in cathedrals were to be encouraged. The past indicates that this action may yet work a new revival in the theater of the West, with who knows what results for the image industries.—HUGH GRAY.

The Liveliest Art: A Panoramic History of the Movies, by Arthur Knight. (New York: Mentor—New American Library, 1959, 50c.)

A paperback edition of Arthur Knight's very serviceable general history. Certain areas of film-making get shorter shrift than they deserve (animated films and documentary, especially) but with Manvell's *Film* now out of print this is undoubtedly the best introductory volume on film available in an inexpensive form. It joins such other recent paperbacks as Eisenstein's *Film Form* and *The Film Sense* (Meridian) and Arnheim's *Film as Art* (California), and will reach a vastly greater audience.—E. C.

Cinema e Resistenza, by Giovanni Vento and Massimo Mida. (Florence: Luciano Landi, Editore, 1959.)

As Glauco Viazzi points out in introducing this book, the general spectator is ordinarily able to name only four or five films that deal with the Resistance; critics and professional historians may reach thirty. This book deals with 400 films representing 22 countries. The vastness of this total is explained by the authors' concept of the term *Resistance,* which they view as not merely the partisan war during the second world war, but any movement of rebellion against Nazism and Fascism. The title, thus, might well have been reworded as "The History of Resistance Through Motion Pictures," since we learn all about the historical and geographical presuppositions of the Resistance, its development and final victory but, in effect, very little about the films themselves.

The appeal of the organization, unfortunately, is utterly smothered by the political orientation of the authors, who cannot refrain from using over and over again phrases such as "the compact masses arouse," "the workmen at last awake," "social justice is finally achieved," "labor wins," and so on. After the first 50 pages one begins to fear, and the fear is confirmed, that there will be no aesthetic and artistic analysis to come. Aside from the accent on the direct relation between Resistance and Neorealism, and the consistency of its form with the content of its message, the authors make no other contribution to illuminate the cultural and artistic achievements of the films discussed. Their obvious source of ideology seems to be a sufficient support to their superficial statements. We are simply told that Neorealism is far better than any other style; it is not explained why.

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and the grandeurs of poetry. I find it strange, too, that in view of his concern with fantasy and reality, he makes no mention of the realist drama on film. Or does he believe, with the image industrialists, that their product exhausts the uses of the camera?

As to the universities, a number are teaching film-making on the purely technical level, but others are teaching film-making and TV as part of a liberal arts education. Certainly in one of these, UCLA, the attempt is made to teach in a creative spirit, holding with Socrates (surely a part of the truly Catholic imagination) that "our greatest blessings come to us by way of madness . . . by a divinely wrought change in our customary social norms." There is no touch, here, of a post-Tridentine pallor over the imagination, but a desire to cope with that dynamic compound of the turbulent and the fabulous which is the heritage of the West, on-stage and off.

Despite the welcome efforts in this book, I am skeptical of any change in the image industries not dictated by the box office, where their treasure is. Meanwhile, in all the present greyness, an unexpected light shines. Perhaps the most constructive act in the world of the theater in many a decade was taken when Pope John XXIII announced that plays given in cathedrals were to be encouraged. The past indicates that this action may yet work a new revival in the theater of the West, with who knows what results for the image industries.—HUGH GRAY.

The Liveliest Art: A Panoramic History of the Movies, by Arthur Knight. (New York: Mentor—New American Library, 1959, 50c.)

A paperback edition of Arthur Knight's very serviceable general history. Certain areas of film-making get shorter shrift than they deserve (animated films and documentary, especially) but with Manvell's *Film* now out of print this is undoubtedly the best introductory volume on film available in an inexpensive form. It joins such other recent paperbacks as Eisenstein's *Film Form* and *The Film Sense* (Meridian) and Arnheim's *Film as Art* (California), and will reach a vastly greater audience.—E. C.

Cinema e Resistenza, by Giovanni Vento and Massimo Mida. (Florence: Luciano Landi, Editore, 1959.)

As Glauco Viazzi points out in introducing this book, the general spectator is ordinarily able to name only four or five films that deal with the Resistance; critics and professional historians may reach thirty. This book deals with 400 films representing 22 countries. The vastness of this total is explained by the authors' concept of the term *Resistance,* which they view as not merely the partisan war during the second world war, but any movement of rebellion against Nazism and Fascism. The title, thus, might well have been reworded as "The History of Resistance Through Motion Pictures," since we learn all about the historical and geographical presuppositions of the Resistance, its development and final victory but, in effect, very little about the films themselves.

The appeal of the organization, unfortunately, is utterly smothered by the political orientation of the authors, who cannot refrain from using over and over again phrases such as "the compact masses arouse," "the workmen at last awake," "social justice is finally achieved," "labor wins," and so on. After the first 50 pages one begins to fear, and the fear is confirmed, that there will be no aesthetic and artistic analysis to come. Aside from the accent on the direct relation between Resistance and Neorealism, and the consistency of its form with the content of its message, the authors make no other contribution to illuminate the cultural and artistic achievements of the films discussed. Their obvious source of ideology seems to be a sufficient support to their superficial statements. We are simply told that Neorealism is far better than any other style; it is not explained why.

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Briefer Notices

The Autobiography of Cecil B. DeMille, edited by Donald Hayne. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1959. $5.95.)

Comédies et Commentaires, by René Clair. (Paris: Gallimard, 1959. 1,300 fr.) The scripts (in play form, without shooting directions) for *Le silence est d'or*, *La beaute du diable*, *Les belles-de-nuit*, *Les grandes manoeuvres*, and *Porte des lilas*. With a brief preface.

Film: An Anthology, edited by Daniel Talbot. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959. $8.50.) A fat anthology including many articles previously somewhat fugitive. To be reviewed in our next issue.

Fiches Filmographiques, by various authors. (Paris: Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques.) Text in French. These very detailed analyses of films are by students in the IDHEC. Recent numbers: 132, *Senso* (Visconti); 133, *High Noon* (Zinnemann); 134, *Ordet* (Dreyer); 135, *Il Sceicco Bianco* (Fellini); 136, *The Girl in Black* (Cacoyannis); 137, *L'Arc en Ciel* (Donskoi); 138, *L'Assassin Habite au 21* (Clouzot); 139, *Cela S'Appelle L'Aurore* (Buñuel); 145, *Rashomon* (Kurosawa); 146, *Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé* (Bresson); 147, *Othello* (Youtkevitch); 148, *La Traversée de Paris* (Autant-Lara); 149, *A Face in the Crowd* (Kazan).

Motion Picture Encyclopedia, by James R. Cameron and Joseph F. Cifre. (Coral Gables, Florida: Cameron Publishing Co., 1959. $1.00.)

Notes of a Film Director, by Sergei Eisenstein. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1959.) Printed in U.S.S.R., bound in England. Contains various essays in translations by X. Danko, including some previously translated by other hands. CONTENTS: ABOUT MYSELF AND MY FILMS: How I Became a Film Director; The Twelve Apostles; Alexander Nevsky; True Ways of Invention (*Alexander Nevsky*). PROBLEMS OF FILM DIRECTION: Organic Unity and Pathos in the Composition of Potemkin; Montage in 1938; "An American Tragedy"; A Few Thoughts About Soviet Comedy; Wolves and Sheep (Directors and Actors); Not Coloured, but in Colour; Colour Film; Stereoscopic Films. PORTRAITS OF ARTISTS: The Greatest Creative Honesty; The Birth of an Artist; Twenty-five and Fifteen [Tisse]; P-R-K-F-V; The Telephone Betrays; Charlie the Kid; Hello, Charlie!; *The Dictator*. ALWAYS FORWARD: (By Way of an Epilogue). With 28 pp. of drawings by Eisenstein, a large part of them for *Nevsky* and *Ivan*.

Principles of Cinematography, by Lester J. Wheeler. (New York: Macmillan, 1959. $12.75.)

The Slide Area, by Gavin Lambert. (New York: Viking, 1959. $3.50.) A collection of short stories about people in and around the film industry. "The Closed Set" deals entirely with film people; the others are laid in or around Hollywood and Santa Monica.

TV and Film Production Data Book, by Ernest M. Pittaro. (New York: Morgan & Morgan, Inc., 1959. $6.95.) Describes equipment now available and tells how to operate it: an eminently useful guide for anyone engaged in film work aiming at professional standards of technical quality. Contains illustrations of cameras and some other items; many tables.

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