FILM QUARTERLY

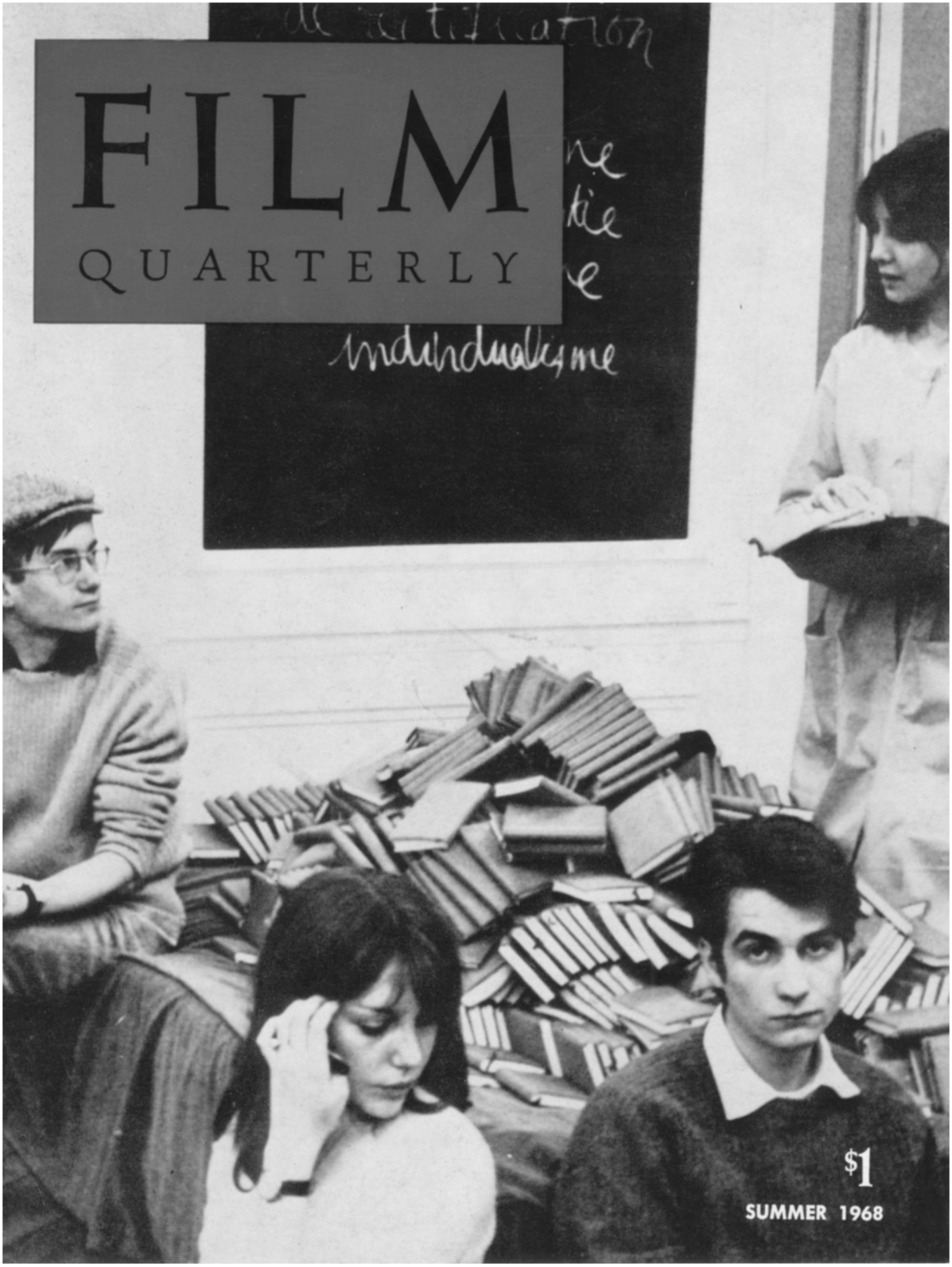
INDEX TO VOLUME XXI

Titles of films and books reviewed appear in *italics*. First reference number indicates volume number; second indicates issue number; third indicates page. Major topics are also indexed.

Adaptation as Art, the Films of Sidney Lumet. 21:2:9
Aldrich, Robert. 21:2:39
Arkadin. 21:1:14
Ashes and the Diamond. 21:1:29
Balshofer, Fred J. 21:3:50
Banacki, Raymond. *Caprice*. 21:1:58
———. *Fire Creek*. 21:4:58
———. *The Fox*. 21:3:58
———. *Games*. 21:2:61
———. *More Than a Miracle*. 21:3:59
———. *The Tiger and the Pussycat*. 21:2:64
Barrier, The. 21:1:31
Barsness, John A. A Question of Standard. 21:1:32
Bates, Dan. *The Mummy's Shroud*. 21:2:63
———. *Point Blank*. 21:2:63
———. *The Producers*. 21:4:59
Battcock, Gregory. *The New American Cinema: A Critical Anthology*. 21:4:57
Battle of Algiers, The. 21:2:27
Bed, The. 21:4:52
Bedazzled. 21:3:56
Belson, Jordan. 21:3:48
Benton, Robert. 21:4:2
Bergman, Ingmar. 21:4:33
Between Theater and Life: Jean Renoir and *Rules of the Game*. 21:2:2
Body and Soul. 21:3:56
Bogdanovich, Peter. 21:4:61
Bonnie and Clyde. 21:2:41, 21:4:2ff
Boorman, John. 21:4:2
Braudy, Leo. Hitchcock, Truffaut, and the Irresponsible Audience. 21:4:21
Brewer, Terry. *Kops and Custards*. 21:4:57
Bride of Frankenstein. 21:3:53
Brooks, Richard. 21:1:49
Broughton, James. 21:4:52
Callenbach, Ernest. Editor's Notebook. See each issue
———. *The Bed*. 21:4:52
———. *The Chelsea Girls*. 21:2:60
———. *Dutchman*. 21:3:57
———. *Elvira Madigan*. 21:4:48
———. *The Endless Summer*. 21:1:59
———. *Film Makers on Film Making*. 21:3:55
———. *The Films of Laurel and Hardy*. 21:2:59
———. *Funnyman*. 21:2:48
———. *Home for Life*. 21:2:52
———. *Interviews with Film Directors*. 21:3:54
———. *An Introduction to the American Underground Film*. 21:2:59
———. *King of Hearts*. 21:2:62
———. *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*. 21:4:54
———. *Mahanagar*. 21:3:46
———. *Phenomena*. 21:3:48
———. *Phyllis and Terry*. 21:2:52
———. *Private Screenings*. 21:2:57
———. *Samadhi*. 21:3:48
———. *The Secret War of Harry Frigg*. 21:4:60
———. *Spellbound in Darkness*. 21:1:64
———. *Vive Langlois*. 21:3:1
———. *Warrendale*. 21:2:52
Callenbach, Ernest and Albert Johnson. The Danger Is Seduction: An Interview with Haskell Wexler. 21:3:3
Camelot. 21:3:56
Caprice. 21:1:58
Carabiniers, Les. 21:2:27
Casino Royale. 21:1:14
Cataloguing and Classification of Cinema Literature, The. 21:4:57
Changas, Estelle. *The Graduate*. 21:3:37
———. *Our Mother's House*. 21:3:60
Charlie Bubbles. 21:4:57
Charulata. 21:1:42
Chelsea Girls, The. 21:2:60
Chien tu Hau. 21:3:57
Chinoise, La. 21:4:14
Chytilova, Vera. 21:3:35
Cinémathèque Française. 21:3:1
Citizen Kane. 21:1:14
Clouzot, Claire. *Daisies*. 21:3:35
———. *I, A Man*. 21:4:58
———. *Loves of a Blonde*. 21:1:47
———. *The Queen*. 21:4:58
Coach Ride to Vienna. 21:2:22
Competitive Cinema, A. 21:1:62
Conrad, Randall [tr.]. 21:2:2
Corliss, Richard. *Hour of the Wolf*. 21:4:33
———. *How I Won the War*. 21:2:35
Cowie, Peter. *A Competitive Cinema*. 21:1:62
———. *Films: A Report on the Supply of Films for Exhibition in Cinema*. 21:1:62
Cramer, Alex. *Made in Italy*. 21:2:62
Czechoslovak Films. 21:2:18
Daisies. 21:2:20, 21:3:35
Dale, R. C. *An Illustrated History of the Horror Film*. 21:3:52
Daly, Tom. 21:1:9
Danger is Seduction, The: An Interview with Haskell Wexler. 21:3:3
Darling. 21:1:41
Deadly Affair, The. 21:2:10
Dear John. 21:1:37
Decadent Influence, The. 21:1:60
Demoiselles de Rochefort, Les. 21:4:45
Deux ou Trois Choses Que Je Sais d'Elle. 21:4:14
Dialectique. 21:3:30
Dirty Dozen, The. 21:1:58, 21:2:36
Disney Version, The. 21:4:57
Donen, Stanley. 21:1:38, 41
Doctor Faustus. 21:3:56
Documentary. 21:3:25
Dorado, El. 21:1:58
Durgnat, Raymond. *Buñuel*. 21:4:56
———. *Eros in the Cinema*. 21:1:64
Dutchman. 21:3:57
Ecstasy. 21:2:21
Edge, The. 21:2:57
Elvira Madigan. 21:4:48
Empty Canvas, The. 21:1:59
Endless Summer, The. 21:1:59
Eros in the Cinema. 21:1:64
Expo 67: A Multiple Vision. 21:1:2
Eisenstein, S. M. 21:3:15
Elsa. 21:3:28
Enter Laughing. 21:3:57
Erlebnisse der Puppe. 21:3:34
Evans, Mary. *Chien tu Hau*. 21:3:57
Every Young Man. 21:2:26
Face Junk. 21:2:60
Fade In. 21:3:58
Fail Safe. 21:2:13
Falstaff. 21:1:13
Family Way, The. 21:1:59
Far from the Madding Crowd. 21:2:61
Far from Vietnam. 21:2:27
Farber, Stephen. *Charlie Bubbles*. 21:4:57
———. *The Dirty Dozen*. 21:2:36
———. *El Dorado*. 21:1:58
———. *Enter Laughing*. 21:3:57
———. *Face Junk*. 21:2:60
———. *Fade In*. 21:3:58
———. *The Family Way*. 21:1:59
———. *The Graduate*. 21:3:37
———. *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush*. 21:4:58
———. *Hombre*. 21:1:49
———. *The Honey Pot*. 21:1:60
———. *The Love-ins*. 21:1:61
———. *Planet of the Apes*. 21:4:59
———. *Sebastian*. 21:3:61
———. *Taming of the Shrew*. 21:1:61
———. *Targets*. 21:4:60
———. *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. 21:1:61
———. *To Sir, With Love*. 21:2:50
———. *Two for the Road*. 21:1:37
———. *Up the Down Staircase*. 21:2:50
———. *La Vie de Chateau*. 21:3:62
———. *Wait until Dark*. 21:3:63
———. *Waterhole*. 21:3:63
———. *Welcome to Hard Times*. 21:1:49
———. The Writer in American Films. 21:4:2
———. *You Only Live Twice*. 21:1:62
Feast and the Guest, The. 21:2:20
Fellini. 21:4:56
Fellini's Voices. 21:3:21
Fille et des Fusils, Une. 21:1:60
Film Makers on Film Making. 21:3:55
Films of Laurel and Hardy. 21:2:59
Films: A Report on the Supply of Films for Exhibition in Cinemas. 21:1:62
Films of Sidney Lumet, The: Adaptation as Art. 21:2:9
Finler, Joel. *Stroheim*. 21:4:56
Fire Creek. 21:4:57
Forman, Milos. 21:1:47
Fox, The. 21:3:58
Frankenstein. 21:3:53
French Cinema Since 1946. Volume One: The Great Tradition. 21:1:64
Fugitive Kind, The. 21:2:10
Funnyman. 21:2:48
Game Is Over, The. 21:1:60
Games. 21:2:61
Girard, René. 21:4:44
Giulietta degli Spiriti. 21:3:21
Godard, Jean-Luc. 21:2:29, 21:4:14
Golden Rennet, The. 21:2:23
Graduate, The. 21:3:37
Grand Illusion. 21:2:6
Great Train Robbery, The. 21:1:32
Group, The. 21:2:17
Guess Who's Coming to Dinner. 21:4:58
Gunfighter, The. 21:1:49
Half Century with Cotton, A. 21:3:4
Hands Up. 21:1:31
Heat of the Night, In the. 21:3:6
Henry IV. 21:1:18
Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush. 21:4:59
High Noon. 21:1:33
Hitchcock, Truffaut, and the Irresponsible Audience. 21:4:21
Hombre. 21:1:49
Home for Life. 21:2:52
Honey Pot, The. 21:1:60
Hoops, Jonathan. *Hour of the Wolf*. 21:4:33
Hour of the Wolf. 21:4:33
How I Won the War. 21:2:27, 33, 35
Hud. 21:1:52
Hunt, Dennis. *Dirty Dozen*. 21:1:58
———. *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. 21:4:58
———. *In the Heat of the Night*. 21:2:61
———. *Inside North Vietnam*. 21:3:58
———. *President's Analyst*. 21:3:60
I, A Man. 21:4:58

Illustrated History of the Horror Film, An. 21:3:52
In the Heat of the Night. 21:2:61
Innocent Sorcerers, The. 21:1:29
Inside North Vietnam. 21:3:58
Interviews with Film Directors. 21:3:54
Intimate Lightning. 21:2:26
Introduction to the American Underground Film, An. 21:2:59
Johnson, Albert. *Body and Soul.* 21:3:56
———. *Bonnie and Clyde.* 21:2:41
———. *Kokon.* 21:2:62
———. *Mickey One.* 21:2:41
———. *A Sunday on the Island of Grand Jatte.* 21:2:63
———. *This Time the World.* 21:3:61
———. *The Young Girls of Rochefort.* 21:4:45
Johnson, Albert and Ernest Callenbach. The Danger is Seduction: An Interview with Haskell Wexler. 21:3:3
Johnson, William. *Bedazzled.* 21:3:56
———. *Camelot.* 21:3:56
———. *Doctor Faustus.* 21:3:56
———. *Far from Vietnam.* 21:2:31
———. *How I Won the War.* 21:3:33
———. Orson Welles: Of Time and Loss. 21:1:13
Jokers, The. 21:1:61
Journey into Fear. 21:1:13
Joly, Jacques. Between Theater and Life: Jean Renoir and *Rules of the Game.* 21:2:2
Kael, Pauline. 21:4:54, 57
Kagan, Norman. *Live for Life.* 21:3:59
Kaleidoscope. 21:1:2
Kanal. 21:1:29
Kelly, Terrence. *A Competitive Cinema.* 21:1:62
Kenner, Hugh. *One Reel a Week.* 21:3:50
Kernan, Margot S. *Far from the Madding Crowd.* 21:2:61
———. *Une Fille at des Fusils.* 21:1:60
———. *The Jokers.* 21:1:61
———. *Love Affair.* 21:3:41
———. *Reflections in a Golden Eye.* 21:2:63
King of Hearts. 21:2:62
Kiss Kiss Bang Bang. 21:4:54
Knife in the Water. 21:1:27
Kokon. 21:2:62
Kops and Custards. 21:4:57
Korty, John. 21:2:49
Kozloff, Max. *Battle of Algiers.* 21:2:27
———. *Les Carabiniers.* 21:2:29
———. *Far from Vietnam.* 21:2:30
Kroitor, Roman. 21:1:9
Labyrinth. 21:1:2
Lady from Shanghai. 21:1:13
Lahue, Kalton C. *Kops and Custards.* 21:4:57
Landscape of Contemporary Cinema. 21:2:59
Last Year at Marienbad. 21:1:39
Laurel and Hardy. 21:2:59
Lee, Owen, *Ten* [poem]. 21:4:13
Left Handed Gun, The. 21:1:49
Lester, Richard. 21:2:33, 35
Leyda, Jay. A Note on Progress. 21:4:28
Line of Apogee. 21:3:34
Live for Life. 21:3:59
Long Day's Journey Into Night. 21:2:10
Losey on Losey. 21:4:57
Love Affair. 21:3:41
Love-Ins, The. 21:1:61
Loves of a Blonde. 21:1:47
Low Water. 21:3:26
Lumet, Sidney. 21:2:9
MacBean, James Roy. Politics and Poetry in Two Recent Films by Godard. 21:4:14
Machaty, Gustav. 21:2:21
Made in Italy. 21:2:62
Magician, The. 21:4:34
Magnificent Ambersons. 21:1:15
Mahanagar. 21:1:44, 21:3:46
Makavejec, Dusan. 21:3:42
Maltese Falcon, The. 21:1:52
Man and the Movies. 21:4:57
Man and the Polar Region. 21:1:2
Marseillaise, La. 21:2:6
Martin, James Michael. *The Empty Canvas.* 21:1:59
———. *French Cinema Since 1946. Volume One: The Great Tradition.* 21:1:64
———. *The Game Is Over.* 21:1:60
———. *Point Blank.* 21:4:40
———. *The Sleeping Car Murder.* 21:3:44
Marton, Patricia. Nothing New at Knokke II. 21:3:32
Martyrs of Love, The. 21:2:24
Masquage. 21:3:15
Méliès, Georges. 21:4:29
Mickey One. 21:2:41
Miller, Arthur C. 21:3:50
Misfits, The. 21:1:33
Monopolies Commission, The. *Films: A Report on the Supply of Films for Exhibition in Cinemas.* 21:1:62
More Than a Miracle. 21:3:59
Motion Pictures from the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection, 1894–1912. 21:1:1, 21:4:29
Multiscreen films. 21:3:15
Mummy's Shroud, The. 21:2:63
Muriel. 21:1:39
Neville, Tove. *Once There Was a War.* 21:2:55
New American Cinema, The. 21:4:57
New Periodicals. See Editor's Notebook, each issue.
Newman, David. 21:4:2
Niver, Kemp R. 21:1:1, 21:4:29
Note on Progress, A. 21:4:28
Nothing New at Knokke II. 21:3:32
Now That the Buffalo's Gone. 21:3:49
Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey. *Visconti.* 21:4:57
On the Waterfront. 21:1:52
Once There Was a War. 21:2:55
One Man's Truth . . . Another Man's Poison. 21:3:25
One Reel a Week. 21:3:50, 21:4:31
Othello. 21:1:19
Our Mother's House. 21:3:60
Oxenhandler, Neal. *The Stranger.* 21:4:43
Pawnbroker, The. 21:2:10
Penn, Arthur. 21:4:2
Persona. 21:4:33
Peter and Pavla. 21:1:47
Petrie, Graham. The Films of Sidney Lumet: Adaptation as Art. 21:2:9
Phenomena. 21:3:48
Phyllis and Terry. 21:2:52
Place to Stand, A. 21:3:15
Planet of the Apes. 21:4:59
Point Blank. 21:2:63, 21:4:3, 40
Polanski, Roman. 21:1:27
Politics and Poetry in Two Recent Films by Godard. 21:4:14
President's Analyst, The. 21:3:60
Private Screenings. 21:2:57
Producers, The. 21:4:59
Professionals, The. 21:1:49
Psycho. 21:4:24
Queen, The. 21:4:58
Question of Standard, A. 21:1:32
Question Marks on the New Czechoslovak Cinema. 21:2:18
Raphael, Frederic. 21:1:39, 41
Ray, Satyajit. 21:1:43
Red River. 21:1:33
Reflections in a Golden Eye, 21:2:63
Renan, Sheldon. *An Introduction to the American Underground Film.* 21:2:59
Renoir, Jean. 21:2:2
Resnais, Alain. 21:2:32
Ride the High Country. 21:1:49
Robinson, W. R. *Man and the Movies.* 21:4:57
Roud, Richard. *Godard.* 21:4:57
Routt, William D. One Man's Truth . . . Another Man's Poison. 21:3:25
Rules of the Game. 21:2:2
Rysopsis—Identification Marks None. 21:1:29
Samadhi. 21:3:48
Sarris, Andrew. 21:3:54, 21:4:3
Sartre, Jean-Paul. 21:4:45
Schickel, Richard. *The Disney Version.* 21:4:57
Sebastian. 21:3:61
Secret War of Harry Frigg, The. 21:4:60
Seu Do Nim. *The Trip.* 21:2:64
Shatnoff, Judith. Expo '67: A Multiple Vision. 21:1:2
Siegler, Robert. *Masquage.* 21:3:15
Skolimowski, Jerzy: Portrait of a Debutant Director. 21:1:25
Sleeping Car Murder, The. 21:3:44
Snow, Michael. 21:4:50
Solmi, Angelo. *Fellini.* 21:4:56
Spellbound in Darkness. 21:1:64
Spy Who Came in from the Cold, The. 21:1:55
Stagecoach. 21:1:33
Steele, Robert. *The Cataloguing and Classification of Cinema Literature.* 21:4:57
Sternberg, Joseph Von. 21:4:57
Stranger, The. 21:4:43
Streetcar Named Desire. 21:1:52
Stroheim. 21:4:56
Sunday on the Island of Grand Jatte. 21:2:63
Tagore. 21:1:44, 45
Taming of the Shrew, The. 21:1:61
Targets. 21:4:61
Technique of the Motion Picture Camera, The. 21:2:60
Third Man, The. 21:1:14
This Time the World. 21:3:61
Thoroughly Modern Millie. 21:1:61
Tiger and the Pussycat, The. 21:2:64
Time to Play, A. 21:1:4
Titticut Follies. 21:2:55, 21:3:8
To Be a Crook. 21:1:60
To Be Alive. 21:1:6
To Sir, With Love. 21:2:50
Toeplitz, Krzysztof-Teodor. Jerzy Skolimowski: Portrait of a Debutant Director. 21:1:25
Touch of Evil. 21:1:13
Trial, The. 21:1:13
Trip, The. 21:2:64
Truffaut, François. 21:4:21
Twelve Angry Men. 21:2:10
Two for the Road. 21:1:37
2 or 3 Things I know About Her. 21:4:14
Umbrellas of Cherbourg, The. 21:4:45
Up the Down Staircase. 21:2:50
Vie de Chateau, La. 21:3:62
View from the Bridge, A. 21:2:10
Virginian, The. 21:1:32
Visconti. 21:4:43, 56
Vive Langlois. 21:3:1
Von Sternberg, Joseph. 21:4:57
Wait Until Dark. 21:3:63
Walkover. 21:1:30
War films. 21:2:27
War Game, The. 21:1:45
Warhol, Andy. 21:2:60, 21:4:58
Warrendale. 21:2:52
Waterhole #3. 21:3:63
Wavelength. 21:4:50
We Are Young! 21:1:3
Weinberg, Herman G. *Joseph von Sternberg.* 21:4:57
Welcome to Hard Times. 21:1:49
Welles, Orson: Of Time and Loss. 21:1:13
Westerns. 21:1:32
Wexler, Haskell. 21:3:3
Whitehall, Richard. *Now that the Buffalo's Gone.* 21:3:49
Widerberg, Bo. 21:4:48
Williams, Forrest. *Fellini's Voices.* 21:3:21
Writer in American Films, The. 21:4:2
Yalkut, Jud. *Wavelength.* 21:4:50
You Only Live Twice. 21:1:62
Young Girls of Rochefort, The. 21:4:45
Young, Kristin. *The War Game.* 21:1:45
Zalman, Jan. Question Marks on the New Czechoslovak Cinema. 21:2:18

FILM QUARTERLY



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SUMMER 1968

VOL. XXI, No. 4 Summer 1968

ARTICLES

The Writer in American Films — STEPHEN FARBER 2

Politics and Poetry in Two Recent Films by Godard — JAMES ROY MACBEAN 14

Hitchcock, Truffaut, and the Irresponsible Audience — LEO BRAUDY 21

A Note on Progress — JAY LEYDA 28

FEATURES

Hour of the Wolf — RICHARD CORLISS and JONATHAN HOOPS 33

Point Blank — JAMES MICHAEL MARTIN 40

The Stranger — NEAL OXENHANDLER 43

The Young Girls of Rochefort — ALBERT JOHNSON 45

Elvira Madigan — ERNEST CALLENBACH 48

SHORT FILMS

Wavelength — JUD YALKUT 50

The Bed — ERNEST CALLENBACH 52

BOOKS

Kiss Kiss Bang Bang — ERNEST CALLENBACH 54

Movie Editions 54

Cinema One Series 55

Charlie Chaplin 55

Other Listings 56

SHORT NOTICES 57

Cover: From Jean-Luc Godard's *La Chinoise.*

Editor's Notebook

NEW PERIODICALS

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Film-Makers' Newsletter is published by the Film-Makers' Cinémathèque, 175 Lexington Avenue, New York 10016; $2.00 per year ($3.00 abroad). Although still a bit thin in contents, it is the east coast counterpart of the *Canyon Cinema News*: news of festivals and other events, letters, general information.

The controversial British magazine *Movie* has returned as a quarterly—$4.00 for four issues; 21 Ivor Place, London N.W.1. New issue contains an interview with Don Siegel, features on the forthcoming *I Love You Love* and *Targets,* articles on *Persona, Belle de Jour, Reflections in a Golden Eye, Far from Vietnam;* also production reports from various film capitals. An exciting journal that provides an alternate perspective to *Sight & Sound*'s.

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VOL. XXI, No. 4 Summer 1968

ARTICLES

The Writer in American Films — STEPHEN FARBER 2

Politics and Poetry in Two Recent Films by Godard — JAMES ROY MACBEAN 14

Hitchcock, Truffaut, and the Irresponsible Audience — LEO BRAUDY 21

A Note on Progress — JAY LEYDA 28

FEATURES

Hour of the Wolf — RICHARD CORLISS and JONATHAN HOOPS 33

Point Blank — JAMES MICHAEL MARTIN 40

The Stranger — NEAL OXENHANDLER 43

The Young Girls of Rochefort — ALBERT JOHNSON 45

Elvira Madigan — ERNEST CALLENBACH 48

SHORT FILMS

Wavelength — JUD YALKUT 50

The Bed — ERNEST CALLENBACH 52

BOOKS

Kiss Kiss Bang Bang — ERNEST CALLENBACH 54

Movie Editions 54

Cinema One Series 55

Charlie Chaplin 55

Other Listings 56

SHORT NOTICES 57

Cover: From Jean-Luc Godard's *La Chinoise.*

Editor's Notebook

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The controversial British magazine *Movie* has returned as a quarterly—$4.00 for four issues; 21 Ivor Place, London N.W.1. New issue contains an interview with Don Siegel, features on the forthcoming *I Love You Love* and *Targets,* articles on *Persona, Belle de Jour, Reflections in a Golden Eye, Far from Vietnam;* also production reports from various film capitals. An exciting journal that provides an alternate perspective to *Sight & Sound*'s.

CONTRIBUTORS

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STEPHEN FARBER

The Writer in American Films

In a recent survey of moviegoing habits by the Motion Picture Association of America, the main conclusions were not very surprising: most American moviegoers are under thirty, and most of them are well educated. The research only verified what movie producers had learned anyway; tried on contemporary audiences, the old surefire commercial principles—Doris Day, best-selling properties, uplift—are likely to backfire. Offbeat material, without star appeal—*Bonnie and Clyde, The Graduate, 2001: A Space Odyssey*—has been tremendously successful. The studios are busier than they have been in years, and are taking chances, sometimes, on films they would not have considered a few years back. In addition, thanks chiefly to *Bonnie and Clyde,* critics are taking American films seriously again. It would seem to be a good time —in all respects—for Hollywood.

What encourages me in all of this is that some interesting original screenplays are being done, more than at any time in recent years. There were, I think, two really extraordinary original scripts for American films this past year —David Newman's and Robert Benton's for *Bonnie and Clyde,* and Frederic Raphael's for *Two for the Road.* There were several others that, although much less successful, showed flashes of talent and impudence—Norman Lear's for *Divorce American Style* (destroyed by the cloying presence of Debbie Reynolds and Dick van Dyke, but with moments of truly black comedy), Joseph Steck's for *Waterhole #3* (a film that was very well liked by college students, but ignored by most everyone else), Theodore Flicker's for *The President's Analyst,* Tom Gries's for *Will Penny,* William Norton's for *The Scalphunters.* And studios really *want* original material. William Goldman sold his original, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (about a gang of late-nineteenth-century Western bandits—forerunners, apparently, of the Barrows—who continued robbing trains as far as Brazil) for a record $400,000; and although it has not even been cast yet, movie people around Hollywood are buzzing about it as excitedly as literary people buzzed about *Myra Breckenridge* before its publication. Benton and Newman have completed another original that is to begin shooting this summer. Writers like Gries, Flicker, Francis Ford Coppola, Peter Bogdanovich, Elaine May are getting a chance to direct their own scripts without spending years politicking.

The enthusiasm of the studios toward original material is important, because there is virtually no way for a talented young person to break into American films except through writing. The unions are too powerful and restrictive for anyone without connections to land a job as a photographer or an editor. Film directors still do work their way up from television, but the results haven't been encouraging lately. Filmmakers who enter the field through writing have not had to direct 24 segments of *I Spy* for deodorant manufacturers. So it may be an unexpected boon that most channels into moviemaking are closed. The writer, developing a project he cares about, then going on to direct, or at least working closely with individual directors, may find a way, at last, of developing something remotely like personal cinema in America.

At MGM in 1938 writers averaged seven per script. As Ben Hecht joked in his autobiography, "Movies were seldom written. They were yelled into existence in conferences that kept going in saloons, brothels and all-night poker games." Writers did not work on a script they wanted to see filmed, they were hired by stu-

dios to adapt other men's novels, plays, ideas, or hack at other men's scripts; they worked at their writing under the noses of producers, more like advertising copy-writers than artists in any other medium. Hecht summarized the Hollywood experience for talented writers: "My chief memory of movieland is one of asking in the producer's office why I must change the script, eviscerate it, cripple and hamstring it? Why must I strip the hero of his few semi-intelligent remarks and why must I tack on a corny ending that makes the stomach shudder? Half of all the movie writers argue in this fashion. The other half writhe in silence, and the psychoanalyst's couch or the liquor bottle claim them both." Writers were treated without respect, and they accordingly had little respect for the work they did. Hecht's contempt for movie Owners was matched only by his contempt for the medium: "A movie is basically so trite and glib that the addition of a half dozen miserable inanities does not cripple it. It blares along barking out its inevitable clichés, and only its writer can know that it is a shade worse than it had to be."

It is no surprise, then, that the director has become the hero of the films of this period. One of the principles of Andrew Sarris's *auteur* criticism in 1962 was that "Interior meaning is extrapolated from the tension between a director's personality and his material." Sarris was attacked for this remark, but he was simply describing a fact about the majority of American movies until very recently. The only sign of vitality in our movies for decades has indeed been the occasional trace of a director struggling to give trash some style; this struggle has often been the only evidence of concern, of passion, of imagination. And every once in a while directors were able to sneak disturbing, unconventional elements into hack material—as Hawks did in *The Big Sleep,* or Aldrich in *Kiss Me Deadly.* But to say that this kind of subversion—this tension between director and material—can make for a more exciting film than a Stanley Kramer essay is not to say very much. The fact that American film history is largely a matter of distinguishing good bad movies from terrible ones may be, at least in part, the result of the devaluation of writers.

The main problem in American films is still with material. Except for *Bonnie and Clyde* and maybe *In Cold Blood,* the good American films of the last several months have all suffered from script problems. On the one hand there are, as always, talented directors struggling to make something of a weak script—John Boorman in *Point Blank,* Franklin Schaffner in *Planet of the Apes;* on the other hand there are scripts with real possibilities, like Lewis John Carlino's and Howard Koch's for *The Fox,* John Gay's for *No Way to Treat a Lady,* undermined unwittingly because the directors could not cast the material in effective visual terms. The opportunities for writers are promising right now, but there is still a scarcity of talent.

But this much is common knowledge. I decided that I needed to know more about exactly how films were written, how writers worked with directors, how they felt about their work. First I wanted to get one director's impressions about writers in Hollywood today; and since I feel that *Point Blank* is, with *Bonnie and Clyde,* the most striking American film of 1967, and since John Boorman is new to Hollywood, I was interested to know more about how he tried to deal with the problems in his script. *Point Blank* seemed to me, from the start, a classical example of the kind of film that *auteur* critics would respond to—an unusually provocative result of tension between director and material. (Andrew Sarris was, anyway, consistent—he put *Point Blank* right behind *El Dorado* on his list of the year's best films.) I suspected that the film had begun as a straightforward gangster movie that Boorman had seen possibilities in; and without being able to escape the frame of the original story, he had tried, with tremendous visual energy and style, to turn it into a stylized portrait of a nightmarishly distorted Los Angeles. It wasn't well received, because most critics, especially those not used to the peculiar kind of deciphering necessary in American films, saw it only as a pretentious gangster

Boorman's HAVING A WILD WEEKEND

movie. The film has gradually been developing a reputation, and something that almost no one remarked at first has begun to be appreciated—*Point Blank*'s bizarre blend of violence and comedy. There was visual comedy—a fancy new convertible smashed to death beneath the freeways, a string of credit cards draped over the dead body of a syndicate boss; and there was sardonic detail in the dialogue too—in the unctuous language of a car salesman, in casually overheard burblings of guests at a business meeting, in a criminal's concern about his swimming pool and his crabgrass. I wondered how those satiric touches, and the expressionistic treatment of the sinister, omnipresent Los Angeles Organization had crept into a creaky story about a man trying to revenge himself on a treacherous friend and collect money owed him by the syndicate. In watching the film I could almost feel the intensity of Boorman's effort to "lick" the material. His American film debut is the most brilliant I can remember (he began doing television work in England, and his first feature, *Catch Us If You Can*—called *Having a Wild Weekend* here—has a following among the few people who were able to see it), but *Point Blank* has rather the effect of reading fine poetry in the Sunday supplement or the *Reader's Digest*; there is a certain shock in the juxtaposition, but ultimately it is unsatisfying. In spite of the undigested gangster clichés, though, the film freezes the deathlike look of the streamlined modern city, and, through its unsettling blend of satire and brutality, the link between antiseptic glitter and destruction in our society.

It illuminates the American city, in the language of dream, not social document.

Boorman's problems on *Point Blank* seem to me to crystallize the difficulties of a talented director working on hack material. This interview is directed, mainly, to questions about scripts, and it is not intended as exhaustive discussion of *Point Blank* or of Boorman's career.

How did you get involved in Point Blank?

Well, Lee Marvin was in London doing *The Dirty Dozen*, and the producer, Judd Bernard—I'd met him earlier—came over to London with this script, which was written by David and Rafe Newhouse. It was deliberately written as a sort of old-fashioned, throwback gangster picture. I committed to do the film because I wanted to do a film with Marvin; I admired him tremendously. I thought there was an idea there, which appealed to me very strongly and appealed to him very strongly, so we decided to do it.

What was the novel like?

The novel was called *The Hunter* by Richard Stark. I never read the novel, because I could never find a copy of it. I struggled with the script and finally had the idea of having this sort of mythical figure Yost, who goes through the thing and turns out to be the boss of the syndicate. This was in the book, and the writers had taken it out, and I put it back without realizing that it had originally been there. We rewrote the script completely—Alex Jacobs and I. The only problem was we didn't really have enough time. Once we started to examine it, the whole thing fell apart. So we started to change it. The studio got worried because they could see we were making fundamental changes, and they felt that we wouldn't be ready. We were much too ambitious in the changes we wanted to make. I could only succeed in having Alex paid to be on the picture for four weeks, and we worked on it for four weeks, and then I was left with it on my own. The producers were very worried also, because they felt that if I didn't shape it, we would start late on Lee and lose the picture. So we got into it and started, and I then did a lot of rewriting during the

course of the film. I got Alex back for another two weeks in the middle of the shooting, to help me. He's more of a constructionist. What Antonioni looks for, and what I look for really, are collaborators, helpers. And also Kurosawa; he works with three, four, or five writers, and he takes five rooms in an inn. They all get together and discuss a scene, then they all go off to their rooms and write the scene, and then they submit it to him, and he reads the different versions and takes whatever he needs and makes the scene himself—which is an extraordinary way of working. Alex is a sort of constructionist for me.

Has he worked on other films?

In England Alex Jacobs has for years been an unofficial constructionist for a lot of people—Clive Donner, for instance. A number of people bring Alex in and he goes over a script and he's always got ways of cracking problems. He's very very perceptive. I wouldn't say he's a great dialogue-writer or anything, but he's a very good constructionist. So anyway we did as much as we could, and he went off, and I then went into the picture and I rewrote more stuff as I went along. Lee was very good, very helpful, he did a lot of working on it. I knew that the script wasn't right, there were problems desperately wrong with it, basic flaws, which I tried to cover up, paper over, never quite succeeded in doing so.

What was the script originally like?

First of all, it was set in San Francisco. That was the first clash I had with the studio. I'd never seen San Francisco. I came over and looked at it, and as soon as I saw San Francisco, I knew I couldn't shoot the picture there. It was completely against my concept. Now here was an example of trying to talk with a studio about something that was totally ephemeral. I mean, all I could say was that the colors, the pastels, the romantic nature of San Francisco were completely against the feeling of what I wanted. I wanted something hard and cold and bare and desolate. I wanted a setting for this man's emptiness, desolation, alienation, and San Francisco was romance.

Had you been to Los Angeles?

Oh yes. I knew this was the place. His situation was that he couldn't respond emotionally, he couldn't feel grief, or anything. And the violence is an eruption because of loss of feeling. Because people can't express feeling through traditional means, they go to violence as the only way of releasing those pent-up feelings. This is what I was trying to say in the picture, and I felt the Los Angeles setting was crucial.

Did you have trouble persuading them?

Yes. What worked in my favor was the fact that it would save about $70,000 or $100,000 by shooting in Los Angeles as opposed to San Francisco. It just so happened that that fell into my court. It could easily have been the other way around, and then I probably would have lost the battle. Actually, once I got going on the picture, the studio was always with me. We only had trouble at the beginning, when they were nervous and worried. I'd like to have spent more time on the script.

When they saw the film, how did they feel about it?

They were very pleased. About halfway through my shooting period, *Blow-Up* came out and had a big success, which was a great help to me, because when I put the picture together it wasn't entirely explicit, and since *Blow-Up* was their picture, they figured this must be the contemporary style, so they didn't worry about it too much. No, they were delighted with the film. There was a lot of hostility from theater owners, who couldn't follow it; they're the most traditional of all, aren't they? But it got an audience. And it's been very successful in Europe, in France and Germany particularly. I just got some reviews from France, which were tremendous, but that's probably because they couldn't clearly follow the flaws in the script.

Could you be more specific about some of the changes in the script? Did it originally have the satiric details?

No. There was a scene in a poolroom and a scene in a crap game and a scene in a garage and a scene on that sailing ship in San Francisco and a scene in a Chinese temple. It was kind of a tour of San Francisco. Since the character was what interested me, Alex and I

started to work on the character, build that up, explore him and explore his predicament, try to make him a truly contemporary American character. And then we started to explore his relationships—inadequately. I think I inadequately explained his relationship with his friend; I wanted to build up this sense of comradeship with his friend, with homosexual overtones.

I wondered about that. I thought there were some homosexual overtones, for instance in that scene where he pulls Reese out of bed and lunges on top of him.

I think I staged them in that way, but I hadn't led into them well enough. The very first scene, when Reese is trying to attract his attention at this gathering of men—all men—and he finally hits him and drops down on top of him, and there are all these feet around them. Lee's whole playing of that was kind of like a girl who's getting raped and is not sure whether she's enjoying it or not. I think it probably had an emotional effect, but nobody mentioned it. And the scene when he pulls Reese out of bed—it was the reversal of that first scene. One thing I did in the film—every scene had an echo; every single scene was echoed in another scene. Another example is he finds his wife dead, and then he finds Angie Dickinson in almost the same position, and she's also been taking tablets.

Did the first script explain things more clearly?

It was extremely simple, it was just a man out to get his money.

Did the Organization have the mysterious overtones?

No. It was very much a Chicago-type syndicate, and they were all conventional gangsters. I wanted to make it the business world. It seems to me the business world *is* the Organization in America. I didn't have any Jews or Italians in it; they were all WASPS, everybody had blue eyes.

What was so fascinating was that you were never sure just where the front activities ended and the criminal activities began.

Yes, one scene I liked was the business meeting in the auditorium, where the Organization chairman is really a pillar of society. This sort of terrible blandness that you find in business. And one of the levels I was working on was to say that Walker was like an ordinary individual with no backing trying to deal with a business corporation or trying to claim from the insurance company and just being rejected and pushed away. And so he resorts to violence, which is the only thing to do in the face of blandness, I think—to punch somebody in the nose.

What did you think of the attacks on the film for its violence?

I didn't think there was much violence in it myself. But it's implicit, the violence is in the subject matter. But I never showed any blood. When the police shoot one of the guards in the knee and then bang him against the car, I did that all in long shot, and the studio said you really must have close-ups, but I didn't do it. I was really very restrained.

I think what upsets people is that the film says something for *violence. As a foil to the blandness of the Organization people, as you say, Walker's violence is refreshing. It's the only sign of vitality in that whole world.*

Someone I respect said to me, "They'll reject this picture in America, because you're attacking the very heart of America—insuring everything and locking yourself in and refusing to recognize the violence on the streets." Like Beverly Hills is all protected. That house in the film is typical of Beverly Hills, where they have these lovely open houses with fierce fences all around them, electrified fences. But the critics did attack the film, rightly, for weaknesses in the script.

I was bothered by the superficial qualities of some of the relationships. And the Angie Dickinson character wasn't developed. It bothered me that she went to bed with Reese, whom she detested, with such willingness. That's something you might accept as just a necessity of the plot in a more conventional movie; but here I wanted to know more about her feelings. It

wouldn't have been that easy for her.

I regretted that myself. My intention there was that she was broke, at a low ebb, and Lee was too; this was what they had in common, what somehow gave them a feeling for each other. She's trying to get a response from him—nobody gets a response from him—and trying to get a response from herself. Now that wasn't well enough done. She wanted to arouse feeling, she wanted to become human. She wanted to sacrifice herself for him, and it was very important for her to do it in a way that degraded herself. But that just wasn't there.

That's the kind of problem you faced in reworking this material?

Yes. A lot of the problems in Hollywood arise from the fact that the system still requires a property. A book has to be bought with a certain amount of heat on it. You get a situation like Elia Kazan, who writes a bestseller, and the studio hires him to make the film. I think what happens in France is interesting. No writer is employed, he's not expected to write a screenplay. In France only directors write screenplays, then he may give it back to the writer, and the writer works it over.

Well, that seems almost what you've done.

That's sort of the way I work. I've got a film idea—I have a deal with MGM, to do three pictures—I wrote this idea up and submitted it to them and said this is the picture I want to do. So they said where does it came from, where do we buy it? I said well, it's just an idea of mine. So then they said who's going to write it? I think there are some good relationships, that seem to work, between writers and directors. John Schlesinger and Freddie Raphael. It seems to me a really good screenwriter is, in fact, a film-maker, and he ought to direct, which I think Freddie Raphael is going to do, because I think he dominates the films that he writes. Charles Wood and Dick Lester. Charles Wood is the only screenwriter I have unreserved admiration for. He's written *Charge of the Light Brigade,* which is a marvelous script. He wrote a script which I was going to do but could never get it going, called *The Patriots,* from a James Barlow novel.

Are there other writers you'd like to work with?

Well, I think my attitude to writers is very equivocal, because I feel that if the guy's too good, I'm a bit nervous, because I don't really want to be a handmaiden to a writer. I just want to use writers, I just want to squeeze them, exploit them, steal their ideas, and then discard them. That's fairly honest. You get into Hollywood, and then people give you scripts, and most of them are thoroughly bad. Now and again you read one which you can see potentialities in, and that tends to be the one that you go for. When I read a very very good script, I get terribly depressed, because what you're doing then is just making somebody else's work —which is an extremely arrogant and unwise attitude for me to take; it's nevertheless what I feel. But I also have a sense of my limitations. I know that I certainly couldn't write American dialogue, although I did quite a lot of it in *Point Blank.* Perhaps that's one of the things that's wrong with it. The actors will usually correct you. Good actors know. That's one of the things that a film actor should do, actually—write his own dialogue. I think the answer is to try and form some sort of stable relationship with writers, not to do what they do in Hollywood, where everyone is grabbing the new young hope; or the studio will say what you need on this project is a really "top" writer, which means a man who gets $100,000, to hold your hand. It's a very unhealthy situation here in Hollywood, where writers are always having meetings and carping about directors and producers. We don't have that in England, because there aren't any screenwriters in England, there are just writers. You get a man to write a screenplay much more because he's a good novelist or a good playwright. Screenwriters have no real standing in England. There are a few screenwriters, but they write the hack things. Of course another problem with screenplays is that they're not written for directors, they're written for actors and producers—they're written to entertain producers and to seduce actors, which,

of course, is a very legitimate purpose. You tend to have an eye for this; you want to show the actor what a good part he has, attract good actors, and show the money that they're going to get an exciting picture. So you throw in odd things which really have no relevance. And there are very few writers who have any sense of structure. Film is made up of architects and has an architectural shape; it has to have a skeleton, a bone structure. That's what they tend to lack.

Do you like to have everything written down before you start shooting a scene?

I'm always very stimulated in leaving things to the last moment; I never make final decisions almost until the camera's rolling. You remember the scene when Angie comes up to Reese's apartment? Two guards are in there talking to each other, and I didn't know what for them to say. I wanted it to be inconsequential, I didn't want it to have any meaning, but to somehow express the feeling. You know when you're in a very emotional situation, and everything becomes bizarre; your sensibilities are heightened and suddenly you hear people saying strange things. Well, this guy who was playing the part—just a day's work, you know—he was having his hair cut and he was talking, and I was listening to him talk. He was talking about Brazil. And I went over to him and I said, tell me about Brazil, and he started talking. He was saying what a marvelous place Brazil is, and then he said, "We have a saying in Brazil, and it means God is Brazilian." And that line seemed to me such a bizarre idea, so I told him, that's what I want you to say. But apparently no one noticed it.

Picking up the right line of casual conversation at a moment like that is marvelous.

It looks silly on a script. You put it in a script, and they say, what's this supposed to mean, what's the significance of this remark, surely this is a good place to make a cut. They think it's garbage.

At the business meeting there was another line like that. One of the women was talking about how she was getting fat as a pig.

Yes. The tendency in a lot of the films I made here and in England—I would take a mixture of actors and non-actors, and cast people for character and then use their own lines, because it's the person you want, and you can get the stuff from them much better than you can from a writer.

Could you tell me about the script for your new film?

This film, called *Hell in the Pacific*, had script problems of a different kind. When I took the picture on, what we had was a seven or eight page synopsis, and I got Alex Jacobs in again to help me with it. He worked for some weeks on it with me. We also had a Japanese, Shinobu Hashimoto, who wrote *Seven Samurai* and *Rashomon*, and a couple of other writers working simultaneously. The problem was that there was no dialogue. It's a Second World War story—two men, American and Japanese soldiers who are washed up on a Pacific island, and they discover each other, and it's a story of how they survive. Lee Marvin and Toshiro Mifune. It's almost impossible to write a script, you describe incidents, that's all you can do.

Was this based on a novel?

No, it was just an idea. Actually based on an outline of an idea written by somebody in Japan, and translated.

How did you find out about it?

It had been submitted to Lee, and Lee was very anxious to do it, and very anxious to work with Mifune, but he was very worried about whether it could be done. And he asked me if I would do it. I had some doubts about it, partly because it was to do with a period and a place that I had no real feeling for. And I set out to try and acquire that, but I abandoned the attempt. I couldn't do it, so I made it timeless. It's a very strange island, sort of out of time. We had a longer time on the script than on either *Point Blank* or *Catch Us If You Can*, but still perhaps not long enough. We worked for about eight weeks. At the end of that we had a script which I took out and rehearsed for two weeks, and at the end of that I rewrote the entire script, and then when I was shooting it, I rewrote it again, changing quite a lot. And I don't know what the result of it is at all. I'm

afraid that I've been so inexplicit that I may have buried the meaning. I wanted to be very simple with the camera work, I didn't want the camera to intrude; I emphasized their isolation by very discreet camera movements. So you've got a combination of no dialogue, just two men, very simple camerawork, and it becomes so simple that it almost doesn't exist. I just showed a very rough cut to the money, and they were sitting there waiting for something to happen, and I knew that in their terms it wasn't going to happen. They're understandably nervous. The way they respond to that nervousness is to say, well, what we need is a powerful score, or put a few more lines in it. The very strength of the picture is that it hasn't got any dialogue, or very little, and a powerful score would just let you off the hook, tell you what to think and feel. So when they contractually can get rid of me, that's probably what they'll do.

Really? With Point Blank *you were in control all the way through?*

I managed to keep control, scoring and everything.

I liked the music.

There wasn't very much of it, really.

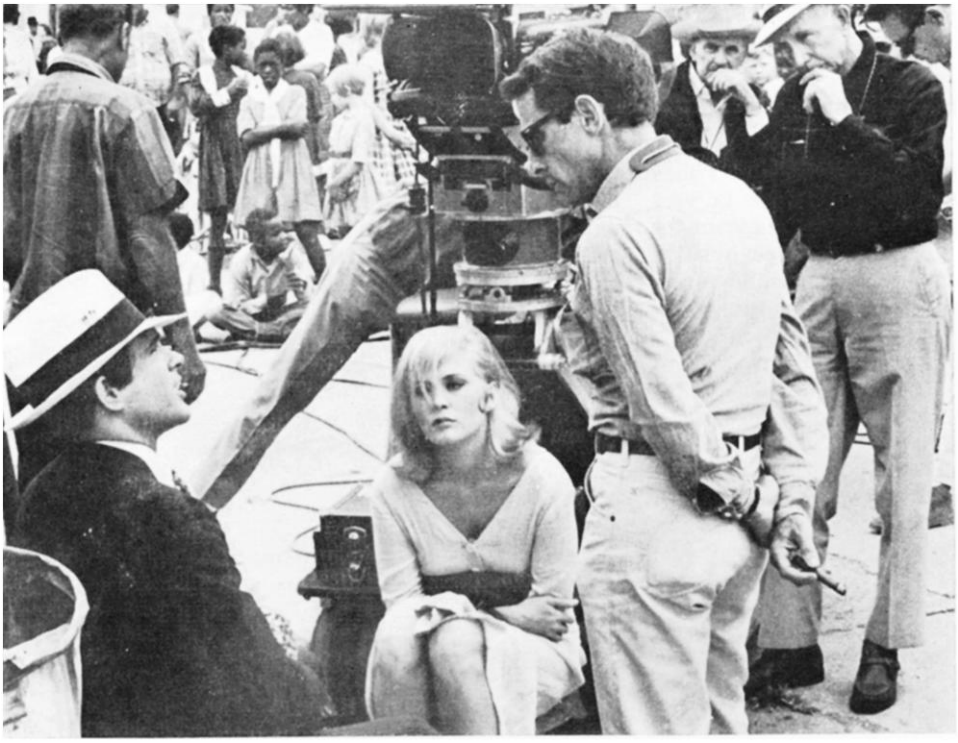
That's one of the things I liked about it.

The studio always wants to make an album, because they always hear you can make a lot of money with a film score. So they set up to make this album, and it turned out 14 minutes of this atonal drone. . . . What to do about scripts I really don't know.

Boorman's idea of using the writer as a helper is certainly one approach to the creation of a film. The *auteur is* the director; the conception and much of the writing are actually his, and the writer is only an assistant to help solve tricky construction problems or to write dialogue. In the case of a director with talent and a strong enough personality, the neglect of the writer will not be disastrous.

But there are other ways of making movies. There aren't many directors in America with the ability to create a film alone. They *need* good writers. And as I've noted, new film talents are likely to come from writing. When a writer is the originator and the chief creative force behind the film, it is monstrous for him to have no more to do with the making of the film. Things are not so bad as when Elia Kazan came to Hollywood to direct his first film and never even met his screenwriters. Now directors usually have a conference or two with writers. But it is still not customary for writers to have anything to do with the filming. Producers will tell you that it is not financially practical to allow a writer on the set; the writer's interruption of shooting with suggestions costs time and money.

Writers who are not able to direct but who want some control over their scripts may be lucky enough to become producers on their films—like Charles Brackett, Ernest Lehman, Howard Koch, Sidney Buchman. In some cases the director may be no more than a hired hand, a stage manager. Joseph Steck, who was able to produce *Waterhole #3*, his first script, was certainly the *auteur* of that film. Since he had no technical training, he hired William Graham as director. But Steck was responsible for the decisions at every stage of the film—casting, shooting, cutting—in a creative capacity, not as stifler of the director. It seems necessary to acknowledge that while a writer may often simply be a helper to the director, there are instances where the director is, or should be, simply a helper to the writer—a technician managing visual problems. The writer will not have this sort of control, in reality, unless he is producing the film; but writers are beginning to be permitted on the set. Dalton Trumbo consulted with Frankenheimer throughout the filming of *The Fixer*. I think Boorman is right that any truly talented writer will want to make his own films eventually, but until he has the technical knowledge or the prestige to do so, he should at least be able to see his project through. There even seem to be effective collaborations between writers and directors, close relationships in which both are equally respected contributors—the Benton-Newman-Penn-Beatty combine on *Bonnie and Clyde*, Sidney Buchman and Sidney Lumet on *The Group*, Martin Ritt and Irving Ravetch and Harriet Frank on *Hud* and *Hombre*.



Warren Beatty, Faye Dunaway, Arthur Penn, and photographer Burnett Guffey during filming of BONNIE AND CLYDE

The following interview with Robert Benton and David Newman will hopefully be the first of several with writers, to get *their* perspective on the films they have been involved in, when their contributions have been significant. A few months ago Benton and Newman spoke to a meeting of the Writers Guild in Los Angeles, and answered questions by the members. The interesting thing to me was the antagonism of the screenwriters toward directors. They exalted Benton and Newman for giving renown back to the writer, and they urged them to take advantage of their celebrity to "defeat" the directors they would work with. When Benton and Newman praised Penn's work on *Bonnie and Clyde,* the Guild members were uneasy, objecting in all seriousness that Benton and Newman should take full credit for the film while they could. This sense of rivalry and hostility may sound petty and spiteful, but it testified strongly to the neglect these writers had suffered, and their probably justifiable resentment at the way in which their material had been mutilated and their significance mocked.

Bonnie and Clyde was originally written, several years ago, as an independent film, to be produced by some friends in New York. It is probably well known by now that both Truffaut and Godard—Benton and Newman noted their script's resemblance to *Shoot the Piano Player* and *Band of Outsiders*—were at different moments almost committed to direct. Beatty heard about the script from Truffaut and it was he who signed Arthur Penn to direct. It was Penn, Benton and Newman said, drawing on his own experience, who achieved the marvelous thirties details in the film. The slow-motion death scene was Penn's idea, though that scene had always been conceived to be somehow stylized; Benton and Newman had originally imagined using still photographs, to match the film's opening. On the other hand, several things which are ordinarily considered "directors' touches"—the use of "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" as balladlike commentary, the sequence intercutting the chase of the gang into Oklahoma with the police posing for photographers at the scene of the crime—were in the original script. It seems to have been an unusually creative collaboration.

What did you think of the Guild's insistence on intense conflict between writer and director?

We don't know anything about it. We didn't have that experience. But it was a kind of sobering thing to hear and see. It is important to us to think about directing ourselves, but it's not important to us to think about beating down our director.

How closely were you involved in the making of the film?

Warren said right away, "I want you guys to stick close all the way through." We were in on all the stages, from casting to cutting.

Were you on the shooting?

No, we were not on the shooting, mainly because we had a lot of work to do back in New York in order to make a living. But we were in fairly constant touch with what was going on at the shooting by phone, and then we saw the footage as it came back to New York—the rough things and some of the dailies and so on. Arthur was terrific. And after he had it all put together in the roughest way, he showed it to us twice before any of the fine cutting was done, and then we had about three meetings about cutting with Arthur and Dede Allen, in which we just had long lists of suggestions. They were very gracious. They didn't have to listen to it at all.

Then you were never concerned about personalities?

No, never. Warren was the driving force behind that, because first of all, he has a large anti-*auteur* theory which says films are made by committees and groups, which we don't really believe either. But the good thing about that is that everybody becomes part of the unit. Everybody was putting a great deal into this picture, because this picture meant a lot to everybody. It meant a lot to us because it was our first shot and if it had failed, where would we be? It meant a lot to Warren because he'd come off a rather bad run of pictures, and he needed this one, and it was the first one he was producing. It meant a lot to Arthur because he'd just had a kind of unpleasant experience with *The Chase*—I think that's fairly well known. It meant a lot to Faye, obviously—this was the chance of a lifetime. People like Theodora von Runkle who did the costumes—it was her first picture. The kid who did the titles had never done a picture before. That was Warren's theory in the picture—to get everybody he could get hungry, so that they would kill themselves and work as a team. That's not to take away from the fact that Arthur was totally the director of the film and totally the centrally guiding force. He and Warren functioned together in some sense as the nucleus of the film. But Arthur's direction was brilliant.

Did you have any dealings with the studio heads, with Jack Warner?

No, Warren did that stuff. We had to do it once. When we were out here and we did the final revisions, we all had to go to a meeting with studio brass. Not Jack Warner—Warren had already handled Jack Warner at some point—but these were the guys who were really functioning at the studio. And it was a very important meeting, because we wanted and got a great deal of freedom to make this movie without studio interference. And we were terrified, and Arthur was a little nervous. And Warren's got this fantastic facility to handle this kind of thing; he's unbelievable. Before we went in, we had a meeting, and Warren said, "Now look, we're going to go in, and the following five guys are going to be there. This one is probably going to say this, and the other one'll say that, and then you'll say this, and you'll say that. Now if the third guy says this, then I'll say this." Well, it was like he'd written a script, because we went in and everything that he said was going to happen happened. So we just sat there and when it came for our cue, we would say our line, and we walked out and they gave us everything we wanted, and we couldn't believe how well he had figured it. He's great at that kind of thing, because he's lived and worked in this system for such a long time.

Were you surprised the movie was such a mass audience success? I imagine when you wrote it, having Godard and Truffaut in mind, you conceived of a much smaller audience.

Yes, we did. Obviously at a certain point, when it became a Hollywood film, people began to talk in terms of box-office success, and how much it might make because of how much it cost. But nobody who had anything to do with

the movie had the vaguest idea that what happened was going to happen—except maybe Warren.

When something is such a big success, you have people going to see it and getting all different kinds of things out of it, and responding in radically different ways. Does that bother you, do you like it?

We like it.

For example, many young people take the film as a protest against police brutality. And I guess that wasn't really your intention?

No, except insofar as our sympathies were with Bonnie and Clyde. That happens to be a matter of record, that a thousand rounds of ammunition were fired into them and that they never got to fire a shot back. Well, in some kind of an abstract way, no matter what they were, that just sounds unfair, that they pumped that many bullets into two people. Hamer was the heavy, the rest of the police were anonymous. That's kind of the way we feel about the police as a body of people anyway—they're all one faceless power. But the point about that was not proselytizing for an attitude about the police, it was working out of the point of view of sympathy for the gang and for Bonnie and Clyde—that's the way *they* saw the police.

That's just one instance of how something can be changed, just slightly, from your intention.

You can never gauge the reverberations of anything you do. That kind of incalculable response to things that you didn't know were there—it happens all the time. It happens on a magazine article, on a much smaller scale. We once wrote a magazine article in which we thought we had been terribly nice to somebody, and five people came up and said, boy, you really killed him. And the first time that happened we were a little bothered, but the second time it happened we realized that things sort of have a life of their own after they leave you. The best moment for us with *Bonnie and Clyde* was after it had been open for about three weeks and some of the longer magazine pieces began coming in on it, and we suddenly began to hear phrases and responses that we had talked about ourselves when we were writing it two years before. And then we thought ah, it came through. The first set of newspaper things we thought well, gee, these are interesting reviews, but they don't seem to be reflecting what we thought the movie was going to do. But then that began to happen. And then it began to go beyond that into responses we had not anticipated—like the war in Vietnam, which was not going on when we wrote *Bonnie and Clyde,* at least not going on hot and heavy.

Why do you think people get so angry about the "immorality" of the film?

There have been a lot of gangster movies before. And nobody ever jumped on Howard Hawks when he did *Scarface,* or on Ben Hecht when he did *Underworld.* It's that people find themselves liking Bonnie and Clyde in spite of the fact that theoretically they hate them; and the fact that they find themselves liking them and being upset at the end of the picture makes them angry an hour later. It's not just that they like them, it's that they find them being *ordinary,* and they get some kind of sympathy for them out of the moments when their lives are ordinary that aren't in a lot of other gangster pictures, and then they resent that. The movie shows them as being something more than just criminals. It's not George Raft flipping a quarter and then finally getting gunned down in the street; it's about all those scenes in the George Raft movies that were never in them, which is when George Raft went back to the house and listened to the radio. Bonnie and Clyde are two people who rise above their environment by achieving a sense of style in their crimes. They want to be celebrities; but they cannot be bank robbers 24 hours a day. Whenever they try to become human beings again—playing checkers, listening to Eddie Cantor on the radio—that's always the moment when the police move in. They want to escape the ordinary, but they always have to return to it. And when they do, they're vulnerable.

The sexual business in the film always confused me slightly. What were your intentions? What kind of weight are we supposed to give to the fact that Clyde is impotent? Is the film a psychoanalytic study, or is the impotence mere-

ly meant to represent his more general feelings of insecurity, the insecurity of the times, of young people anytime. . . .

We anticipated Freudian interpretations, which we didn't want. You said it, it's meant to be a part of that general insecurity. Also it has to do with the fact that when we thought of the movie, we thought of the love story in terms of something that we call a professional love affair. There are a lot of people in New York, and I know here, and I'm sure elsewhere, who have professional love affairs, which means for us—Bonnie and Clyde are like a mirror for each other, they both see in each other the possibilities of what they can become, that's what turns them on to each other. The first time they meet they have met their match, and the nature of that match is not a sexual match, it's a selfish, a narcissistic match, it's like two mirrors confronting each other. Which is why when she finally gives Clyde a kind of immortality via that poem, he can become potent, because his dreams of glory about himself are fulfilled, and the word is made flesh. It's out of that that we went back and constructed the impotence, not out of somebody saying that a gun was a phallic symbol . . . because everybody knows that a knife is a phallic symbol.

In the original version I know Clyde was a homosexual. There are still implications of homosexuality, aren't there?

Unavoidable. But Warren plays against that. Well, in classical Freudian terms in impotence there are intimations of homosexuality. But we had to cut out all the parts in drag. You know in order to avoid detection, so the story goes, Clyde drove through a town once dressed as a woman. Try to put that in a movie and then you'd see Bosley Crowther sing a happy tune.

What are your plans?

We have a three-picture contract, not exclusive, with Warners. We're almost finished with an original, tentatively called *Hell*, based on records of a hellhole-type prison in Arizona in the 1880's. It's fictional, but it has something of the same mixture of moods as *Bonnie and Clyde*. Then we're going to adapt *Choice Cuts*, which is a novel by Boileau and Narcejac, who wrote the novel that *Vertigo* was based on. It's a bizarre thing about transplants. And it's funny.

TEN

The moments I remember best are these:
Grey soldiers, lightning-writ, on vast retreats
Roofs, lurching bridges, maid in maddened hands
Relentless boots on steps, screams, sabres, fright
The judge's lips, the saint's tear falling true
Bleak Aran's rocks lashed by cascading spray
Prince-wakened princess, once upon a day
Marmorial clutching, clanging Xanadu
On Crispin's feast, bows' twang and arrows' flight
Black rider imaged in reflecting sands
Remembered childhood, scrubbed and swathed in sheets.
At such times eye leaps, pulse stops, senses freeze.

—Owen Lee

JAMES ROY MACBEAN

Politics and Poetry in Two Recent Films by Godard

The student revolt in France, and the general revolt it set off, have placed Godard's recent and perhaps most directly political films* (Made in USA, Deux ou Trois Choses Que Je Sais d'Elle, Far from Vietnam, La Chinoise) *in an electrifying new perspective. In particular, those who airily dismissed* La Chinoise *as detached, irresponsible toying with revolutionary ideas must now face the fact that people like Véronique* have *closed the Sorbonne—and that much else in France must now be "rethought from zero." As we go to press, we learn that Godard, active in the successful opposition to firing of Henri Langlois as head of the Cinémathèque Française, was also instrumental in closing the Cannes Film Festival as part of the protest movement sweeping all France.

"Words, words, words." Hamlet's reply to Polonius when questioned about his reading might well be the response one would make when questioned about two recent films by Jean-Luc Godard, for never has the cinema been so wordy as in *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know About Her) and *La Chinoise* (The Chinese Girl). Godard, currently preparing his sixteenth feature film, obviously is a man who knows exactly what he is doing. (If ever there were any doubts in this area, Godard's patient and penetrating answers to the myriad questions asked of him during his provocative four-day stay at Berkeley early in March, must certainly demonstrate the extreme consciousness which Godard brings to bear on every aspect of his film-making.) Nevertheless, the cinema-goer might very well wish that Godard had been a little more considerate of the aural endurance of the audience before unleashing the torrent of words—and noise—which overwhelms the "viewer-listener" (one can no longer simply say viewer) of *Deux ou trois choses* and *La Chinoise*.

The former film is particularly taxing aurally, in that, firstly, the narration (by Godard himself, in a running commentary on the film and its making) is spoken in a barely audible whisper; secondly, all of the commentary and much of the dialogue is spoken off-camera or away from the camera, thus eliminating any real assistance from lip-reading; and, thirdly, both the commentary and the dialogue of the film are systematically covered—and often smothered—by the noise of construction machinery, low-flying jets, pin-ball machines, electric appliances, huge tractor-trailer trucks, etc. Consequently, the viewer-listener of *Deux ou trois choses* finds

himself having to strain at every moment to pick up even two or three words in each sentence; and, then, if he has been diligent enough to catch two or three words, to attempt to assimilate the words and reconstruct the sense of what is said while trying not to fall behind the flow of words which continue to pour forth. And this procedure, itself very trying and very tiring, can only be undertaken by those who have a fairly fluent knowledge of French. What the others do during *Deux ou trois choses* is anyone's guess—especially when, as was the case at the Berkeley première, the film is shown without English subtitles.

But with Godard as with Hamlet, there's a method in the madness; and the aural strain on the spectator during *Deux ou trois choses* is very intimately and very calculatingly related to the subject matter of the film. Clearly, one of the "two or three things" Godard knows about Paris (the "elle" of the title) is precisely the fact that within such an urban metropolis a man simply finds himself unable to hear himself think, much less to hear anyone else think. Moreover, by making the spectator *experience* this alienation—through noise, among other things—of man from his own thoughts and from the thoughts of others, Godard succeeds in putting across a message in the way best calculated to leave its imprint on the spectator, for it is the spectator himself who realizes during the course of this film (if he has not realized it before) just how intolerable is this constant roar of noise in which we live in the modern city.

It is worth pointing out, by the way, that Godard's manipulation of the soundtrack in *Deux ou trois choses* is by no means a radical new departure for him: while it is true that he has always (or at least from *Une Femme est une Femme* on) relied heavily on direct recording of natural sound, he has also experimented a great deal with various ways of arranging, or composing, the raw material into what we might call "sound-blocks" of alternating levels of intensity. *Une Femme est une Femme,* for example, juxtaposes sound-blocks of a tremendous variety of sound possibilities—dialogue recorded in studio, dialogue recorded over natural sound,

Marina Vlady in UNE OU DEUX CHOSES . . .

fragments of music, entire songs, dialogue over music, silence, etc.—and in *Bande à part,* in particular, the soundtrack is no longer the harmonious counterpart of the visual image but is rather the audio counter*point* to the visual image.

This contrapuntal form of composition is developed most fully, however, in *Deux ou trois choses,* where Godard's insistent forcing of the spectator out of his normal passivity is carried out in a relentless flood of seemingly unrelated

images and sounds—of *signs*, both audio and visual—which, in the words of the main character, "ultimately lead us to doubt language itself and which submerge us with significations while drowning that which is real instead of helping us to disengage the real from the imaginary." In short, Godard both tells us and shows us, in *Deux ou trois choses,* that we in western civilization are adrift on a sea of significations, victims of our own signs, the only escape being to sink or swim—to drown in *non-sense* or to struggle for *sense.*

One of the main problems, then, in the struggle for sense, is the problem of endurance: At the beginning of the film, presumably, everyone (or at least everyone who knows some French) will be willing to *try* to hear the words and assimilate what is said, but over a period of more than an hour and a half, with only occasional and very brief "rest-stops" (snatches of Beethoven's last string quartet and, once or twice, a few precious moments of sweet silence), it seems unfortunate but inevitable that, sooner or later, a certain portion of the audience is going to sink (or, as happens, simply walk out), exhausted and exasperated by the constant struggle to separate words from noise, sense from non-sense.

One might be tempted simply to ignore the often unintelligible dialogue and commentary, and to look for sense exclusively in the visual image; but perhaps it is not until and unless the spectator begins to understand how noise, in the context of this film, makes sense—how noise in this film does not impede sense but rather is a vehicle of sense—that the film as a whole can begin to emerge from the bewildering complexity that is at first glance deceptively similar to non-sense. The act of confronting the bewildering complexity of modern urban society and of learning two or three things about it, is, after all, the not so easy task which Godard himself has undertaken: is it then asking too much of us, as we confront the complexity of his film, that we, in turn, attempt to learn two or three things about cinema?

This double action—of analyzing society and how it works, and at the same time analyzing art and how *it* works—is precisely the double action of *Deux ou trois choses,* a film in which Godard *qua* sociologist scrutinizes the "social pathology" of the modern city at the same time that Godard *qua* film-maker scrutinizes the cinematic means of transposing the social analysis into art. Moreover, in the whispered commentaries in *Deux ou trois choses*, we hear, or overhear, as it were, Godard questioning himself (as he does in *Far From Vietnam*), both as sociologist and film-maker, as to whether these are the right images, the right words, and whether his perspective is from too close or from too far. In short, *all* is put in question in *Deux ou trois choses*: the impersonal cruelty of Gaullist neo-capitalism; the prostitution, in one form or another, of the modern city-dweller; the American imperialist aggression in Vietnam; the fragmentary assimilation of culture in a society flooded with paperback books; the thousand and one amenities of modern life (radios, beauty salons, super-sudsy detergents, the latest style in dresses, and the modern bathroom plumbing still unavailable to 70% of the French people): *all* is put in question, including, and, perhaps, especially, the notion of cinema.

Godard, it is clear, wants a revolution in both art and society; and he hopes to make his contribution to the revolution of society by accomplishing, in film, the revolution of art. It is this double action that Godard advocates when he speaks (as he does in a recent *Cahiers du Cinéma* interview) of the need to "struggle on two fronts"—an idea he seems to develop more fully in his fourteenth film, *La Chinoise.*

Godard has very often acknowledged that in his view art is a very serious matter with a most important role to play in the social revolution which he sees taking place today in western civilization. Moreover, Godard's art (like Gide's *Les Faux Monnayeurs* or Hamlet's play-within-a-play) is very calculatingly constructed of a most disquieting mixture of the fictional and the real; and one of the dominant refrains that haunt *La Chinoise* is the Hamlet-like assertion that "art is not the reflection of reality, but the

reality of the reflection." There is, indeed, something very Hamlet-like in Godard's hyper-lucid introspection, in his intense desire to understand a situation and at the same time to act upon it and influence it; in his genuine desire to commit himself to the social and political life around him and in his aesthetic inclination to maintain an ironic distance from that life, to play with words, to pun, to mimic, to jest. But where Hamlet found these two attitudes incompatible and the wavering between them inimical to an active life, Godard seeks to resolve the dilemma, not by eliminating one or the other of its horns—social commitment and aesthetic distance—but by jealously guarding them both in the creation of a work of art, like *La Chinoise*, that is at the same time sincerely and sympathetically committed to social revolution and yet ebulliently ironic in its insistence on delineating the sometimes infantile and dangerous excesses of the very heroes and political stands with which he, Godard, and we, the audience, may sympathize and, perhaps, identify. *La Chinoise*, like all of Godard's films, contains within itself its own self-critique: it is social thought and the critique of social thought, art and the critique of art. For an audience accustomed to having their politics and their art be one thing only—serious or funny, pro or con, tragedy or comedy—*La Chinoise* must indeed be very perplexing; but it would be a grave mistake to reduce this film, as some viewers seem to do, to one category or another—hilarious spoof or dead-serious militance, insouciance or hard-line propaganda, aesthetic dillettantism or didactic non-art. Godard, one should have learned by now, cannot be explained away so easily; and his well-known taste for contradictions might better be understood as the ability to achieve a dynamic balance amid seeming oppositions.

Godard is, in many ways, a Hamlet who has found his calling: he is Hamlet as playwright, Hamlet as artist. It is art which enables Godard to achieve and maintain that dynamic balance; and, conversely, it is his intense desire to achieve such a harmony amid seeming discord which brings him inevitably to art. As Godard himself puts it in *Deux ou trois choses*, the goal of achieving a new world in which both men and things will know a harmonious rapport—a goal both political and poetic—explains, in any case, the rage for expression of Godard the writer-painter, of Godard the artist. Hamlet, too, one will recall, knew that art and politics could serve one another, that art could be the mousetrap for the conscience of society; but Hamlet staged only one play and from then on attempted to deal with life "directly," without the mediation of art, whereas Godard stages play after play after play, and deals with life by dealing with art.

In *La Chinoise*, this interplay between art and life, between reality and the reflection of reality—and, most important, the inevitable interdependence and overlapping of the two—are expressed dramatically in the memorable sequence early in the film when the young actor, Guillaume (played by Jean-Pierre Léaud), begins by reciting in very traditional style several lines from a text he is rehearsing, then stops short, grins, and, in answer to a question unheard by the audience (again, it is more or less whispered by Godard himself), acknowledges that "Yes, I am an actor" and then launches into an impromptu monologue on the dilemma of an actor committed to social revolution. At the close of this scene, however, Guillaume protests vigorously that one must avoid the temptation not to take his words seriously just because he is an actor performing in front of a camera, and he insists that he is sincere. At this moment we are suddenly shown a cameraman (Raoul Coutard) who has been filming Guillaume's speech and who is, in turn, now filmed himself in the act of filming the actor Jean-Pierre Léaud for the film we are presently watching. However, Godard's use of this complex procedure evokes little, if any, of the Pirandellian confusion of illusion and reality, but emphasizes rather the very Brechtian paradox that the film-within-a-film, like the film itself, must be seen not only as a work of art, but, like all art, also as an activity engaged in by very real people who may be sincerely committed to the ideas

they are acting out in artistic form. As Godard explained when answering questions from the audience in Berkeley, Guillaume is an actor committed to the revolution who hopes to make his contribution to the revolution by *acting* in a revolutionary way in revolutionary films and theater. In this sense, Guillaume's revolutionary activity with the Marxist-Leninist cell is not so much a *secondary* activity as it is a *corollary* activity of the committed art he practices as an actor. In short, Guillaume is a revolutionary actor acting for the revolution; and this, too, seems to be what Godard is getting at when he advocates the "struggle on two fronts."

Godard recently indicated (in the *Cahiers* interview mentioned earlier) that he was interested in the film-maker's opportunity to create, in his own modest way, "two or three Vietnams in the heart of the immense empire of Hollywood - Cinecitta - Mosfilm - Pinewood, etc., and economically as well as aesthetically—that is to say, in struggling on two fronts—create national and free cinemas that are brothers, comrades and friends." From this statement and from others like it, we can see that Léaud's role in *La Chinoise* as a revolutionary actor acting for the revolution, is, in a very real sense, the role which Godard believes is the most authentic role he himself can play as a committed artist.

This problem of the artist's particular kind of commitment arises again in *La Chinoise* as we witness the intense dialogue in a train compartment between Véronique and Francis Jeanson, the deeply committed colleague of Jean-Paul Sartre at *Les Temps Modernes,* who was in the forefront of political agitation in opposition to French colonial rule in Algeria at the time of the Algerian uprising. Jeanson, in *La Chinoise,* willingly puts himself in what is for him the rather paradoxical position of seeking to oppose or at least restrain the revolutionary activities advocated by the young would-be terrorist played by Anne Wiazemsky. Jeanson senses acutely—and very visibly—the uncomfortable paradox of his position *vis-à-vis* the younger generation of radicals, but he argues sincerely and penetratingly—and with a wonderful feeling of warmth and genuine personal concern for his youthful student—as he attempts to make her realize the need, first and foremost, of creating a solid base of mass popular support for social change. Without this popular support, he points out, his own revolutionary activity in the Algerian crisis would have been futile—if not impossible; and it is precisely this need to create popular support for social change which involves Jeanson at the moment in a project designed to bring revolutionary theater to the people in the provinces.

Once again, the notion of the revolutionary actor acting for the revolution seems to be the artist's way of carrying on the "struggle on two fronts"; but even here, in presenting what is essentially his own view—and what he believes to be the only authentic role for the artist in contemporary France—Godard's extreme honesty, sincerity, and penetrating lucidity force him to acknowledge, as we see in the scene with Jeanson, that the artist's position will inevitably appear an equivocal one, for the militant activists will never consider the artist's contribution bold enough or even of any real significance in the revolutionary struggle; and the artist's particular way of committing himself will always contain a hint, or more than just a hint, of self-interest, in as much as the artist continues to pursue his artistic career while at the same time claiming to align his art with the revolutionary cause. In both of these respects, then, it is understandable that in spite of Jeanson's obvious sincerity and the excellence of his arguments, we find it difficult to listen without slight annoyance, slight embarrassment, or both, when he speaks of the way his little theater troupe will enable him to engage in social action and at the same time enable him to get away from Paris where he no longer finds himself able to concentrate on the books he is writing. "In going to the provinces," he explains with enthusiasm, "I'll be able to carry out this social action and, moreover, carry on my writing at the same time."

It is hardly surprising, however, that Jeanson's arguments—however right they may be—

do not dissuade Véronique from advocating, and then committing, acts of terrorism. The artist can speak of the "struggle on two fronts" precisely because for him there are two fronts—art and society—but for the ordinary individual (like Véronique, Yvonne, or Henri—the young man expelled for "revisionism") there is only the single front of a world which is not right, of a world with something rotten at its core, of a world which must, in one way or another, be taken apart so that it can be reassembled in a better way. While the artist can create on paper, on canvas, or on film, a new and "perfect" world (and, in so doing, perhaps encourage others to attempt to create a new world in real life), it seems that the dirty work of going out and attempting to create this new world in real life falls inevitably to the ordinary individual who deals directly with life—without the mediation of art; and it is the ordinary individual who, no matter how much he may be encouraged by the example of "committed art," must bear the burden of the fact that a bullet fired in reality takes a man's life, whereas a bullet fired in a film is art.

Hamlet, himself, one will recall, found great sport in creating a work of art (his play-within-a-play) in which the king was murdered; but the same Hamlet found it well-nigh impossible —in spite of the best of reasons—to kill the king in real life. The ordinary individual, given this predicament, can react in many ways, the two poles being either to sit back, do nothing, and, like Hamlet, complain that "the time is out of joint. O cursèd spite that ever I was born to set it right" or, like Véronique in *La Chinoise,* he can accept the consequences of setting it right and go out and shoot somebody. These, however, are the extreme positions, and Godard, in Berkeley, admitted that while he himself would never take up a gun, he now felt that he had to support those (like the North Vietnamese, or Régis Debray, or Che Guevara, or the Black Panthers) who, in the name of positive social reform, were willing to pick up a gun and if need be, use it. Godard also expressed admiration for a society like China which he sees, with

Anne Wiazemsky in La Chinoise

the advent of the Red Guard youth movement, as virtually turned over—lock, stock, and barrel —to the young people between fifteen and twenty-five years of age. As Godard puts it, "there are lots of things in this world that would be better off if they were turned over to the young people who have the courage to start again from zero."

This notion of starting again from zero (which was Juliette's conclusion at the end of *Deux ou trois choses*) recurs repeatedly in *La Chinoise*: Véronique wants to close the French universities so that the entire notion of education can be rethought from zero; she would bomb the Louvre and the Comédie Française so that painting and drama can likewise be rethought from zero; and Guillaume pushes his own investigation of the nature of theater to a notion of "The Theater of the Year Zero"—which is visualized cinematically by a shot of two individuals (an older women in a sort of bathing suit and a young girl nude) knocking on either side of a large panel of transparent plexiglas through which they can see each other but which separates them—an image, perhaps, of

the first primitive nonverbal efforts to communicate between one human being and other. Moreover, this notion of starting again from zero is implicit in the fact that both in subject and form, *La Chinoise* is a film of revolution, a film which traces the progress of movement around the circumference of a circle until one completes the circle and returns to the point of departure. There is a strict logical sequence (as an intertitle states in announcing the film's final shot) which demands that the film end with the same shot with which it began—the shot of the balcony of the activists' apartment.

In beginning and ending at the same point, the film itself can be said to undergo a complete revolution; but to say that the film ends at the point of departure is not to say that the action within the film accomplishes nothing. On the contrary, it is the action within the circle which permits the return to the point of departure and the opportunity to start again from zero. The opening and closing shots of the film, although they contain the same shot of the balcony, reveal very different actions and attitudes within the development of the film-narrative. In the opening shot, we see the balcony with its bright red shutters opened, and we hear, and then see, a young man (Henri) reading aloud a number of quotations from the "Little Red Book" of Chairman Mao. Then, as the film unfolds, Henri is seen to be the character who develops the least, the one who adheres most rigidly to the French Communist Party line, the one whose attitude remains static (and it is significant that Henri is the one character—aside from Kirilov, who is also extremely rigid—who is always filmed in static shots without cuts).

In the closing shot of the film, we see the same balcony, at that very moment being reoccupied, so to speak, by the bourgeoisie—represented by the girl whose parents have let Véronique use the apartment during the summer vacation. The girl scolds Véronique for having made such a mess in the apartment and tells her it must be cleaned up before the return of her parents. Finally, Véronique is left alone on the balcony with the parting advice to "think over carefully all that she has done." As Véronique leaves the balcony and closes the red shutters, we hear her unspoken thoughts explaining that she had already thought over her actions, that the end of the summer means the return to the university and the continuation of the struggle for her and for her comrades, and that she has now realized that the summer's activity with the Marxist-Leninist cell, which she originally thought represented a major breakthrough in revolutionary action, represents, in reality, only "the first tiny step in what would be a very long march"—words taken by Godard from a speech by Chou En-lai. Thus, the sequence of events that began on the balcony with Henri mechanically reading quotations from Mao comes to an end on the same balcony with Véronique thinking out for herself the realization that what she has done is merely a beginning in an ongoing struggle ten thousand times longer. As Godard indicates in the final intertitle, the end of the sequence of events that comprises the film is only "the end of a beginning."

For Godard, himself, one has the impression that the end of each new film is only "the end of a beginning"; and it is clear that as Godard develops as a film-maker, more and more, with each new film, he is putting into question both the entire notion of western civilization and the entire notion of cinema. He has often remarked that when he made *A bout de souffle* (his first feature), he had lots of ideas about films, but that now, after making more than a dozen of his own, he no longer has any ideas about films. This confession, however, should not be taken as an indication of despair; rather it is for Godard a genuine liberation. He is clearly a man who has the courage, as well as the will, to start again from zero—and to do it every time he makes a film. Even Hamlet, after all, despite his hesitations, managed at last, even if inadevertently, to wipe the slate clean and enable Denmark to start again from zero. "Readiness is all," he proclaimed. Godard, at the end of *La Chinoise*, seems ready.

LEO BRAUDY

Hitchcock, Truffaut, and the Irresponsible Audience

In the beginning of his opulently mounted interview with Hitchcock,* François Truffaut writes that Hitchcock has always feared technicians who might "jeopardize the integrity of his work." But in this "definitive study" (to cite the dustjacket) Truffaut's own approach is so doggedly technical, so intent on style as opposed to meaning, that one wonders if the feared technicians haven't come in by a rear window after all. The interview is an anatomy of Hitchcock's work that shows little sense of what technical methods signify, or what stylistic devices express. Truffaut draws back from any exploration of the psychological depths of either Hitchcock himself or the movies Hitchcock has made. Hitchcock makes many leading remarks about his themes and methods that Truffaut glosses over. Hitchcock reveals fascinating shards of his psychological nightlife, but Truffaut only alludes to the dark area of voyeurism, exhibitionism, and fetishism that Hitchcock's films explore; he is too interested in showing his own knowledge of plot and technical details to go any further. And because of his lack of interest in the psychological dimensions of Hitchcock's films, Truffaut misses how Hitchcock in his best films manipulates the deepest reactions of his audience.

Has Truffaut been hampered by the difficulties of a long interview (fifty hours spread over several days), complete with translator? If we cannot have the experience of two directors talking equally, let us have an incisive picture of one. But Truffaut gives us neither. Recent journalism has developed the interview into a vehicle of self-revelation. But what we learn about Hitchcock from *Hitchcock* is less due to Truffaut's insight than to his inclusiveness. There are 472 stills and full credits for all of Hitchcock's films. There is even a developing plot relation between two characters named "Hitchcock" and "Truffaut" which can be followed as a welcome counterpoint to the more obvious play of question and answer. But this plot reveals neither Truffaut nor Hitchcock; each tries to direct and each has cast the other in an uncongenial role. Truffaut's early impulse is to score points. He shows that his memory of *The Last Laugh* is better that Hitchcock's and he tries to make Hitchcock admit that his work was influenced by Fritz Lang. Hitchcock responds with his usual mask of evasive humor: he can't remember *M, The Spy,* or *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse,* but he will admit to changing a scene in the first version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* because he had noticed a similar scene in Mervyn LeRoy's *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang.* Underground arguments sometimes flare. While discussing *The Ring,* Hitchcock mentions visual touches he thinks no one noticed; Truffaut nods but wants to talk about what *he* noticed; Hitchcock replies that all the reviewers noticed *those* details. None of these conflicts is more than trivially illuminating. And it is difficult not to find Truffaut at fault. Instead of facing Hitchcock with probing questions, he plays the eager young man, ready to reel off complicated plots the master has forgotten, adulatory and bumptiously arrogant at the same time. Instead of drawing Hitchcock out, Truffaut forces him back into his old masks.

Ideally, an interview can be a process of un-

* F. Truffaut: *Hitchcock.* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968, $8.00.)

derstanding. But Truffaut has certain set ideas about Hitchcock. His emphasis on Hitchcock's technique of suspense and "dramatic impact" shows traces of the same kind of condescension or reverse snobbery that dubs Hitchcock "the world's foremost technician": however great a director Truffaut believes Hitchcock to be, he may not expect him to be interested in psychological themes as complex as those dealt with in *Jules and Jim*. This bias leads naturally to Truffaut's concern with workmanship and technical detail. He calls *Notorious* "the very quintessence of Hitchcock," "a model of scenario construction." Hitchcock calls the single-shot technique of *Rope* "quite nonsensical," but Truffaut's questions follow the familiar litany: "What about the problems with the color?" "What about the problems of a mobile camera?" "What is truly remarkable is that all of this was done so silently that you were able to make a direct sound track." Faced with Truffaut's almost programmatic bias, Hitchcock finds he can respond only in Truffaut's terms, and in the latter part of the interview he finally asserts—with Truffaut's approval—that he likes technical tricks much more than subject matter or acting.

Hitchcock's seeming agreement with Truffaut rests actually on a very different definition of technique that uses however much of the same language. Both Truffaut and Hitchcock make oddly archaic statements about the way sound film ended the great era of the cinema. Truffaut seems to have forgotten André Bazin's attacks against "pure cinema" cultists (such as "The Virtues and Limitations of Montage") for he comes on like young Raymond Spottiswoode. In line with his interest in technical details and fragments of directorial style, he treats each film as a "pure" object: a compound of techniques, or problems solved and unsolved. But all of Hitchcock's "techniques" are aimed at destroying the separation between the film and its audience. When Truffaut talks about the emotional effect of a film, he is speaking of dramatic irony, surprise, and the shock of realism. When Hitchcock talks about emotion, he is asserting the audience's involvement and implication in what is happening on the screen. In speaking of *Psycho,* Hitchcock appears to follow the "pure" cinema line: "It wasn't a message that stirred the audience, nor was it a great performance or their enjoyment of the novel. They were aroused by pure film." Truffaut answers, satisfied, "Yes, that's true." But Hitchcock explains further what he means: ". . . the construction of the story and the way in which it was told caused audiences all over the world to react and become emotional." Truffaut responds: "Yes, emotional and even physical." Hitchcock snaps: "Emotional."

In the first half of the interview Hitchcock frequently drops hints of some larger issues, but Truffaut, bound in his own interests, plows on. Hitchcock suggests, for example, that his use of handcuffs has "deeper implications":

> A.H. Being tied to something . . . it's somewhere in the area of fetishism, isn't it?
> F.T. I don't know, but I have noticed that handcuffs have a way of recurring in your movies.

While Hitchcock vainly implies the emotional and psychological relevance of his details, Truffaut concentrates on an intellectualized appreciation of fine finish and professional gloss. He says of the death of Mr. Memory in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*: "It's this kind of touch that gives so many of your pictures a quality that's extremely satisfying to the mind: a characterization is developed to the limit—until death itself." Truffaut therefore interprets the paranoia implied by the subjective camera in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* in technical terms as Hitchcock's effort "to sacrifice plausibility in favor of pure emotion." He does not perceive the relation between Hitchcock's typical technical devices and his deepest thematic concerns.

Truffaut's analysis and questioning falls down therefore whenever he touches upon larger areas of structure and meaning in Hitchcock's films. Truffaut dispenses with plot in the name of "pure" cinema; Hitchcock cares little about the minor springs of plot—what he calls the "MacGuffin," the gimmick—because he is dealing with more inclusive rhythms. "To me, the narrator, they're of no importance." And this

narrative sense, Hitchcock asserts, despite Truffaut's concern with technical virtuosity, is the most important part of his directional method. Truffaut talks about technique, but Hitchcock talks about the audience and its psychology. He manipulates the audience for his own ends, and he wants them to leave his films with a narrative sense of what has occurred. Truffaut does not grasp this idea because each film is for him a pure aesthetic object. But for Hitchcock it is the medium for a relation between the director and the audience. Truffaut discusses camera movement in terms of "dramatic impact," but Hitchcock continually expresses it as an element in establishing point of view.

Because of Truffaut's inability or unwillingness to explore Hitchcock's interest in point of view and his skirting of psychological themes and preoccupations, he is particularly blind to the central area of Hitchcock's work where technique and theme coincide in the study of voyeurism. Building on the interplay between directorial construction and audience understanding that is the basis of montage, Hitchcock develops certain themes that rely directly on the experience of watching a film itself. Even when Truffaut touches on the theme of voyeurism, he believes that the psychological interest is fortuitous:

> F.T. Would you say that [James] Stewart [in *Rear Window*] was merely curious?
> A.H. He's a real Peeping Tom. . . . Sure, he's a snooper, but aren't we all?
> F.T. We're all voyeurs to some extent, if only when we see an intimate film. And James Stewart is exactly in the position of a spectator looking at a movie.
> A.H. I'll bet you that nine out of ten people, if they see a woman across the courtyard undressing for bed, or even a man puttering around in his room, will stay and look; no one turns away and says, "It's none of my business." They could pull down their blinds, but they never do; they stand there and look out.
> F.T. My guess is that at the outset your interest in the picture was purely technical, but in working on the script, you began to attach more importance to the story itself. Intentionally or not, that back yard conveys an image of the world.

All through the interview Hitchcock has made remarks about "Peeping Tom audiences" and his efforts to manipulate them. But Truffaut never sees the larger thematic and structural implications of this interest.

Every movie is naturally voyeuristic, not only the most intimate ones, and that is a great part of their appeal—the sensuous immediacy that goes beyond the stylized realism of the fourth-wall theater. A feeling of occasion and artifice may separate us from a particular movie, as it usually separates us from even the most realistic play. But with the camera eye substituted for our own the potentiality for greater intimacy, mediated by "me, the narrator," is still there. The films of Hitchcock play in different ways with these psychological assumptions of the film form itself. Some are less successful and perhaps deserve the technically oriented analysis of Truffaut. But voyeurism is more than a metaphor for Hitchcock; he also emphasizes its moral dimension. In movies we can get away with observing without responsibility. André Bazin remarks in another context: "Incontestably, there is in the pleasure derived from cinema and novel a self-satisfaction, a concession to solitude, a sort of betrayal of action by a refusal of social responsibility." In some of his movies Hitchcock exploits this irresponsibility: "[In *Notorious*] the public was being given the great privilege of embracing Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman together. It was a kind of temporary *ménage à trois.*" In a basically comic film like *Notorious* the audience can remain irresponsible, but in his best films the irresponsible audience must go through the punishment of terror. And Truffaut's approach breaks down most clearly when he is faced with what may be Hitchcock's most perfect expression of the interdependence of his themes and techniques —*Psycho.* In *Psycho* Hitchcock brings the voyeuristic assumptions of film form to the surface and in the process brings his audience from the

detachment of irresponsible spectators to the involvement of implicated participants.

Hitchcock's films frequently approach the problem of detachment and involvement through separate but complementary treatments that might almost be called "genres." In "comedies" like *The Lady Vanishes, North by Northwest,* or *Torn Curtain,* the central characters are a romantic couple, with whom the audience automatically sympathizes. They serve as audience surrogates in a series of adventures that turn out happily. The axe is never far away from the neck in these comedies, but all conflict is finally dissipated by the end of the film, frequently by near fairy-tale or romance means. At the end of *North by Northwest* Cary Grant tries vainly to pull Eva Marie Saint to safety, while she dangles from the face of Mt. Rushmore. He can't do it. But then he can do it. The straining impossibility turns into fairy-tale ease. He pulls her up—into the top bunk of their Pullman, speeding away from the Dakotas.

Hitchcock's tragedies have no such romantic couple for ease of audience identification and sympathy; Truffaut remarks that there is no one in *Psycho* to identify with. We cast around without bearings, looking for conventional movie clues to tell us we have found the "right" character. But everyone is suspect. The first possible romantic couple in *Psycho*—Sam Loomis and Marion Crane (John Gavin and Janet Leigh)—have a melancholic relation in which sex and money are the prime topics of conversation. The later relation between Sam and Marion's sister Lila (Vera Miles), because it is founded on such dubious grounds, only emphasizes that *Psycho* is not the place to find a romantic couple. Solving a mystery may bring together Margaret Lockwood and Michael Redgrave in *The Lady Vanishes,* but it does not work in *Psycho.* Neither Sam, nor Marion, nor Lila, is particularly attractive. We can never give any of them our full sympathy, although we are often sympathetic to each. And Hitchcock manipulates our desire to sympathize and identify. He plays malevolently on the audience assumption that the character we sympathize with most, whose point of view we share, is the same character who is morally right in the story the movie tells. He gleefully defeats our expectation that our moral sympathies and our aesthetic sympathies remain fixed throughout the movie.

Hitchcock begins this manipulation at the very beginning of *Psycho.* He forces the audience, although we may not realize it immediately, to face the most sinister connotations of our audience role—our participation in the watching and observing that shades quickly into voyeurism. We see first a long view of a city and titles that read successively "Phoenix, Arizona. Friday December the eleventh. Two forty-three P.M." We sit back and turn on the "objective" vision we reserve for documentaries, the aesthetic equivalent for a detached contemplation of the truth. But we are forced instead to watch an intensely personal, even embarrassing, scene. The camera moves closer and closer to one of the buildings, until finally it ducks under a drawn shade and emerges in a hotel room where Marion, in bra and halfslip, and Sam, bare to the waist, are having a late lunch-hour tryst. Perhaps we can call on our documentary detachment to insulate us from this scene, and thereby resist Hitchcock manipulations. Truffaut insulates himself by an interest in plot dynamics: "The sex angle was raised so that later on the audience would think that Anthony Perkins is merely a voyeur." But throughout *Psycho* Hitchcock continually assaults our claims of objectivity and detachment in order to emphasize and illustrate our real implication.

Hitchcock successively involves us with Marion and then Norman Bates (Perkins) through the gradually increasing use of a subjective camera. In both involvements there is at first a residual doubt, a nagging compunction about the moral aspects of our aesthetic involvement. In terms of conventional movie morality, or what our second-guessing has provisionally told us about the morality of *Psycho,* Sam and Marion are wrong; she's even overstayed her lunch hour. Hitchcock plays on our desire to feel superior because we have figured out *Psycho*'s system of rewards and punishments: "You know that the public always likes to be one

jump ahead of the story; they like to feel they know what's coming next. So you deliberately play upon this fact to control their thoughts." He invites us next to feel morally superior as well as aesthetically. We can make a few moral distinctions on the basis of this first conversation between Sam and Marion. They can't get married and can't even find a pleasant place to meet because Sam has no money, at least not enough both to get married and to pay off his ex-wife's alimony. The lecherous rancher in Marion's office confirms our acceptance of the Sam-Marion relationship. What poetic justice it would be if his sexually tainted money could be used to make the dreams of Sam and Marion come true! By this point we have gone beyond Marion. We wait impatiently as she moves about her bedroom, debating whether or not to take the money; through Hitchcock's manipulation of our moral responses, we have already decided.

Our identification with Marion becomes more directed as we drive away from Phoenix with her. We sit in the driver's seat and look out the window; when we look at Marion herself, we hear the voices in her head, fantasies about what everyone in Phoenix must be saying. Except for the single establishing shot in which we see the police car pull up near Marion's parked car (and after all, at this time she is asleep), we remain inside the car with her, limited within the world of her imaginings, accomplices with her—for a time—in what she has done. The state trooper appears as a figure of vague malevolence; his shades reinforce his blankness. When he waits across the street from the used car lot, we are apprehensive with Marion. When she drives away and an offscreen voice yells "Hey!" we know it's the trooper. But it's not and he really doesn't seem to be waiting for Marion at all. Through the subjective camera and the audience's belief in economy of means ("every character fits in somewhere"), Hitchcock has given us that guilty, almost paranoid, state of mind that converts all outside itself into images of potential evil.

This feeling of guilt begins to dissipate when we arrive at the motel owned by Norman Bates and his mother. Norman is a genial, shy young fellow, unassuming, pleasant. He's friendly, he makes jokes, he even invites nervous Marion to dinner. When his mother makes him withdraw the invitation, he talks to Marion feelingly about the traps life has put him in. Marion callously suggests that he should have his mother committed, "put someplace." We are beginning to turn against Marion. Norman is a sensitive boy and he loves his mother. Once again our conventional reactions come into play. We wonder if we have been wrong about Marion. Perhaps she did have some cause for the theft, but she has a bad streak. And that first image of sex in the afternoon may recur as proof. She invites Norman into her room, but he draws back. Was her sexuality a threat to Sam in the same way?

Hitchcock's gradual separation of our sympathies from Marion and attachment of them to Norman now becomes even more delicate. We follow Norman into the next room and watch as he moves aside a picture to reveal a peephole into Marion's cabin. He watches her undress and, in some important way, we feel the temptress is more guilty than the Peeping Tom. In the first scene of the movie Marion wore white bra and white halfslip. When she finally decided to take the money, while it lay on her bed as she packed, she wore a black bra and halfslip. She drove off in a black car and then traded it in for a light-colored model. But our conventional moral-aesthetic sense can't be fooled. Once again, as Norman peers through the peephole, we see the black bra and halfslip, and remember Marion's guilt, a guilt we do not want to share. This perhaps dubious pattern of dark and light only reinforces something more basic. Whether we realize it or not, we have had a Norman-like perspective from the beginning of the movie. We too were Peeping Toms when we looked through the window of the hotel room Sam and Marion rented. We shared the Peeping-Tom exposure of Marion when her boss noticed her (and us) staring at him through the car window. When we look through the peephole with Norman, we are doing something we have done before; this time, like the

first time, we know we won't be caught. We tend to blame Marion and not Norman because we are fellow-voyeurs with him, and we do not want to blame ourselves.*

It is worthwhile to emphasize the way Hitchcock manages our shift from Marion to Norman, since many commentators on *Psycho* assume that Marion's murder is somehow justified because she is a thief. But ironically enough her talk with Norman has convinced her that she has done wrong and should return to Phoenix. Her last act before the fatal shower is to figure out how to cover from her own bank account the loss sustained in buying the car. But her bra and halfslip have already given her away to Norman, whose psychotic view of people admits no shade between black and white, no difference between a mildly flirtatious invitation and a blatant proposition. Hitchcock masterfully implies that we can't tell the difference either. Perhaps the murder may also sardonically mirror our beliefs about Hollywood: Janet Leigh was the star of the first half of the movie; Perkins murders her and becomes the star of the second half. Perhaps we're also being invited to remember that Janet Leigh had recently disported herself sexually in another motel in Welles's *Touch of Evil* (1958; *Psycho,* 1960). In any case, Norman had added her to his collection of dead birds; when he emerges from the bathroom after his "first" look at her, he knocks one of the bird pictures from the wall. Marion fits well into the collection because, after all, her last name is Crane and she comes from Phoenix. But she won't rise again. There's only one phoenix, and in this movie it's Norman's mother.

The sight of Norman cleaning up the bathroom after the murder reinforces our identification with him aesthetically and morally. Our hands hold the mop and swirl the towel around the floor; Hitchcock cryptically remarks to Truffaut about his own hypercleanliness. Norman cleans up so well because he is a dutiful son trying to protect his crazy mother. Once again, Hitchcock forces us into the security of conventional moral reactions in the face of an absurd situation. In many of his movies he begins with an excessively normal, even banal, situation and then proceeds to show the maniacal forces seething just below the surface. Norman's mop reverses the process; the bathroom is gleaming and conventional once more. We are relieved that the most characterless place on the American landscape has become characterless once again. We have become so identified with Norman's point of view that we feel a moment of apprehension when the car refuses to sink all the way into the black pool. But it finally goes down. We heave a sigh of relief with Norman; the insanity has been submerged once again. Our relief masks our progress from the acceptance of illicit sex to robbery, to murder, what Truffaut with his rage for precision calls a "scale of the abnormal." The memory of our pleasure in Marion's nudity, even while the murder was in process, our effort to see if that was a breast or only an arm we half-glimpsed, all become submerged, especially since, with Norman, we may have decided that she deserved it.

Our sympathy with Norman also controls our feeling about the detective, Arbogast (Martin Balsam). Arbogast upsets Norman with his questions, and we have little or no sympathy with him through the camera. When he walks upstairs in the house, we get only one short shot of his lower legs. Then all the shots are face on, as if we were at the top of the stairs with "Mother." When the murder begins we look straight into Arbogast's face as he staggers back down the stairs under the knife blows. We follow him along with "Mother," striking again and again. The conventional and self-protective operations of our aesthetic and moral sympathies have once again implicated us in something we were not ready for. Hitchcock plays to Truffaut's prejudices by saying that the high camera shot—the bird's-eye view—that begins the murder segment was used to avoid showing "Mother's" face. But when he returns to it at

* Because of the importance of the motif of observation, especially through windows, it's worth noting that we see Hitchcock through the window of Marion's office.

the end of the scene, as Perkins carries her down to the fruit cellar, Hitchcock checks off our complicity. We are no longer so terrified.

Sam and Lila arrive during the day, presaging the illumination of Norman's dark subconscious. Previously the dark brooding vertical shaft of the house had stood high in the shadows behind the banal well-lit horizontal of the motel. With light now striking them both, the house is potentially no longer so mysterious. Sam cannot go in to discover the secret. Like Marion and Arbogast, he had first visited the motel (in one of the few inept scenes) at night. But this is Lila's first visit; Sam delays Norman through conversation. His bad acting (on two levels) and accusations of Norman keep us sympathetic to Norman and divided from Sam. In the house Lila has begun to move through the rooms and examine the furniture of Norman's mind. She sees a movement behind her and turns to find a full-length mirror. Like the audience, she has rummaged around in someone else's inner darkness and discovers there, instead of unknown horrors, something akin to herself. With Norman's return she races toward the fruit cellar and the final secret is revealed—"the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart."

Norman's psychosis is the MacGuffin of *Psycho*; its special nature is irrelevant. Hitchcock concentrates instead on problems of presentation and point of view, the uncertain line between the normal audience and the psychotic character, and the actually hazy areas of moral judgment. Throughout the movie we are placed in situations that challenge our conventionalized aesthetic and moral responses. Hitchcock's attack on the reflex use of conventional pieties is basically an attack on the desire of the audience to deny responsibility and assert complete detachment. The viewer who wants such placidity and irresponsibility is mocked by the pseudo-documentary beginning of the movie. If he chooses, he has another trapdoor available at the end—in the explanation of the psychologist.

Because Norman has murdered both his mother and her lover, we don't have the conventional out of psychiatric exoneration from guilt. But the psychologist does offer us a way to escape responsibility by even more acceptable means: he sets up a screen of jargon to "explain" Norman. For the viewer who has learned anything from *Psycho* he must be dismissed. The visual clues are all present: he is greasy and all-knowing; he lectures and gestures with false expansiveness. But it is his explanations that are really insufficient. And one wonders if any categories would be sufficient. Like the moral tags dispensed by the Chorus at the end of *Oedipus Tyrannos,* the bland wisdom of the psychologist bears little relation to the complex human reality that has been our experience in the rest of the movie. We understand Norman because we realize the continuum between his actions and our own. We leave the front office of "clear" explanation, while the psychologist is still talking, to enter Norman's cell. Through Hitchcock's manipulation of point of view and moral sympathy, we have entered the shell of his personality and discovered the rooted violence and perverse sexuality that may be in our own natures. Our desire to save Norman is a desire to save ourselves. But we have been walled off from the comfortable and reasonable and "technical" explanations of the psychologist. The impact that *Psycho* has upon us shows how deeply we've been implicated.

In 1955 Truffaut and Claude Chabrol had gone to interview Hitchcock on the location set of *To Catch a Thief* at Joinville. In their excitement they walked on the ice of a little pond in the center of a courtyard and fell in, tape recorder and all. Truffaut turns this into a charming anecdote: "It all began when we broke the ice." But he conducts the interview as if this first encounter were cautionary. It symbolizes his unwillingness to leave the surface and plunge, however uncertainly, into the dark and icy depths.

évènements d'Odessa (under various titles in the London and New York archives) to discover whether his is a direct copy or a more interesting imitation of this Pathé film about the mutiny on the battleship *Potemkin.* He should also check with the Danish archive to hear whether Ingvald C. Oes, to whom he gives the producer credit for two years of the best Nordisk films, was actually the manager of Nordisk's New York office. He should not feel scolded for such slips: more seasoned film historians can be fooled by false labels or a resemblance. In their valuable book, *Georges Méliès, Mage* (1961) Maurice Bessy and Lo Duca reproduce a frame enlargement on p. 213 as "Image d'un film inconnu de Méliès"—imps torturing a sleepless victim; but the chafing dish at one side might have given them a hint: this is actually from a fantastic film by Edwin Porter, *Dream of a Rarebit Fiend* (1906). If Bessy and Lo Duca had had a chance to see the complete film (fortunately extant, though not in the Library of Congress collection) it would have revealed its American origin with New York lamp-posts, Brooklyn Bridge, etc. Anyone who knows this film might point to other elements that distinguish this frame from Méliès's work (which certainly inspired it), but would we all be so sure?

As the majority of the films registered before 1913 at the Copyright Office were recorded by photographs or single frames,* I hope that the University of California Press will publish a sequel to the paper-print list, to show us these images—possibly a solider base for future historians of the film than misleading words.

* ". . . I understand that some pioneer film producers sent in only a few frames, but these were not included in the paper-print conversion program and therefore [?] will be lost to future historians."—Kemp R. Niver, "From Film to Paper to Film," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress,* Oct. 1964, p. 250.

Film Reviews

HOUR OF THE WOLF

Written, directed, and produced by Ingmar Bergman. Photography: Sven Nykvist. United Artists.

Film historians have a way of forcing filmmakers, and whole movie industries, into a sequential parade. Each group is allowed a few years to produce its masterpieces, and then it's "Sorry, Italy, time's up," and on to Japan. There's a kind of time-table that aspiring film historians, and especially enrollees in film-history courses, can follow. 1896–1900: France (Realism and Fantasy); 1901–1918: United States (The Birth of the Story Film, and Early Comedy Masters); 1919–1924: Germany (Expressionism); 1925–1930: U.S.S.R. (The Principles of Montage); 1931–1940: France (Early Sound-Film Masters); 1941–1942: Orson Welles (Hollywood Defied); 1943–1950: Italy (Neorealism); 1951–1953: Japan (West Meets East); 1954–1957: Ingmar Bergman (The Solemn Swede); 1958–1960: France (The *Nouvelle Vague*); 1961–1963: Italy (Son of Neorealism). The mid-sixties Cup hasn't been awarded yet, but the Czechs will be hard to beat . . .

This Cook's-tour approach, which covers film history in the manner of a TV news program (" . . . and now, come in, René Clair, in Paris . . ."), tends to consider stylistic or thematic refinement to be aimless repetition; the innovation of an editing technique, or of a choice of subject matter, is thought more important than its perfection. The liveliest road is paved, it seems, with the broken careers of directors who shot their artistic wad too early in life, and there's little hope for rehabilitation.

Of course, film historians are not alone in searching for, and writing about, novelty rather than nuance: a recent, voluptuously illustrated art-history book all but ignores Degas while devoting several pages to Jackson Pollack. Pollack, after all, did something that is easy to talk about, whereas Degas . . .

Poor Degas. Poor Porter, Griffith, Chaplin, Sennett, Lang, Murnau, Eisenstein, Clair, Carné, Duvivier, Feyder, Welles, Visconti, Rossellini, DeSica, Zampa, Chabrol, Truffaut, Fellini and the rest who (according to, and favoring the argument of, the historians) peaked during their assigned golden years and then petered out in repetitions and exaggerations of their early works. And poor Bergman—a director of the fifties. Bergman suffered the additional misfortune of being the center of a cult, first in Paris in 1958, then in Britain, and finally in the United States. The "metaphysical ambiguities" of his films were dissected and disputed by the kind of people who delight in the *London Times* crossword puzzles, and for the same reasons. A reversal was predictably imminent. Once the puzzle was solved, they moved on (to *L'Avventura*, and then to *Last Year at Marienbad*, and then to *8½*). Those who adopted Bergman when he was a cult disowned him when he became a fad. (See also Albee, Dylan, Barth, McLuhan, King.) *Cahiers du Cinéma's* Jean-Luc Godard, who had drooled over the somber and sentimental (but quite effective—there's no sense in damning everything the Bergmanes praised) *Illicit Interlude* of 1950, gave his 1958 film *The Magician* "one blob—not worthy of comment," and the reaction had begun. (Godard has always been a trend-setter.) It was sealed by the awarding of Oscars to *The Virgin Spring* and *Through a Glass Darkly*.

British critics, following the French withdrawal of tropes, devoted whole chapters of their books to Bergman (the name was still a selling factor) but found subtle reasons for his failure. This was a more difficult feat than writing a negative review of one film, for the writer had to discover something like a character flaw that marred even Bergman's best works (i.e., the films the critic had loved the year before). John Russell Taylor thought Bergman a bit schizoid: he's a fine director, a fine scriptwriter, but somehow . . . (but, but wouldn't schizophrenia be the most appropriate disorder for the creator of so many polar and split personalities?) Penelope Houston accused Bergman of manipulating his characters (unlike, say, Godard, who lets his characters manipulate him, with a bit of self-manipulation for variety's sake—and again, with all of Bergman's Manipulat*ed*-Artist figures, what else could he be but a Manipulat*ing* Artist?).

In the United States, the cause was shouldered by Stanley Kauffmann, who abandoned his gentleman-and-scholar style to lead off Bergman reviews with lines like "A failure by Ingmar Bergman is always welcome" and "It is now clear that we must resign ourselves to the present state of Ingmar Bergman's virtues." Pauline Kael offered the ultimate judgment: "When you come out of some of his movies, you won't want to do *anything*." (This criterion, if handled carefully, could be the basis for a whole new school of critical evaluation: *Jud Süss, The Pink Pussy,* and *Psycho* must be good films, because people have come out of them wanting to do something—and they've done it. What would anyone want to do after coming out of *The Rules of the Game,* or *Falstaff,* or *Madame de . . .*?)

Bergman's compatriots, both directors and critics, were just as harsh. Bo Widerberg, who made *Raven's End* and *Elvira Madigan*, has criticized Bergman for making films about God's existence "fifty years after people stopped thinking about it," and lamented that most Swedish films were either vertical (Bergman's God-and-man studies) or horizontal (the familiar sex scenes). And *Chaplin*, the Swedish film magazine, published an "anti-Bergman" number, with one article contributed, under a pseudonym, by Bergman.

The most devastating index of Bergman's decline was shown in the US grosses of his films. By 1962, he had notched five hits in America, and many theaters were running Bergman retrospectives—an unprecedented homage to a director, and one that reflected the burgeoning interest in foreign films as well as his personal success. But, in the past six years, only one Bergman picture has made much money: the supposedly sensational *The Silence*. During the Bergman boom years, US distributors bought

HOUR OF THE WOLF

and released practically every old Bergman film available; recently, two features in which he participated—Alf Kjellin's *Lustgarden* (Bergman wrote the script) and the seven-part *Stimulantia* (he wrote, directed and photographed one segment)—have been ignored by US distributors. It seemed as though nearly everyone would have been pleased if Bergman had realized his threat to retire from films at age 50 (he was born in 1918) and devote himself to the theater.

Bergman finally responded to his loss of a Pantheon column by making *Persona*. Most critics (including the once chary, now charitable Stanley Kauffmann) credited him with the creation of a masterpiece. It was called Bergman's best film. And there's little doubt that *Persona* is great. But one suspects other factors in the general effusion. For a start, Bergman gave the critics a film they could be familiar with, for it contained much that was cinematically fashionable. He put aside godly things to concentrate on a secular, human relationship. He threw in reminders that *Persona* was a film and references to other films. (Although the insertion of a burning film strip at *Persona*'s most involving moment—the nurse has just evoked a scream of pain from the formerly mute actress—can be defended as a reminder that we are watching an actress playing an actress playing an offstage role, it and the other interruptions dull the film's remarkable emotional impact. But they served both to taunt those who had called Bergman's work "stagey" and to give critics an opportunity to do a paragraph on "filmic films.") He avoided a linear narrative structure (*Persona* consists of vignettes, which in a story film would be out-takes); viewers who were baffled by *Marienbad* and *Red Desert* were ready to approach and applaud something that looked similar. In other words, *Persona* is neither vertical nor horizontal, but diagonal. And for the critics of his renowned social indifference, Bergman included a scene of a self-immolating monk. (The Buddhist burned himself; Bergman burned his film, the closest he's come to cinematic civil disobedience.) So, for these and other reasons—such as, admittedly, the film's crystalline ambiguity, Bergman's controlled direction, and Bibi Andersson's astounding performance as the

nurse—the National Society of Film Critics chose *Persona* as the best film of the year. But then, 1967 was not a very good year.

Hour of the Wolf opened in New York during a week that also saw the premières of Godard's *La Chinoise* (with which it shares a film-within-a-film structure) and Buñuel's *Belle de Jour* (with which it shares another round of the illusion-or-reality shell game), and so missed some of the attention it might have received in a week not so congested with quality films.

Hour of the Wolf has much in common with *Persona,* its identical twin: the theme, that of a Blocked Artist (no other term will do) with an identity problem; the number of characters (two, with a number of peripheral phantoms—the difference being that, in *Persona,* the phantoms were probably real but were not shown, while in *Hour of the Wolf,* they are probably unreal but are shown); the secluded setting; and the pervasive vampirism (implicit in *Persona,* explicit in *Hour of the Wolf*). And yet it might be more rewarding to investigate the differences between the films: *Hour of the Wolf* is a story film, with a beginning, a middle, and an end (though, as Godard said in another context, "not necessarily in that order"); it displays specific literary references, as opposed to *Persona*'s general filmic ones; and it confronts the stylistic innovations of certain *nouvelle vague* directors in a way more consistent with what we recognize as good old Bergman.

The protagonist is Johan, a painter whose work has not been going well, and the antagonist is either a group of perverse aristocrats or his crumbling mind that imagines the group. Johan, spending the summer with his pregnant wife Alma (who, with the aid of Johan's diary, narrates the film) at their Frisian Island retreat, is physically and psychically restless. Alma offers herself as a human teddy-bear, always around for Johan to hug, to outstare, and to sketch. For a short time, this seems to help: "If I could draw you patiently, day after day," Johan muses. But night after night, presumably during the hour of the wolf (the hour just before dawn), he sketches strange faces that Alma has never seen. One morning, she meets one of Johan's characters: a woman who claims to be 216 years old. (Since she is played by the Ernest Thesiger of Swedish films, Naima Wifstrand, who was a 200-year-old witch in *The Magician,* we tend to believe her.) She tells Alma to read Johan's diary, and through it three other apparitions are introduced: two are inhabitants of a castle on the island, and one is Veronica Vogler, Johan's long-gone mistress (probably dead, and probably the mother of his son). Immediately we grow suspicious. These spectres are charming and poised. Bergman's villians have rarely tried to hide their intentions. Could it be that Johan is simply paranoid?

When we meet the group (through a subjective camera) at a party for Johan and Alma, we recognize Bergman's demons as nothing more frightening than ghosts from his old films. Why, it's the crowd from *The Magician*; how pleasant to see them again! Along with Miss Wifstrand, we find Erland Josephson and Gertrud Fridh, who played Consul and Mrs. Egerman, the bourgeois dupes in the earlier film, and who have been elevated from bureaucrats to aristocrats (as Baron and Baroness Von Merkens). As the dinner party begins, the camera and acting styles recall still other spirits: Giulietta's. Like all those jet-set parties in Fellini's last three films, this one is caught by a peripatetic camera. After encircling the guests at the round dinner-table, Sven Nykvist's camera (he is the camera operator as well as the director of photography on Bergman's pictures) roams from one mobile face to the other, like a newcomer trying to keep apace with several diverse running conversations. Except to record Johan's and Alma's first befuddled, then fearful reactions to the constantly louder and more congested talk, Bergman cuts hardly at all. The gestures of the performers are also pure Fellini: an old man bites his napkin and throws his head back in ecstatic agony of guilt; the Baroness moues and strokes her chest; the aristocrats are compulsive people-touchers when emphasizing a rhetorical point. Just as the visual, verbal and tactile oppression is about to precipitate an

emotional explosion from Johan, the diners adjourn for some postprandial entertainment. It is clear, even before these new games begin (and we know from other Bergman films that the evening's highlight will be Pump the Poet), that the ghosts from *The Magician* are bent on revenging the humiliation suffered ten years back, that their charm is a diabolic one, that they are poised like a snake to inject venom and a vampire to extract blood. Johan and Alma hold each other as they prepare to be entertained.

The demons put Johan and Alma through a hazing straight out of *The Golden Bough* (via Tod Browning's *Freaks*), as each in turn insults either his artistic endeavors or her ignorance of the Veronica Vogler affair. The Baron tells of buying a painting, hanging it upside down, and inviting the artist along with "some people who enjoy a good joke." The Baroness shows Alma a portrait Johan had made of Veronica ("I've bought myself a large slice of your husband") and reveals a love-bite that reminds Alma of one Veronica displayed to Johan in the early diary entry. By the end of the evening Alma is certain that, corporeal or hallucinatory, the castle's inhabitants are demoniacal. "They want to part us. They want you to themselves," she cries to Johan as they walk back to their house. Johan says nothing, and leaves her alone as the hour of the wolf approaches. The second half of the film (prefaced with the title: Hour of the Wolf) relates how the demons capture Johan's mind for themselves.

The last forty minutes (which Bergman unfortunately seems to consider the body of the film) are as labored and obvious as the first forty were lovely and ambiguous. We learn that Johan's anxiety derives from a childhood closet scene (he was locked in one) that harkens back to the Penguin Freud of *Juliet of the Spirits*. The Humiliated-Artist scenes are exaggerated until they become comic rather than cathartic. The old woman has an eye-popping scene that recalls a venerable dirty joke. Bergman's desperation leads him to make heavy-handed visual puns (as when the Baron, after telling Johan that Veronica is now his mistress, is driven up the wall with jealousy). And what is meant to be the film's big nightmare sequence (it is harshly overexposed, like the opening of *The Naked Night*) is perhaps its least successful. While fishing at the edge of the sea (the unconscious, that is), Johan is attacked by the memory of his son, which we see as a child who sinks his teeth into Johan's neck. In a Teutonic way the image of the artist fishing his unconscious is humorous (as is Bergman's metaphor of vampirism in the relationship of the subconscious to the conscious mind), but the fear lingers that Bergman's intent was serious.

Although the second half of *Hour of the Wolf* calls to mind the worst excesses of *Night Games, Diabolique* and, especially, *Juliet of the Spirits* (Kauffmann called *Juliet* "8½: Ladies' Size"; *Hour of the Wolf* is a sort of man-sized *Persona*), it is almost saved by several brilliant images. In the fishing scene, after Johan has killed his son and dropped him into the water, the boy slowly sinks and then, even more slowly, rises until his long hair floats on the water's surface like a lily pad—and he sinks again. In Johan's final visit with Veronica, in the depths of the castle, she is stretched out on a table. Johan approaches the table, removes the white sheet that covers her seemingly dead body, and, again very slowly, very delicately, runs his hand over her, from head to foot. No interior monologue or heavy breathing is needed to convey the aching memories and throbbing anticipation that Johan must feel. As an example of Bergman's ability to convey the deepest sexual emotions with the simplest dramatic devices, this sequence is equalled only by Bibi Andersson's confession of a beach orgy in *Persona*. It is, in fact, that scene's visual counterpart.

Hour of the Wolf is most similar to *Persona* and *The Magician* (persona is the Latin word for "mask"; *ansiktet*, the original title of *The Magician*, means "face), but there are nominal and thematic references to other Bergman films. His artist-conjurer-Christ-clown figures have been similarly debased in *The Naked Night, The Seventh Seal,* and *Wild Strawberries*. Ver-

onica Vogler's surname is shared by the actress in *Persona* (played by Liv Ullmann, who is Alma in the current film) and the mesmerist and his wife in *The Magician* (played by Max von Sydow and Ingrid Thulin, who are Johan and Veronica in *Hour of the Wolf*). Alma is the name of Bibi Andersson's nurse in *Persona* and of Frost's wife, who figures so prominently in the opening flashback sequence of *The Naked Night*.

Rarer in a Bergman film is the reliance on "outside sources." In *Hour of the Wolf*, the model is Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and, though a specific reference to it during the party seems at first superfluous, we later realize that it is doubly relevant: because the film is a retelling of the *Magic Flute* story, and because, whereas the dramas from *Through a Glass Darkly* to *Persona* were "chamber" films (described by Jörn Donner as covering "short spans of time with few actors" and possessing "something of the character of intimate music"), *Hour of the Wolf* is frankly operatic. The settings are expansive rather than constrictive; there are many characters, and each is given a verbal aria; the treatment, like most libretti, is melodramatic in the extreme. The film draws its inspiration from *The Magic Flute*'s artful conglomeration of magic, music, farce, and fragmentary statements of high-sounding philosophy. When Johan and Alma finish their dinner at the castle, a Dracula-like character puts on a puppet show to entertain them: a scene from *The Magic Flute*. After it he notes, to the discomfort of the artist (Johan? Bergman?), that Mozart had transformed a commissioned work into a work of art. (Bergman received a $1,000,000 commission from United Artists to make *Persona* and *Hour of the Wolf*.) Later in the film Johan, in the *Magic Flute* role of Tamino, pursues his wife Veronica, who in a modification of the operatic version has been (we presume) dead for some years. Somehow transported to the castle by its inhabitants for their amusement of the event, Veronica plays the role of Pamina, daughter of the Queen of the Night. The Dracula-puppeteer, whom Johan has identified with Papageno the Bird-Man, plays that part in helping Johan find Veronica (he leads him to her through a crow-filled corridor). Johan finds her, in the scene already described, lying on a table like the boy in *Persona*. Upon receiving the sixties equivalent to a Prince's kiss, Veronica returns to life and joins with the demons, who we find have been watching all along, in laughing at Johan. The artist's marriage with his past is a farce, and Johan goes to pieces. "The glass has been shattered," Johan tells his amused audience, "but what do the splinters reflect?"

If all the splinters of modern art have anything in common, it is that they are, and claim to be nothing more than, splinters of an experience; and film is the most fragmented of the arts. As Bergman has reminded us, we spend half our movie-watching time in the dark. A film is made in fragments and edited to form something cohesive. Only in the last decade have many film-makers abandoned the pretension of wholeness; the *nouvelle vague* directors popularized this idea. And only in his last two films has Bergman attempted to relate this to his patented style. If *Persona* was a recognition of the *nouvelle vague*, *Hour of the Wolf* may be said to be an understanding of it. Bergman always draws his themes and images from one reservoir that often risks going dry. In this film he has added to his usual reference book the quotes from *The Magic Flute* (and, to a lesser extent, the works of E. T. A. Hoffmann). Although these references are not the irrelevant quotes that Godard, after a morning's browse in Left Bank bookstalls, inserts in the afternoon's footage, Bergman's reliance on them provokes the feeling that he's trying to support, or perhaps camouflage, a weak artistic performance. Yet it is an admirable performance, for to his personal interests Bergman bends the originally French techniques in a way that is more subdued than that of *Persona* and better suited to those interests.

For instance, *Persona*'s fusion of those two *nouvelle vague* metaphysical mouthfuls, temporal indeterminacy and the narration of possibilities, is reduced in *Hour of the Wolf* to a

story with an identifiable chronology, and there is only one sequence, Johan's disappearance soon after his meeting with Veronica, which represents possible variations on a single action. Bergman's camera-consciousness, which seemed a distracting afterthought in *Persona* (bits of film were edited into the film proper), is more germane here. *Hour of the Wolf* opens with the incidental noises of preparation for shooting—hammering, some genial cursing, and then "Camera, action!"—followed by an interview with Alma. In *Persona,* only Bergman, not any of his actors, was camera-conscious; the performers spoke most of their lines, in the best dramatic-film tradition, to that mythical person just to the side of the camera. In *Hour of the Wolf,* Alma faces and talks into the camera. The other characters are not conscious of the camera, but there is no stylistic need for them to be, since the "story" is told in dramatic-film flashbacks. Whereas *Persona*'s one face-on monologue (a doctor's explanation to the nurse of the actress's problem) had perversely theatrical overtones (because the doctor speaks into, but not to, the camera), an eye-to-the-audience situation exists in *Hour of the Wolf* which, while hardly improvised, approaches the intended sense of spontaneity.

Bergman has also applied the shuffling of filmic tenses, a technique associated with Alain Resnais, to *Hour of the Wolf.* The present tense is represented by the interviews with Alma, the past by the "story," and the past conditional by Johan's nightmares. The directors differ in the extent to which they use tenses other than the present: Resnais's are usually flashes (whether back, forward or inward), while Bergman's are fleshed out. Resnais's are shots, Bergman's are sequences. Before restricting Bergman to a mere extension of Resnais's innovations, we should recall that Bergman developed a full and integral sequence of tenses in *Wild Strawberries,* released in Paris two years before *Hiroshima, Mon Amour.*

It would be demeaning to think of *Hour of the Wolf* as the sum of Resnais's, Godard's, Mozart's and Hoffmann's parts. Bergman elicits most of his best effects from his trademarked bag. His direction of actors and, especially, actresses is unequalled. He writes impressive, intensive scenes and parts for them, and photographs them in close-ups that catch each well-wrought facial nuance. The only exception in the current film is Max von Sydow, who gives his typically stolid, rather than solid, performance. His way of conveying Johan's artistic discomfort is to run his finger around the inside of his collar and squint pensively into the sunset. He does manage one nice imitation of Bill Cosby's fatuous smile; and he does possess the camera presence necessary to give some force to the often weak lines Bergman has written for him.

Close-ups abound. Often when Bergman puts any distance between the camera and his actors, they begin to look ludicrous (as in *Through a Glass Darkly,* a poor film with few close-ups and many unsuccessful tableaux.) Part of *Persona*'s success was due to the emphasis on close-ups—the most extreme example being a monologue that Bibi Andersson delivered twice, so that the reactions of both speaker and listener could be observed without distraction. *Hour of the Wolf* features many close-ups of many memorable faces. The scene in which Gertrud Fridh (outstanding as the Baroness) stares at the painting of Veronica and says, simply and fiercely, "I love her," is the kind of thing Bergman does best. The Papageno character's description of a scene from *The Magic Flute* generates the excitement of a great teacher-performer holding his student audience spellbound. Bergman can wring incredible intensity out of a scene that consists of Alma reading off the month's bills to an indifferent Johan. Liv Ullmann's Alma is a moving composite of words, whimpers, smiles, admiring and admonishing glances. She is the show-normal person in Bergman's wolf-world, and she imparts Alma's helpnessness in the face of Johan's blossoming insanity with grace and understanding. If the weakness of the second part of Bergman's script keeps *Hour of the Wolf* from the greatness *Persona* achieved, his command of actors and

scenes saves it from banality. The critics, somewhat mellowed, seem to realize this: reviews of the film have been, deservedly, reserved but respectful. Bergman, also mellowed, must find some solace or—like his tormented artist—compulsion in film-making, for he is scheduled to spend his fiftieth birthday (this Bastille Day) shooting a new color film. Unlike Johan, he has not disappeared.

At the end of *The Naked Night,* Frost relates a dream: curling up in Alma's lap, he becomes smaller and smaller, a baby, enters her womb and becomes a seed. Johan does the same. All that's left of him is his child, inside Alma. In the interview that ends the film, Alma says, "I don't know what to think, and I . . ." The soundtrack is cut off (a completion of the prologue) and Alma is left to face the last hour of the wolf—her own—alone.

—Richard Corliss and Jonathan Hoops

POINT BLANK

Director: John Boorman. Producer: Judd Bernard. Script: Alexander Jacobs, David Newhouse and Rafe Newhouse, from a novel, "The Hunter," by Richard Stark. Photography: Philip H. Lathrop. Music: Johnny Mandel. MGM.

"Point Blank," according to Webster's, means "aimed directly toward the mark; specifically, in gunnery, not having, or allowing for, an appreciable curve in trajectory." Perhaps the definition helps clear up some of the abundant ambiguity in John Boorman's first Hollywood effort. Only Walker, the indestructible protagonist of the movie, is shot point blank; twice, in fact, and by a magnum revolver at a distance of eight to ten feet. Both bullets tear into Walker's stomach; they are the sort of wounds which prove fatal in nine out of ten cases. But in Boorman's film, Walker (Lee Marvin) survives the blasts, crawls out of the Alcatraz prison cell where the shooting occurs, and mysteriously, miraculously gets across the channel between The Rock and the mainland. A tour guide on one of the sight-seeing launches which ply the waters matter-of-factly announces that the Bay is so notorious for its deadly currents and freezing waters that few prisoners ever attempted escape. Furthermore, there has never been conclusive evidence that anyone who did made it to the mainland. "How did *you* do it, Walker?" asks Keenan Wynn. Indeed, how did he?

One possible solution, however specious, however barely tenable, is that Walker the Superman, like Cégeste in Cocteau's *Orphée,* is mysteriously resuscitated from the floor where he has fallen, that he has been summoned from one underworld to perform an act of nemesis in another. The title sequence, a series of stark, unearthly images, both still and moving, might be seen as the revival of the dying or as the recall of the ungrateful dead: Walker rising into frame from the prison cell, crossing the yard; climbing a high, barbed-wire fence, and, finally, splashing into the icy waters of the Bay. In credit-sequence shots where Walker appears, Marvin is made to strike a pose and freeze, while the background (clouds, seagulls, and so on) move as they normally would. In other images—mostly of heavily oxidized pieces of pipe and metal—the action is freeze-framed optically. The juxtaposition of these two types of images builds up a fragmentary, expressionistic mood quite reminiscent of the films of Resnais, particularly *Marienbad.*

But whereas *Marienbad,* according to Robbe-Grillet, was a film about a "persuasion," *Point Blank* is about a retribution. Walker has been betrayed by his wife and best friend, and he's been cut out of his share of a double-cross, $93,000 stolen from the Syndicate. But *how did* Walker get across the channel? *Point Blank* makes fascinating viewing if Walker is seen as a revived restless spirit, an exterminating angel brought back by the gods, returned to the living to stalk his betrayers and avenge his own death at the hands of those more wicked than himself. There is evidence for this view of protagonist-as-peripatetic poltergeist: the long walk down the corridor of the Los Angeles Airport brings to mind visions of Orpheus emerging from Hades; Walker's encounter with his wife, Lynn, finds her vague and uncertain of his "existence" beside her, and, most important, he is never *directly* responsible for any of the deaths which occur during the film. Lynn dies

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"Point Blank," according to Webster's, means "aimed directly toward the mark; specifically, in gunnery, not having, or allowing for, an appreciable curve in trajectory." Perhaps the definition helps clear up some of the abundant ambiguity in John Boorman's first Hollywood effort. Only Walker, the indestructible protagonist of the movie, is shot point blank; twice, in fact, and by a magnum revolver at a distance of eight to ten feet. Both bullets tear into Walker's stomach; they are the sort of wounds which prove fatal in nine out of ten cases. But in Boorman's film, Walker (Lee Marvin) survives the blasts, crawls out of the Alcatraz prison cell where the shooting occurs, and mysteriously, miraculously gets across the channel between The Rock and the mainland. A tour guide on one of the sight-seeing launches which ply the waters matter-of-factly announces that the Bay is so notorious for its deadly currents and freezing waters that few prisoners ever attempted escape. Furthermore, there has never been conclusive evidence that anyone who did made it to the mainland. "How did *you* do it, Walker?" asks Keenan Wynn. Indeed, how did he?

One possible solution, however specious, however barely tenable, is that Walker the Superman, like Cégeste in Cocteau's *Orphée,* is mysteriously resuscitated from the floor where he has fallen, that he has been summoned from one underworld to perform an act of nemesis in another. The title sequence, a series of stark, unearthly images, both still and moving, might be seen as the revival of the dying or as the recall of the ungrateful dead: Walker rising into frame from the prison cell, crossing the yard; climbing a high, barbed-wire fence, and, finally, splashing into the icy waters of the Bay. In credit-sequence shots where Walker appears, Marvin is made to strike a pose and freeze, while the background (clouds, seagulls, and so on) move as they normally would. In other images—mostly of heavily oxidized pieces of pipe and metal—the action is freeze-framed optically. The juxtaposition of these two types of images builds up a fragmentary, expressionistic mood quite reminiscent of the films of Resnais, particularly *Marienbad.*

But whereas *Marienbad,* according to Robbe-Grillet, was a film about a "persuasion," *Point Blank* is about a retribution. Walker has been betrayed by his wife and best friend, and he's been cut out of his share of a double-cross, $93,000 stolen from the Syndicate. But *how did* Walker get across the channel? *Point Blank* makes fascinating viewing if Walker is seen as a revived restless spirit, an exterminating angel brought back by the gods, returned to the living to stalk his betrayers and avenge his own death at the hands of those more wicked than himself. There is evidence for this view of protagonist-as-peripatetic poltergeist: the long walk down the corridor of the Los Angeles Airport brings to mind visions of Orpheus emerging from Hades; Walker's encounter with his wife, Lynn, finds her vague and uncertain of his "existence" beside her, and, most important, he is never *directly* responsible for any of the deaths which occur during the film. Lynn dies

at her own hand, from an overdose of sleeping pills; Mel, his ex-partner, stumbles and falls, naked, from the parapet of his own penthouse apartment, and the rest of the "victims" die from wounds inflicted by a mysterious sniper—perhaps a symbol of the indifferent violence of our times. Lynn asks Walker if it isn't "good . . . to be dead." Later, her sister (Angie Dickenson), halfway through the film, tells Walker "You died at Alcatraz all right." Both Lynn and Mel, like Macbeth, could be the victims of the deceptions of their own guilty minds. But this interpretation has its limitations: Mel is not the sort of man who would allow his conscience to take the upper hand. And we are shown physical evidence of Walker's medical rehabilitation: during a scene of love-making with his sister-in-law, she runs her fingers along two nasty scars on his abdomen. It is possible, then, that the bullets did not pierce his intestines; that there is, in fact, a scientific explanation for his uncanny survival. But how *did* he get to the mainland?

There is a more satisfactory, alternate explanation: that Walker is lost in a labyrinth of troubled memories, dreams, and wish-fulfillments at the moment of death. The film opens with Mel shooting Walker inside an open cell of the abandoned prison. Two shots are fired; Walker spins, then slumps to the floor. We hear his thoughts: "Cell. Prison cell. How'd I get here?" Then we flash back to the events leading up to the shooting: Mel convincing Walker to "trust" him; the two of them making away with the Syndicate delivery; Mel shooting the pick-up men, and, finally, Walker and Lynn waiting for Mel inside the empty cell. Like a recurring nightmare, the shooting is repeated a number of times during the film, as though Walker, in his own mind, must convince himself that he exists, if only as a participant in the events of a dream. "Did it happen?" he asks himself, lying on the prison floor. "Was it a dream?" Reality, for Walker, is a curious blending of natural phenomena and mental associations, *déjà vu,* and recapitulation. Like the characters of Resnais and Marker, Boorman's protagonist is always enmeshed in his own memories—of past, present, and future.

If *Point Blank* is a fantasy, it is an abortive one. And the film is more satisfying when accepted on literal terms; in a very real sense, Walker did die on the island—or a part of him, at least. He becomes so obsessed with the idea of retribution, of setting wrongs right, that he is rendered indestructible. Violence is shown to be a conditioned reflex; Walker is not really interested in collecting his $93,000; only in having justice. He uses the money, as do so many of us in everyday circumstances, as a justification for his ruthlessness. When he is, at the end, called forth to pick up his reward, Walker is silent, slipping back into the shadows; he does not exist as a person, but as a persona, as Everyman, as all of us.

Parker Tyler once wrote an extraordinary essay concerning the subjective nature of the film medium. It was his theory that film narratives succeed to the degree that they draw audiences into involvement with the characters and events depicted. Unconsciously, we identify with actors and actresses: if the director has managed to sustain our identification, for the duration of a film we live their lives, and they are agents for our subconscious fantasies. Walker is an amoral if destructive force in the landscape of our American Dreams, confirming our suspicions about such things as collusion between big business and organized crime. Just as Joseph Losey has proved the most perceptive critic of English life styles, Boorman, a Briton, may emerge as the most astute observer of our

POINT BLANK ►

own. In *Point Blank,* he has essayed the American scene, and his conclusion consistently insists that our greatest weakness is self-deception. Walker, himself confused by the nature of reality, is an allegorical figure, a mythical representation of truth, which strips away the chrome and tinsel façade obscuring our follies and weaknesses. Like Godard, Boorman finds extensive contradictions between what we pretend to be and what we actually are, what we think of ourselves and what outsiders see in us.

Just as Lynn carefully applies a false face at the beauty parlor prior to (and in expectation of?) Walker's return, so does the greasy, fast-talking car dealer "Big John" wear a false face for his customers. One of the Syndicate bigwigs, Carter, is shown to be a "respectable" member of his community, a real prince among people who are deceived by his wealth: he has just finished a speech at a charity organization when Walker first confronts him. Keenan Wynn is not identified as the leader of the Syndicate, Fairfax, until the climax of the film. I wonder how many other viewers thought, as I did, that he was a police detective—willfully allowing (or even ordering) the deaths of the other Syndicate figures—perhaps because his department has been unable to gather sufficient evidence for conviction.

Walker, as agent of truth, seeks an altogether different sort of revenge. In one case, it is revenge for every rotten business deal ever sold to us by salesmen of bills-of-goods and by door-to-door maniacs: to pry information from the car dealer, Walker demolishes one of "Big John's" best buys against the underpiling of a freeway. As the Demolition Derby becomes more and more destructive, audiences break into unselfconscious laughter, gleefully enjoying their own revenge. How ironic the scene is! Walker uses as his weapon of destruction the supporting columns of a platform constructed specifically for the expedition of automobile traffic. And when we have finished with the car, we leave the bewildered salesman listening to his own commercial on a "Top 40" radio station, telling us about his "great deals" on cars we suspect to be just about as roadworthy as the one we see before us. "Big John's" toothy smile and sugary hard-sell are the façade; planned obsolescence and repossession lurk beneath. But if we are deceived by the tools of the trade, it is only because we want to be: we get cheated because our values, like the promises these men make to us, are false.

Finally, Boorman and his screenwriters, Alexander Jacobs, David Newhouse, and Rafe Newhouse, extend their statement on deception to the media themselves, often finding ample evidence in support of Marshall McLuhan's conclusions about the "extensions of man." When Walker and his sister-in-law engage in a spat, Angie Dickinson jangles his nerves by "turning on" all manner of noisy kitchen appliances; the electrical machines are not only weapons but active participants in their quarrel. Even the TV set "plays a role" in their environment, providing an ironic comment on the mating dance by bringing Minnelli's *Tea and Sympathy* into the living room.

Perhaps the most remarkable sequence occurs when Marvin goes to a discotheque looking for his sister-in-law. On the stage is a wailing Negro entertainer, repeatedly screaming like a madman, encouraging the patrons to become part of the act (to identify, to become a part of the art form, just as we have become a part of the film). Most of those on whom he calls are the sort of red-neck barflies who dig black art because entertaining, they would maintain, has nothing to do with civil rights. But when these people mimic the entertainer, when they monkey-do with him, they are really deceiving themselves, submitting to him. As Leroy Jones has his young Negro tell the white prostitute in *Dutchman,* the black man may sing "to" the white man, but it is only to mock the honky, not entertain him. It is the black man's best way of avenging himself for all of the decades of minstrel Stepin Fetchits we've thrown at him.

Later, Walker goes out back to joust with some Syndicate henchmen. During this scene of almost unparalleled violence (during which Marvin once delivers a judo chop to a ruffian's genitals), Boorman dares to mirror his audi-

ence's reactions on a light-show screen behind the fighting men. Flashing on and off, the slide projections show us a woman who is alternately screaming in horror and crying out as though in some sort of ecstasy. In part, I suppose, this is a comment on the eclectic art forms of this decade: light shows, mixed-media events, and happenings. Rock music, especially, expresses sexuality as well as violence. Groups like The Doors and the Velvet Underground use violence—particularly sadomasochism—as an integral part of their act. This is violence-as-art as much as violence-in-art. Rock channels repressed erotic and violent emotions, just as the motion picture allows vicarious experiences of the same order. When Walker finishes with the attackers, he steps back into the discotheque, framed in the doorway and illuminated by a display of fireworks on film—part of the light show itself. He thus is absorbed into the electronic madness of contemporary popular art. And our identification with him becomes complete. It is in this central image that Marvin/Walker becomes very much a symbol of our times, and that *Point Blank* answers Godard's concept of the younger generation as "the children of Marx and Coca-Cola." Boorman sees American youth as the offspring of McLuhan and Pepsi. —JAMES MICHAEL MARTIN

THE STRANGER

Director: Luchino Visconti. Producer: Dino de Laurentiis. Screenplay by Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Georges Conchon, Emmanuel Robles, based on the novel by Albert Camus. Photography: Giuseppe Rotunno. Paramount.

Camus's novel, *The Stranger,* is one of the most commented and most misunderstood books of modern times. Luchino Visconti's film is faithful to the book in many respects; but, as I shall point out, the film does not and cannot capture the deep ambiguity of the book, that dimension which makes of it both an autobiographical document and a literary testimony to the point of view known as romantic egoism or solipsism.

One of the few obvious breaks with the book occurs at the beginning of the film we see Meursault, escorted by two cops, being led to prison. This turns the entire film into a flashback, a device that is not in itself offensive but does violate the spirit of indeterminacy and freedom that the book conveys.

Atmosphere, characterization, and narrative rhythm are all admirable visual translations of the book. Visconti captures not merely the sense of Algiers but the disorder and squalor of rented rooms, the repetitiveness of a clerk's life, the pervasiveness of bureaucracy, the European ritual of exchanging and smoking cigarettes—all qualities which are present in the novel. Color is beautifully controlled: the pastels of the North African sky and city, the orange of the buoy (picked up in Marie's bathing suit) where Meursault and Marie lie to soak up the sun, the Stygian blue-green of Meursault's solitary confinement cell. Carefully modulated electronic music conveys both a sense of city traffic and of something wilder and more inhuman.

The actors (with the possible exception of Marcello Mastroianni, who plays Meursault) are all admirably chosen. Anna Karina captures the affection and empty-headed sensuality of Marie; the Instructing Judge, the Prison Chaplin, and Raymond, Meursault's underworld friend, are all admirably acted.

Mastroianni too plays his role brilliantly. The last section of the film, Meursault's long monologue prior to his execution, is powerfully enacted without physical action, simply through the offstage voice and the changes of expression on the actor's face. Still, it is one of the anomalies of the film racket that the story of the most anonymous, the most private of men, Meursault, the nonentity lost in the mass, is played by the greatest and best-known of European stars, the man with the most easily recognizable face and mannerisms. This *does* harm the unity of effect that the film produces. Besides, Mastroianni is almost fifteen years too old for the role as it was written by Camus. The influence of Robert Bresson, which is felt in the factualness and restraint of the film, unfortunately did not go so far as the use of non-actors. Of course, the notion that Meursault is Everyman may be a mere cliché. There is a sense in which Meursault is also a star, that star of stars, Albert Camus. If

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the film can be taken autobiographically, then perhaps Mastroianni is a fitting Meursault after all.

Here we must leave the film for a moment and grapple with the deeper meanings of the book. The first authoritative interpretation of *The Stranger* was that of Sartre who used the book to characterize a "philosophy of the absurd."* The book demonstrates "primary absurdity," which Sartre defines as "a cleavage between man's aspirations to unity and the insurmountable dualism of mind and nature, between man's drive toward the eternal and the *finite* character of his existence, between the 'concern' which constitutes his very essence and the vanity of his efforts. Chance, death, the irreducible pluralism of life and of truth, the unintelligibility of the real—all these are extremes of the absurd." Sartre was the first to read the book as the statement of a respectable philosophical tradition, and by and large the book has been interpreted in this way ever since.

This interpretation of the novel is contested by René Girard in an article which looks far more closely than Sartre's at the novel that Camus has actually written.† Girard uses literary analysis to produce a psychological depth study of the implicit dimension of the novel. By opposing *The Stranger* to Camus's last book, *The Fall,* Girard is able to show a well-defined evolution in Camus's thought and life-style.

The three phases of Camus's career are generally taken to be: (1) The phase of *The Stranger* and *Caligula,* associated with the absurd and nihilism. (2) The phase of "engagement" or political commitment, associated with *The Plague.* (3) A phase of self-criticism, in which Camus seems to negate *both* of the preceding phases. Girard's analysis of *The Fall* clarifies this self-critical phase.

The crux of Girard's argument lies in the fact that both books are concerned with criminals and with judges. In *The Stranger* we have a murderer who is somehow "innocent"—at least we are made to feel that he is not responsible for his crime, or that he should not be punished for it. (For Sartre, the man of the absurd must be innocent, because transcendental morality has disappeared, and "everything is permitted." But this is a philosophical nicety, and we are made to feel and believe in Meursault's innocence even for the crime he has really committed!) The judges are really the guilty ones, since they sentence Meursault to death for not having cried at his mother's funeral. If Sartre's view held, then the judges could not be considered guilty any more than Meursault; but it is a fact that the reader considers them reprehensible. The reader is cleverly manipulated so that he assents to a manifestly false plot. As Girard says: "Do we really believe that the French judicial system is ruthlessly dedicated to the extermination of little bureaucrats addicted to *café au lait,* Fernandel movies, and casual love affairs with the boss's secretary?"

In *The Fall* the Narrator, Jean-Baptiste Clamance, informs us that he is a lawyer who has devoted himself to defending criminals against dishonest judges. In other words, he occupies the same position that Camus occupies in regard to Meursault. The essential difference is that the young Camus is self-righteous; the disabused Clamance is honest enough to avow that "his real desire was not to save his clients but to prove his moral superiority by discrediting the judges."

There has been a change in Camus. He no longer believes that it is possible to sit back and sneer at "the others" as dishonest judges; he realizes that the criminal must be punished, and that the judges must judge. Real moral superiority is not as easy to come by as the nihilist or solipsist assumes.

Girard then goes on to analyze the point of view developed in *The Stranger.* He maintains that Meursault's act of murder is the moral equivalent of Camus's act of writing a novel. Each is a solitary, a man cut off from the world by romantic pride, who claims to have no need or interest in the world; yet each performs an

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* Jean-Paul Sartre, *Literary Essays* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), pp. 24–41.

†René Girard, "Camus's Stranger Retried," *PMLA,* (Vol. LXXIX, 1964), pp. 519–533.

act which, contradictorily, draws the attention of the world. "Please don't bother to notice me!" each shouts from his solipsistic solitude.

Girard's interpretation is the only one that has ever satisfactorily explained the last line of the novel, Meursault's wish that, at his execution, the crowd greet him with cries of hate. This is perfectly in keeping with the solipsist or romantic egoist who asks for attention, while seeming to avoid it, who cannot relate to society except as its victim—the man, in short, who judges the judges and fully expects to be sentenced to death because he failed to cry at his mother's funeral.

The awareness of these problems is not to be found in the film; we can safely assume that Visconti is unaware of them.

Still, the film has extraordinary narrative fidelity. Visconti has accurately transposed the "inner time" of the book, that specific quality of monotony and swiftness with which event follows event. Each episode of the novel has its accurately matched "duration" in the film. Item: the wake, with Meursault sitting in a straight chair beside his mother's coffin; the funeral procession; the lunch at Céleste's; the walk on the beach; the boredom of a Sunday with nothing to do; the heat of the courtroom where Meursault listens uncomprehendingly to the rhetoric of accusation and defense—in all of these scenes Visconti conveys not mere visual accurateness but the quality of psychological fate which pushes Meursault from one step to the next of his absurd adventure. No event is slighted, none is insisted upon.

But if Camus's narrative is accurately presented, what about the editorial or rhetorical dimension? The understated yet powerful polemic of the book *may* be conveyed—I am not sure. I have lost my own "innocence" in regard to Camus. The rather simplistic moral assumptions, which we were able to make only a few years ago (that society is inherently corrupt; that the individual can preserve his integrity by opting out; that sun, surf, and sex can somehow compensate for the absence of larger meanings), these assumptions no longer seem possible to me. And so I find in *The Stranger*, both book and film, a curiously archaic quality. The tremendous influence of this book, comparable to Goethe's *Werther* or Chateaubriand's *René*, is already in the past; and Meursault, the noble savage, the man without passions, the man of the absurd—Meursault, the solipsist and romantic egoist, appears to me with the same clarity of outline as those two sublime heroes of earlier generations. Indeed, Camus himself chose to inter Meursault when he wrote *The Fall*. Visconti's film seems to me, therefore, more an act of piety than a powerful and original piece of film art.

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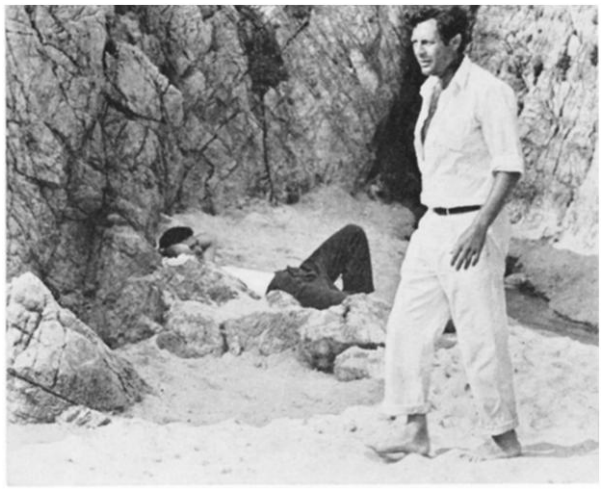

Marcello Mastroianni in The Stranger

THE YOUNG GIRLS OF ROCHEFORT

Script and Direction: Jacques Demy. Producer: Mag Bodard-Gilbert De Goldschmidt. Music: Michel Legrand. Photography: Ghislain Cloquet. Warners/Seven Arts.

Much of the excitement about the resurgence of interest in the musical among Hollywood producers is ill-founded. In the sixties nothing new has been contributed to the film musical tradition since the opening dance sequence and *Cool* number from *West Side Story* (1962). There are few people working in the film milieu who really care about the high standards set by such performers and directors as Astaire, Kelly, Garland, Donen, Minnelli, Berkeley, and Walters during the previous decades, and the

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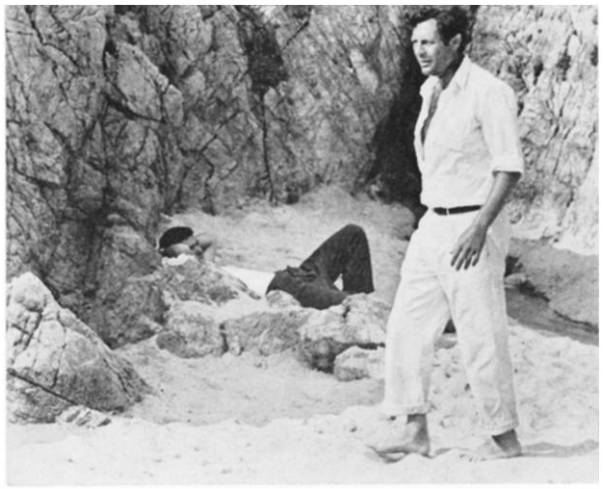

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abysmal ignorance of producers who refuse to utilize the lyric and choreographic talents of newcomers constitutes a major artistic scandal. The financial success of *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music* has led to an almost insane desire to cast the charming Miss Andrews in every forthcoming musical film, whether her personality is suitable to the material or not. Such non-musical directors as William Wyler, Richard Fleischer, Francis Coppola, and George Roy Hill have all dared to grapple with the delicate insights required for this genre, with results that will comprise another article.

These remarks are meant to establish, by comparison, the effect that the American musical film has had upon *foreign* directors; many European and Asian directors have taken characteristics of the form and reworked them into extremely skillful and likable films, aburst with color and satirical overtones. With France's Jacques Demy, musicals are *divertissements,* but underlying the merriment, there has to be a bit of longing and some touches of melancholy and regret. *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* was an experiment in song and narrative, a romantic tragedy in which music controlled the emotions of every character, where, miraculously, human beings gave expression to feelings which would be absolutely impossible to articulate except in song. To a large section of the American public, *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* was a unique success, and the genius of Demy as an imagist and controller of atmosphere was perfectly complemented by the melodic creativity of Michel Legrand. Legrand is truly the unsung hero of the film; for those who have been paying close attention to his orchestrations and film scoring for many years, his work in *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* was the brilliant culmination of a personal lyric style. Since film audiences are not really trained to *listen* to film music, the subtleties of Legrand's scores become apparent only after several confrontations with them, so that only now are people discovering the musical linkage between Legrand's score for *Lola* (1961) and *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg.*

In the newest Demy-Legrand film, *The Young Girls of Rochefort,* the music is as clever and inventive as expected, but the approach to the story is not in the operetta style of their earlier musical; here, the emphasis is on dance and character, and, most important of all, it is an *homage* to the American musical film tradition. This latter point must be stressed, because the French critics, outraged that one of their countrymen would dare to make a musical, wrongly presumed that Demy tried to *imitate* the work of Donen, Minnelli, et al. when, in fact, he had assumed that critics would joyfully recognize his witty, tongue-in-cheek tribute to musical delights-gone-by.

The plot is the usual, elegant criss-cross of unrequited lovers, damsels-in-longing, lonely and lyrical sailors, and so on, that characterized *Lola.* In this case, the young twin sisters, Solange and Delphine (Françoise Dorleac and Catherine Deneuve) run a small dancing school for children, dreaming of a gayer existence in Paris. When a traveling sports-fair arrives in Rochefort and sets up its booths in the sunlit square, commandeered by two brash American types, Etienne and Bill (George Chakiris and Grover Dale), the lyrical elements of the film are immediately set into motion.

The opening sequence (under the titles) shows the arrival of the sports-show troupe, and the beauty of the images is quite extraordinary. Demy's sense of rhythmic, dramatic responses on the part of an audience is uncannily authoritative and his view of the transport bridge above the river Charente immediately catches the eye—the troupe's members get out of their trucks to look at the approaching shore as insinuating tinkles of music are heard. The men and women gradually, in controlled, trancelike movements, began to respond to these sounds and by the time the music has built to a jazz climax, the cadences and gestures of ordinary life are transformed into dance. The excitement of pure lyric cinema is placed before us with the same effect as in the opening of *West Side Story*; dance fades into the realistic clang and uproar of trucks starting, the journey continues and the titles end. The allegiances to Wise and Robbins (hinted, too, by the presence of Chakiris) are further indicated in a lively pas de

Grover Dale, Françoise Dorleac, Catherine Deneuve, George Chakiris in Les Demoiselles de Rochefort

quatre *(Marins, Amis Amants* ou *Maris)* between Etienne, Bill and two girls from the fair, where taunting lyrics and Latin rhythms complement Legrand's jazz in an exuberant tribute to America; and finally, when all of the major characters are permitted brief reprises of their songs, with sharp cross-cutting, French audiences burst into applause at recognition of this witty obeisance to the *Rumble Quintet* from *West Side Story*—with Demy's light-hearted marivaudage contrasting slyly to the latter's serious lyric ode to violence.

Demy's second *homage* lies in the film's obvious tributes to Minnelli's *An American In Paris* (1951). Gene Kelly's appearance in the film as Andy Miller, an American composer searching for an old friend from his conservatory days, is one of the major pleasures of the film.* It is certainly Kelly's swan-song as a musical performer (he has now devoted himself entirely to directing), and in two numbers, Kelly evokes memories of his lyric-sailor days *(Anchors Aweigh, On The Town)* by a snappy tap dance on a Rochefort street with two American gobs; and with some schoolboys, he brings back the gaiety of his famous "I Got Rhythm" number from Minnelli's film. Perhaps the most moving interlude in *The Young Girls of Rochefort* is the adagio danced by Kelly and Dorleac in a spotless music store, to the theme of a rather grandiose concerto theme. Here Kelly recreates the same choreography used by the Seine with Leslie Caron when they danced to Gershwin's "Our Love Is Here to Stay" *(An American in Paris)*, and this tender good-bye-to-all-that valediction in dance is as timeless a statement for Kelly as "Dancin' Man" in *The Belle of New York* remains for Fred Astaire.

What are the major excellences of Demy's new film? First of all, there is Grover Dale. Although choreographer Norman Maen seems limited in his ideas (often, the dancers seem to be repeating the same steps, all leaps and turns), Grover Dale is one of the most exciting new male dancers in the musical cinema; in his numbers, always with others, he manages to convey a fresh, athletic enthusiasm and grace that is individualistic (one watches him, not the others), and it is hoped that an important place is found for him in the musical renaissance. Secondly, Demy has managed to surmount the limited choreographics by concentrating upon specific dance numbers, and during the dialogue

* Kelly was not originally considered for the film, and was signed only two weeks before shooting began on *Rochefort*. Nino Castelnuovo was the original leading man, playing Guy, the same character from *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. He was to meet Deneuve and be reminded of his former love, etc. However, Castelnuovo could not break a television commitment, and Demy had to rewrite the script to fit a new character, played by Kelly.

sequences, the atmosphere of *kermesse* never subsides; people dance along the street as if it were as natural as walking. With the dances, everything is presented on a major and minor basis—as the characters are singing to each other inside a shop, or a coffee house or a school, the silent dancers can be seen twirling outside. There has never been such a totally lyrical film before. Besides, the score by Legrand indicates the melodic gift and increasing contrapuntal complexity of his work. Although such performers as Michel Piccoli and Jacques Perrin are not usually associated with musicals, they carry out their dubbed miming with such accomplished perfection that one totally accepts them as lyrical personages. When Maxence, the lonely serviceman (Perrin) sings about his feminine ideal, Demy allows the actor to delineate his famous talents for expressive, visual emotion, so that Perrin's incredibly Garboesque features add to the poignant delicacy of the music. Credibility is suspended by some peculiar magical encounters between artist and lyric mood, but somehow, it all works beautifully. In the same way, the unrequited love of Simon, the music-store proprietor (Piccoli) and Yvonne, the café owner (Danielle Darrieux), is linked by a haunting musical theme, sung on separate occasions by each character with the nonchalant mannerisms of conversational monologue, brilliantly delivered with the same effect that one felt when first hearing the "Récit de Cassard" in *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. Of course, Legrand has his fling with several vocal tours de force; notably, a rapidly sung argument between Delphine and her boyfriend, Guillaume (Jacques Riberolles); two duets for the sisters, one, a fey, jazzy business à la Lambert-Hendricks-Ross ("Chanson des Jumelles"), and a hilariously inept parody of Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell ("Chanson d'un été"), complete with red sequined gowns, arm-length gloves, and Jack Cole gestures. The witticisms of Demy's lyrics are delightful, and it is hoped that the American distributors are aware of this when the subtitling is done. It is imperative that just about *everything* be translated (by someone with a sense of nuance and humor), for the lyrics are not only involved with characterizations, but they propel the story toward its ironic conclusion. Otherwise, much of the richness of the film is lost, particularly in those subtle conversations held when the characters bump into each other on the street, quite by chance, not knowing that one holds the key to the other's future, or Yvonne's incomparable mixture of horror and amusement as she reads in a newspaper that a kindly old customer is really a sex maniac.

The Young Girls of Rochefort is bathed in pastel hues, and Ghislain Cloquet's photography brings a sun-white glow to Rochefort's exceptionally picturesque town square and cobbled streets; the entire film is an exemplar of Demy's love for life and his personal experiment with the dancing cinema. One sometimes longs for a Michael Kidd, a Gower Champion, or a Robbins, but considering the many sophisticated things here, as Mr. Gershwin said, who could ask for anything more? Now that Demy has come to American shores, there are new cinematic roads to travel, and Nantes, Cherbourg and Rochefort are in the past. With the enormous amount of musical talent at his disposal in this country, it is certain that Jacques Demy will not ignore the possibilities of developing the American film musical tradition to a higher, more exciting level of art. —ALBERT JOHNSON

ELVIRA MADIGAN

Directed and written by Bo Widerberg. Photography: Jorgen Rersson. Cinema V.

The gorgeous color photography of *Elvira Madigan* leads the unwary to assume that Widerberg is trying to glorify a silly romance in a mush-headed or *A Man and a Woman* way. The film is based on an actual incident, and it is set back in the nineteenth century; yet this does not suffice to offset our natural modern skepticism about certain kinds of unfashionably desperate emotional attachments: relationships which "don't pay," or are "immature." Even when reminded that such things *do* happen,

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American audiences—and perhaps especially intellectuals and youth striving to be sophisticated—find it impossible to accept. Surely there must be *some* way out! Our endemic optimism will not easily admit that some situations *are* impossible, some emotional dilemmas insoluble. Surely with a good analyst . . . Hence we are able to confront the national suicide rate cheerfully: suicides are mistakes, and no more troubling than other unfortunate accidents. Rational people can avoid them. Yet we also believe that we believe in true love—overwhelming passion and deep feeling.

Widerberg's film, as it turns out, brings into question many of these attitudes, but its root impulse, I think, is chiefly to recapture a certain kind of adolescent passion. And this *is* a respectable enterprise; it's what *Romeo and Juliet* is about. I hope we have all experienced those fatal loves: affairs which so sweep up our emotional life that we cannot conceive of living if they ended. If we were candid, we would even confess to such feelings long after adolescence—in deaths and divorces, for instance. It is silly to disparage these feelings, by the standards of the sensible, practical, bargaining relationships we now consider healthy. (Although they are most familiar in adolescent loves, they have their source in the beginning of the human condition: the relation with the mother.) And for several centuries such "total" feelings were widely considered the criterion of true love; our current ideas would seem by contrast only a special kind of emotional business-relationship: rational and calculating, sensitive to changes in price. Widerberg's film is about something different, and he has rightly chosen to accompany much of it with a Mozart piano concerto—from which, even chopped up to fit the editing, emerges a pervasive melancholy. Mozart is neither elegiac nor romantic.

Large parts of *Elvira Madigan* are actually silent-film in style. The dialogue contributes some information necessary for grasping how the world is closing in, and how the lovers are unfitted to cope with it. Sixten is a count; he is unequipped to survive in ordinary life; although Elvira could earn money, doing so would destroy their relationship; and they cannot go back. Widerberg could have built conventional dramatic machinery to drive home these points—it is easy enough to contrive incidents at the border, to have Sixten recognized as a nobleman when trying to find work, to heighten the suspense of the chase. But the emotional side of the film is chiefly conveyed through "miming" and music. Many aspects of the situation are conveyed almost as Griffith might have done: the close-ups of diminishing money in hand, sinister fortune cards, the dagger and gun; Elvira's secret scene on the clothesline, the eating of berries and mushrooms, and of course the many (rather decorous) love scenes. This curiously antique quietness extends even to "action" scenes—as Elvira and Sixten steal away from a hotel where they have been spotted, they hide in breathless silence while a man strolls past; Sixten wins their last meal by a wordless game of strength. Their escape on horseback, their quarrel and boatride, even the suicide itself, are basically silent scenes. Widerberg deals only with peripheral matters through dialogue: Sixten's role as soldier, Elvira's selling of the Toulouse-Lautrec. And these turn out to be weak spots.

Like most silent films, thus, *Elvira Madigan* forces us to project our own emotional detailing into the lovers' situation; we must piece out for ourselves the underlying psychological drama of oblique developments and undercurrents. (The real Sixten and Elvira were rather more prickly and wild, it seems.) Unlike the talkative modern film, *Elvira Madigan* does not indulge us with a philosophical commentary on itself.

Pia Degermark in ELVIRA MADIGAN ►

Widerberg asks us only to follow the slow tightening of the ring of consequences which follow from their action. (Of course that action was a mistake by rational standards; that's one of the main reasons they did it.) Hence the film does not have ordinary suspense, except perhaps in the question of whether Elvira—since women are supposed to be closer to gut matters of life and death—might renege on the relationship, in favor of survival. But then suspense is hardly a *sine qua non* of drama, or no one would go to see a play he knew; and most of the world's theaters, with their familiar repertoires, would never have existed.

Instead, Widerberg is exploring some of the emotional territory that lies outside of ordinary life. (His shooting method is certainly exploratory—he shoots immense quantities of footage.) Despite its silent side, the film is also fashionably modern in its photography: much handheld camerawork, an immersion in the natural colors of Scandinavia which makes *Le Bonheur* look overripe, a formal enjoyment of the beauty of Elvira, and a large sweep of field in exterior long shots; the film is open and visually free. But the idyll is hardly idyllic. When the world most seems to shimmer miraculously in the summer sun, dues are running up that must be paid. The mystical union of the lovers can only exist outside of life; the pleasure principle must be fenced and confined if we are to survive; survival means compromise. If we accept its premises at all, we must see *Elvira Madigan* not as a mindless romance but as a melancholy emotional fable. —ERNEST CALLENBACH

Short Films

WAVELENGTH

Directed, script, photo, art direction, and editing by Michael Snow. Music by Ted Wolff. Cast: Amy Taubin, Hollis Frampton and others. 16mm color, with optical sound plus sound on separate magnetic tape.

The winning of the $4000 Grand Prix at the Belgian International Experimental Film Competition can certainly serve to rescue any independent film from either belated recognition or a premature burial, yet can simultaneously subject it to the misdirection of mass curiosity for the wrong reasons. "It must be interesting, to have won all that money." Michael Snow's *Wavelength,* winner of the 1967–68 Grand Prix though previously rejected by the New York Film Festival, will be shown again at the New York Film-makers' Cinematheque in response to an increasing audience demand.

Described by its creator (a sculptor, painter, musician, as well as film-maker) as "a continuous zoom which takes 45 minutes to go from its widest field to its smallest and final field," *Wavelength* is at once one of the simplest and one of the most complex films ever conceived. Literally oscillating between the conceptual and the immediately real, its four human occurrences interrupt yet remain tied into the flow of continually metamorphosing variations on the unrelenting crescendo of its "one shot" toward and into the four windows of a Canal Street loft.

The sound hurtles between the synchronized speech and music of the mortal intrusions and the simultaneously occurring electronic sound, "a sine wave, which goes from its lowest (50 cycles per second) note to its highest (12,000 c.p.s.) in 40 minutes." This "total glissando" propels the audiovisual experience of *Wavelength* into the realm of mind-expanding and environment-transforming art. Clearly a meditative experience, its "mind-blowing" persistence penetrates to the spectator's Inner screen. "You can see things in a great many ways if you stay in one place," Mike Snow has commented.

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Michael Snow's WAVELENGTH: *opening position of the 45-minute zoom shot comprising the film.*

At the competition at Knokke-Le-Zoute, the huge Grand Ballroom of the Belgian resort's Casino was totally transformed during the film, completely overwhelmed by the insistent, incessantly fragmented image, and the concert of the film's optical sound and the simultaneous tape-recorded sine wave. *Wavelength* became for this reporter the "sine" generator and redirection of the festival's energy flow, a zeroing-in on the essential interplay of sound and light vibrations, a trip through and out the focal center of the spectator's eye-brain.

Electronic composer Steve Reich, responsible for the soundtracks of Robert Nelson's *Plastic Haircut* and *Oh Dem Watermelons,* was irresistibly urged to write after his first viewing of *Wavelength*: "It begins with a girl having a bookcase moved into a loft room, in sync sound, on a documentary level, complete with the sounds of the street and traffic. The people leave—the room is by itself. What does a room feel when no one is there? Does the tree fall in the forest if no one hears it? Two girls enter (one coming back? from where?) and turn on a radio—"Strawberry Fields"—traffic sounds and they turn off the Beatles before the tune is over and they leave. And then the sound (sync) goes off and we get a new sound (no sound?) of the 60-cycle hum of the amplifier slowly beating against an oscillator tone which then slowly, very slowly, begins to rise, creating faster and faster beats and finally intervals and, in short, we're in the realm of pure sound. And then the images change color and there are filters used all on the same shot out the windows, and different film stocks, and so we're moved out of documentary reality into the reality of film itself."

As a professional musician, Snow sees a great correlation between musical form and the visual aspect. "For me, film is a coming together of things previously separated in my work. Sculpture and film both represent my coming to terms with formerly scattered elements. One is thoroughly static and solid, something you can hammer together, and the other is light, sound and time, a fusion of pretty fugitive things. The structuring of time and the duration of things interest me as well as the realization of total time-shapes that have a beginning and end. The glissando of the oscillator sine wave in *Wavelength* is the sound equivalent of the zoom." The sound concept was realized by Snow with Ted Wolf, who constructed a motor to operate the oscillator.

A primary unification of Snow's painting and sculpture, as well as films, is the infinite possibility of variations on a modular concept. Every piece of his, from 1962 to 1967, has been a variation on his archetypal "Walking Woman" drawing. Documented by photographs of his total output of those five years is his use, without altering the contour of the woman figure, of every possible variation in media and in the uses of those media. Paintings and sculptures probe into every gradation of the interplay of positive and negative space through and around the one focal image, from the black and white changes in a "Walking Woman" rubber stamp composition to the sculptural permutations of his Expo '67 Ontario Pavilion commission, the metal silhouettes and their remaining holes in sheet metal to the contoured slices out of great metal slabs.

Between the obsessional female silhouette juxtaposed upon innumerable environments of his *New York Eye and Ear Control* film, and the climax and release of *Wavelength* through the almost hallucinatory sensations of movement within the ultimate black and white still of waves seen from Battery Park, is encompassed Snow's wonder of the "infinite variations

which can happen in one place in one medium." He prefers to release only the one still of the four windows, the establishing shot of the film, as a jumping-off point, a starting-from-the-beginning, entrance into the film.

"The geometrical and the organic, and the infinity possible in very different ways within both, is what my work has been all about," he comments. "I try to encompass both sides of the Platonic-Dionysian, Classical-Romantic opposition, to make one the foil of the other, or to discover their compatibilities. When I first conceived of the zoom movie, I didn't know at first where the movement would end. Perhaps it could have returned to a photograph of the three windows in a complete cycle. But my love for waves and the concept of a still photograph of water in a motion picture fascinated me."

As the waves slowly fill the entire screen, their superimposed image appears concentrically, the two-dimensionality both breaking forward and receding in depth, flashing out into the expanding macrocosm of water. Steve Reich concludes his description: "It's slowly getting still closer and slowly, at last, it is a picture of THE SEA, a picture of the sea and it fills the whole screen. A picture of a picture of the sea in black and white, and what about the dead man? We could go further into the picture of the sea, but he doesn't have to—you complete it in your head." The man who enters the picture frame, falls down and dies, is another of the punctuating human events. Later a girl enters, the sync sound returning as she slowly makes a telephone call. "Yes—I just got here—there's a dead man on the floor," leaves, her silent superimposed after-image re-echoing her previous actions. Then the human images fade in the exultant surging, past a "Walking Woman" photograph echo, between the windows' perimeters into the textured flashes of the illusory-real wave world.

"The sound of glass broken before the man who dies enters is a beautiful moment for me," Snow comments, "the use of sound in a musical way. Then the realistic sound stops and a set of vibrations go out in waves that flicker and fade. Each human incident is either foretold and prophesized or echoed and reiterated by the formal aspects of light play. I feel, having considered the implications of John Cage's work and the totality of Marcel Duchamp's life, that, faced with the philosophical choice between acting and real life, I must recognize that the dichotomy between art and life does exist. The fact that a certain choice of time, places and things can be used to make something called 'a work of art,' and that the possibilities of these choices are immeasurable, has a strong philosophical implication on the way that we live."

Indeed, that man can recognize a particular confluence of space-time elements as a "piece," or as a "film," is staggering. Michael Snow's *Wavelength* emerges as a passage through concepts of reality, lucidly arriving at a new and "different place." —Jud Yalkut

THE BED

Directed by James Broughton. Photography: William Desloges. Score: Warner Jepson. Contemporary.

Broughton's return to film-making, after many years in theater, reminds us of the engaging nuttiness of his early San Francisco shorts: *Mother's Day, Adventures of Jimmy, Loony Tom,* still firmly established in the experimental repertoire. Broughton's humor lasts because it has coherence and bite; it gives us a playful but not unserious view of the world. The idea of *The Bed* is simple, "musical," Classical: upon and around an elegant bed, which magically appears on a grassy hill, cavort every possible combination and permutation of human beings —cunningly various embodiments of the eternal yin and yang, presided over by the film-maker himself in a buddha pose. Male and female, young and old, hip and square, lecherous and cool, rich and poor, stoned and sober, white and black and yellow, athletic and somnolent, straight and perverse, in roles and out of them: the film is a lightning survey, in Broughton's words, of "the rituals and games, follies and

which can happen in one place in one medium." He prefers to release only the one still of the four windows, the establishing shot of the film, as a jumping-off point, a starting-from-the-beginning, entrance into the film.

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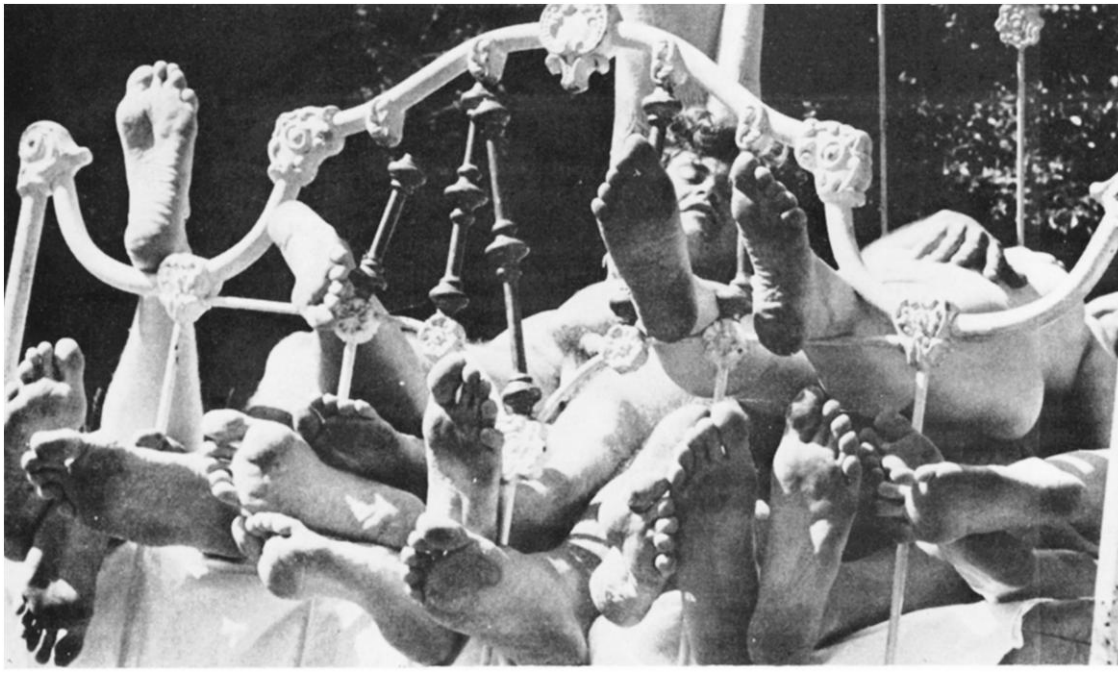
Directed by James Broughton. Photography: William Desloges. Score: Warner Jepson. Contemporary.

Broughton's return to film-making, after many years in theater, reminds us of the engaging nuttiness of his early San Francisco shorts: *Mother's Day, Adventures of Jimmy, Loony Tom,* still firmly established in the experimental repertoire. Broughton's humor lasts because it has coherence and bite; it gives us a playful but not unserious view of the world. The idea of *The Bed* is simple, "musical," Classical: upon and around an elegant bed, which magically appears on a grassy hill, cavort every possible combination and permutation of human beings —cunningly various embodiments of the eternal yin and yang, presided over by the film-maker himself in a buddha pose. Male and female, young and old, hip and square, lecherous and cool, rich and poor, stoned and sober, white and black and yellow, athletic and somnolent, straight and perverse, in roles and out of them: the film is a lightning survey, in Broughton's words, of "the rituals and games, follies and



James Broughton's THE BED

fears, dreams and transformations of man's brief time upon the bed of life." The proceedings are organized in a subtle series of thematic variations (and further held together by the witty score by Warner Jepson): a series of quick cascades of images that gently trace the human condition from the Adam-and-Eve of the opening through wedding, knitting, adventures in sexual life-styles, to death. Much of the action is carried out stark naked, yet there is a curious propriety about the film, as of some lunatic anthropological document. Such is man: not a land-animal, nor a creature of the sea, but a bed-animal. *The Bed* is a comic celebration of a species which has been taking its knocks lately, from film-makers and everybody else. There are plenty of strange characters in *The Bed,* and strange goings-on, but as in the world of the great silent comics, there is nothing despicable. Leaving Broughton's metaphorical hilltop, with its sophisticated agenda, you can for once laugh and feel better.

—ERNEST CALLENBACH

Books

KISS KISS BANG BANG

By Pauline Kael. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968. $7.95)

Like *I Lost It at the Movies*, which was the best-selling book of movie criticism ever published, this new volume is a collection of reviews and essays—with two added kinds of material this time: a long, heretofore unpublished account of the making of *The Group* (too hot for *Life* magazine), and 280 brief notes originally written for theater brochures, program notes, and so on. Lest anyone fear that these last might add a distressing commercial note to the proceedings, let me add that Miss Kael, in her days in the art-house trade, was perhaps the only publicist who has been able to give a movie its due knocks and yet persuade people to go see it; this valuable talent is an essential if film opinions are not to oscillate uncontrollably between wild unprincipled raves and destructive denunciations. Her notes, after underground circulation for many years, may now be considered by distributors, theater managers, film-society programmers, and anybody else who wishes to see how an imperfect movie may yet be recommended to an intelligent public.

The new volume establishes without a shadow of a doubt that Miss Kael is the most interesting film writer around: incredibly well-informed, sensitive to the atmosphere and the personalities of the film industry, and with relevant reactions to virtually every aspect of the film-maker's work. As was clear enough from her previous collection, she is an expert journalist, writing best under pressure—both of time and of issues. But as the essay on *The Group* shows, she also has the knowledge and the technical sensitivity needed to assess a film-maker on his own grounds; and she has the capacity to be surprised, to notice things (about Lumet and his work, for instance) that the ordinary reviewing life had not given her the chance to notice. The piece on *The Group* is so good that I hope it will encourage her to branch out into that kind of larger enterprise which criticism needs most: comprehensive evaluations of individual artists. (She is much better at this than was Lillian Ross in *Picture*, which seems by comparison very naive.) Now that she has a solid home base for her regular writing in *The New Yorker*, and at least some months of leisure every year, she will have the chance to do a more protracted sort of writing—which also, I think, will lead her to formulate with greater exactness some of her own notions about cinematic form. Heretofore, her writing has focused primarily on theme and dramatic form; however gloriously transmogrified, it has been substantially conversation about movies (that eternal and universal avocation); the brilliance of her writing has allowed her to get off without fully coming to terms with her assumptions or the nitty-gritty of film style: image and movement. Encouragingly, her recent reviews in *The New Yorker*, far from playing to the snobbish middlebrow reader with the condescending wit that had become a tradition in that magazine, have been some of the fullest, solidest, most closely observed pieces of her career. I am not gainsaying the impressive weight of *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* when I express the hope that this will lead her toward undertaking a "real" book, a concerted treatment of some director or writer or cinematic issue. Given her perfectionism and her ceaseless determination to be interesting, it will not be easy work. But she owes it to herself and to the art of which she is our most passionate and effective partisan.

—ERNEST CALLENBACH

MOVIE EDITIONS Series

Two new series of paperback film books have recently been established. Since the publishers of this journal are distributing one series in the U.S., we refrain from comparisons; both series have virtues, and with the exception of the Visconti, all the volumes to appear so far belong in every serious moviegoer's collection. The Movie Editions books are edited by Ian Cameron of *Movie* magazine; they are issued in England by Studio Vista and in the U.S.

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world has known, into "the little Jew who fled from the pogroms of Europe (only) to find in America a society where the Jew, the Red, and the poor are suspects . . ." Despite his ill-focused anti-Americanism, however, Martin is as severe on narrow-minded Soviet detractors of the Stalinist period, such as Alexander Leites, who judged Chaplin negative and nihilistic. Unfortunately, he dedicates little space to the films of the "decadence" period, *Limelight* and *A King in New York*, which are out of his socio-psychoanalytical perspective. One cannot escape the fact that if America was hell, it was nevertheless productive; whereas in his Swiss exile-paradise Chaplin, by finding happiness, has dried out. Could it be true after all that great comic works can be produced only by suffering?—CLAIRE CLOUZOT

Fellini. By Angelo Solmi. (New York: Humanities Press, 1968. $7.50) Informative, and probably fairly reliable, at least compared to Fellini himself; a biographical study, with anecdotal reports on the making of the films up through 8½. The author is an Italian critic who has followed Fellini's career closely. Badly designed and printed, yet probably the best book on Fellini so far.

The Disney Version. By Richard Schickel. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968. $6.50.) An account of "The Life, Time, Art and Commerce of Walt Disney," in which art figures a lame fourth (" . . . he always seemed to diminish what he touched.") Carefully researched yet inevitably impersonal and bland, like the public image which is all that has yet been revealed of Disney.

Joseph von Sternberg. By Herman G. Weinberg. (New York: Dutton, 1967. Paper, $1.95) An enthusiastic biographical and critical study of a director whose decorative tendencies have obscured his considerable irony and personal point of view for contemporary audiences, who sometimes wrongly see his formal elegance as nothing but Camp. Includes one of Sternberg's stiff interviews, the narration script of *Anatahan*, excerpts from critical reactions to Sternberg's work.

The New American Cinema: A Critical Anthology. Ed. by Gregory Battcock. (New York: Dutton, 1967. Paper, $1.95) Some pieces by critics, some by film-makers, few of them objectionably pretentious. Oriented to the New York branch of the American independent cinema.

Kops and Custards: The Legend of Keystone Films. (By Kalton C. Lahue and Terry Brewer. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967. $4.95) A carefully researched though flatly written account of an astoundingly spontaneous kind of film-making.

The Cataloguing and Classification of Cinema Literature. By Robert Steele. (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1967. $4.00) A guide to various library classifications, proposing an expansion of the Library of Congress system, which is now being adopted by many university and research libraries.

Man and the Movies. Ed. by W. R. Robinson. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967. $7.95) A collection of essays, mostly by academic hands and rather general. Best item: a detailed account of Faulkner in Hollywood.

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Short Notices

Charlie Bubbles is an unusually fine, unimportant little picture that has been misrepresented by the critics. Pauline Kael glumly invoked *La Notte* in her blast, and others echoed her feeling that Albert Finney, directing his first film, was giving us his cut-rate version of Antonioni's tired, rich people moving gloomily through their dull, lavish surroundings. The film *is* about bored people, but it's not the least bit like Antonioni—it's *funny*. Admittedly it's funny in a very quiet, restrained way—it's not exactly a lunatic comedy like *The Producers*—but the visual and verbal details are unobtrusively tart, and the film would be worth seeing if only for the seduction scene, in which a sleepy Charlie responds dutifully, helplessly to the brusque advances of his unattractive secretary—the most hilarious scene of the season, and maybe the funniest disparagement of sex ever recorded on film. What's basically flimsy about the movie is that it never explains why Charlie is so bored with his success (he's a famous writer) or why he has no alternatives to such a depressing existence. The problem, I would guess, is that he is attracted to wealth and fame as well as repelled by them—otherwise he would have no trouble dropping out. Shelagh Delaney's script, superficially lively and psychologically flat, ignores this ambivalence. But although the film fails as a depth study, it succeeds on a less ambitious level—it effectively *illustrates* Charlie's malaise, without illuminating it, during an uneventful day and a half of his life. Finney, as director, has paid attention to little things—an elevator door beginning to close on Charlie as he gets in, the dull glare of an aseptic turnpike café late at night—and this care makes the film *look* like the real thing even as we suspect that the real thing would *feel* rather more complicated for Charlie. The best thing about the movie is that it continues to get better as it goes along, almost as if we are watching Finney gain assurance in the medium (though the film may not actually have been shot in sequence). The opening scenes between Charlie and a raffish buddy are routine and flabby. Then a sequence in Charlie's home, filmed through nine closed-circuit TV screens, is much more ingenious—but perhaps too ingenious, and it goes on too long. But by the time Charlie and his American secretary (a wicked, subtly drawn caricature by Liza Minnelli) begin their drive to Charlie's hometown in northern England, Finney is in complete control; in one scene, for example, a middle-aged couple stares at Charlie as he pulls his Jaguar into a gas station, and without the help of dialogue the camera eloquently renders his uncomfortable awareness of their curiosity and envy. The last fifteen minutes of the film—Charlie's conversations with his ex-wife (a marvelous, womanly performance by Billie Whitelaw) and spoiled son—are superb. How can anyone who really watches these scenes, that have the stops and starts of authentic conversation and unspoken affection and frustration, call the movie weary? Perhaps we are too spoiled by flashiness. Or perhaps the feeble ending—a touch of fantasy—is offputting; just when we most want to see more of Charlie, the movie arbitrarily stops. But it has more good in it than almost any other film around, and Finney's skill in winning performances (not to mention his modesty in underplaying his own) is truly remarkable.

—Stephen Farber

Fire Creek isn't an ambitious Western, but it does want to be a different one. Its one solid virtue is its interest in its major characters and even most of its minor ones. Calvin Clements, the scenarist, obviously believes that characterizations create incident and motivate action and Vincent McEveety, the director, obviously goes along with him. They work carefully and perceptively in this direction and, with the help of an unusually responsive cast, they manage to offer many interesting people. Yet, the film isn't successful; it seems to be in a state of slow death most of the time. Both Clements and McEveety are to blame. Clements takes more than an hour to set up a situation that only takes focus and makes its point in the film's last few minutes. It's a delayed-action narrative technique and it isn't riveting until it moves toward its conclusion. McEveety wants to avoid anything false or contrived, but he becomes low-keyed to the point of monotony. He's also antagonistic toward the Western's purely-for-thrills conventions and, when he's forced into them, either he gets them over with quickly or he allows us only a few quick glimpses (excepting the finale, which combines action and commentary with unforgettable explosiveness). A gradual annoyance throughout the film is its actual physical production: the insistence on bleakness becomes almost suffocating. Actually, *Fire Creek* is tampering with a genre and, as usual in such cases, it simply doesn't pay off.—Raymond Banacki

Short Notices

Charlie Bubbles is an unusually fine, unimportant little picture that has been misrepresented by the critics. Pauline Kael glumly invoked *La Notte* in her blast, and others echoed her feeling that Albert Finney, directing his first film, was giving us his cut-rate version of Antonioni's tired, rich people moving gloomily through their dull, lavish surroundings. The film *is* about bored people, but it's not the least bit like Antonioni—it's *funny*. Admittedly it's funny in a very quiet, restrained way—it's not exactly a lunatic comedy like *The Producers*—but the visual and verbal details are unobtrusively tart, and the film would be worth seeing if only for the seduction scene, in which a sleepy Charlie responds dutifully, helplessly to the brusque advances of his unattractive secretary—the most hilarious scene of the season, and maybe the funniest disparagement of sex ever recorded on film. What's basically flimsy about the movie is that it never explains why Charlie is so bored with his success (he's a famous writer) or why he has no alternatives to such a depressing existence. The problem, I would guess, is that he is attracted to wealth and fame as well as repelled by them—otherwise he would have no trouble dropping out. Shelagh Delaney's script, superficially lively and psychologically flat, ignores this ambivalence. But although the film fails as a depth study, it succeeds on a less ambitious level—it effectively *illustrates* Charlie's malaise, without illuminating it, during an uneventful day and a half of his life. Finney, as director, has paid attention to little things—an elevator door beginning to close on Charlie as he gets in, the dull glare of an aseptic turnpike café late at night—and this care makes the film *look* like the real thing even as we suspect that the real thing would *feel* rather more complicated for Charlie. The best thing about the movie is that it continues to get better as it goes along, almost as if we are watching Finney gain assurance in the medium (though the film may not actually have been shot in sequence). The opening scenes between Charlie and a raffish buddy are routine and flabby. Then a sequence in Charlie's home, filmed through nine closed-circuit TV screens, is much more ingenious—but perhaps too ingenious, and it goes on too long. But by the time Charlie and his American secretary (a wicked, subtly drawn caricature by Liza Minnelli) begin their drive to Charlie's hometown in northern England, Finney is in complete control; in one scene, for example, a middle-aged couple stares at Charlie as he pulls his Jaguar into a gas station, and without the help of dialogue the camera eloquently renders his uncomfortable awareness of their curiosity and envy. The last fifteen minutes of the film—Charlie's conversations with his ex-wife (a marvelous, womanly performance by Billie Whitelaw) and spoiled son—are superb. How can anyone who really watches these scenes, that have the stops and starts of authentic conversation and unspoken affection and frustration, call the movie weary? Perhaps we are too spoiled by flashiness. Or perhaps the feeble ending—a touch of fantasy—is offputting; just when we most want to see more of Charlie, the movie arbitrarily stops. But it has more good in it than almost any other film around, and Finney's skill in winning performances (not to mention his modesty in underplaying his own) is truly remarkable.

—Stephen Farber

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Guess Who's Coming to Dinner. Though all television situation comedies seem to be designed for the mirth of tots, buffoons, and morons, few are inferior enough to compare with Stanley Kramer's comedy about an interracial romance. This film may be an indication that Hollywood is becoming less cowardly about interracial affairs, but we will probably have to endure several years of contrived idiot-bait like this before anything honest or substantial is produced. Kramer obviously scrutinized the racial scene carefully and concluded that the American public is ripe for such a film, so long as it is a lush, chicken-hearted fairy tale where everyone is attractive, wealthy, intelligent, and witty. It is the kind of film that attracts hordes of white liberals who howl maniacally at what passes for humor, though they would take a shotgun to the first Negro their daughter or sister brings home. However, it is too cautious and drastically fictional to spur whites to padlock their women. A story about common people would be more relevant, and forceful, but it would also be a box-office risk because it might be too tough for tender liberals to handle. Kramer's fable begins with an All-American rich girl (Katharine Houghton) arriving from Hawaii with a black fiancé (Sidney Poitier) following a ten-day courtship. Once again, Poitier portrays a deluxe Negro. He is a noted doctor with a string of credentials several minutes long. Her wealthy, San Francisco liberal parents (Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn) are initially appalled, but suave Sidney quickly sways the mother, though the father is a practical sort, and therefore hostile to such a marriage. Similarly, Sidney's mother (Beah Richards) approves, but his fat, middle-class father is suspicious of race mixing. When they all gather at Tracy's mansion for dinner, the film shifts from weak comedy to soggy soap-opera, with everyone making sentimental speeches about generation gaps, brotherhood, knowing yourself, etc. It ends in a burst of happiness, with the women tissueing away the tears. For contrast to Poitier, Kramer tosses in a loud Negro maid (Isabell Sanford) who is constantly fussing at Poitier about blacks knowing their place. The hyena laughter that greets her mediocre racial humor is a perfect example of whites overacting and laughing where they think they should. Kramer, deciding to quit while he is ahead, fails to include a love scene between Poitier and Miss Houghton. Since she is one of those effervescent types incessantly twitching with joy, we would expect her to at least neck with her fiancé. Why is it that Hollywood can casually present Lesbian lovemaking (Mark Rydell's *The Fox*), but not an interracial kiss? It is unfortunate that Spencer Tracy's final performance had to come in rubbish such as this. He and Miss Hepburn are as appealing and effective as possible under the circumstances, and Poitier is right at home as the moralistic, Uncle-Tom hero. Miss Houghton is so bouncy and childish that it is a mystery what a 37-year-old doctor, no matter what color, would want with a bubblebrain like her. Kramer's direction, along with the color photography, editing, and anything else you can name, is remarkably unimaginative.—DENNIS HUNT

Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush. Most people take Clive Donner's film as just another kicky mod youth movie about sexual promiscuity—arch, frantic, and mechanical. Almost no one has considered the possibility that the archness is intentional. Unlike *The Knack,* which meant to celebrate youth, but through overly nervous editing ended up making its characters' "spontaneity" look like a bad case of tics, *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* calculatingly uses a twitchy Lesterese style to underscore the triviality and frustration of these young people's lives. Hero Jamie is sex-obsessed, and the movie makes us suffer along with him. The sex scenes are all really anti-sex scenes. The teen-age lovers seem to spend most of their time fumbling with zippers and snaps; a hip young thing writhes seductively on her bed—and falls off. When Jamie finally loses his virginity, Donner films it in a surprisingly auticlimactic way; it doesn't seem to have been worth all the trouble. It takes a while for the film's irony to surface. For its first third, the movie does look like another *Knack*; the only hint of a more serious perspective in these early scenes is weirdly oblique—a digression, about a little boy trying unsucessfully to break away from two friends, that very evocatively and delicately suggests that Jamie's life too may turn out to be a trap. It is not conventional storytelling, but it is emotionally effective. The film continues zipping along its apparently merry way, and only gradually turns sour. The setting begins to grate—a manufactured middle-class town, spanking new, apartments and houses all alike, plazas of giant department stores, fountains and trees in assembly-line order; even the boatel where the teens go for weekend idylls looks, as one girl says, "just like color supplement." What might have seemed exuberant elsewhere looks frenzied and hollow in the plastic landscape. At one

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moment, after being invited to play golf by an incredibly stupid society girl, Jamie runs ecstatically around the town square, dancing around brightly colored trash containers, swinging on the lamppost; it is played like a conventional lyric scene, but considering the paltry triumph he's celebrating and the aridity of the surroundings, it becomes a devastating parody of youthful romanticism. The parody gets nastier. Later, in the country with the girl he thinks he loves, they go for a nude swim, and she prances goofily through the water in a way that embarrasses him, and us; after swimming, they begin to make passionate love on the bank—when a persistent dog licks at his foot and destroys the mood. The colors may be pretty, but these scenes are painful. Anyone who thinks sexual freedom is the answer to all problems will be less sure after seeing this film. In essence it's a moral film, in a rather old-fashioned way. But what's impressive is that it conveys its moral statement from *within* the young people's universe, without ever stepping outside and condescending, without changing mood and turning Sensitive or Serious. There are problems—Jamie's fantasies are too charming and cute for an ironic film; and there are, in fact, too many moments when the film absorbs itself in wacky situations for their own sake. The movie does not escape the confusions of other youth movies (like *Morgan, Georgy Girl, The Graduate*). Donner's aims *are* cloudy. But it is his most interesting film by far; his attempt to use dazzling visual effects sardonically rather than poetically is an intriguing experiment that, even if not entirely successful, extends our notions of what a film can do.

—Stephen Farber

I, A Man and **The Queen.** It seems quite appropriate to deal with *I, A Man* and *The Queen* at the same time. The specialty of Andy Warhol is to color "gay" what appears straight at first glance and Frank Simon's direct approach to queens results into a noncommittal description of women who happen to be men. Both belong to *cinéma-vérité* but the "vérité" which comes out does not correspond to the material fed into the films. In *I, A Man,* Tom Baker caresses eight samples of women of various complexions and capillarities and in the process he expresses his neurosis, his hesitancy and his insecurity. He is not so much the male equivalent of the "free" girl of the Swedish *I, A Woman* Warhol intended to parody in his title, as he is an ambivalent sexual being performing—with Warhol participating behind the camera—an intercourse à trois. The stress is on Baker zipping or unzipping his trousers or playing guitar on the toilet. What is enjoyable in Warhol, as usual, is the mixture of humor (conscious or unconscious?) and perversion. Hence the best moments are the staircase misunderstanding between Baker and a Mao-capped girl who resists his pressing advances, the close-ups of four feet playing with each other under a bed where Baker and girl #2 are trying out new amorous techniques, or the scene where Baker weighs the breasts of a girl as if they were apples. Because of the number of seduction scenes one man performs with changing female partners, the female species is reduced to an object to be moulded without conviction. Warhol achieves the negation of femininity through the epidermic game of ambivalence—in which he is unbeatable. The final session of the film between a rather unattractive and guilt-ridden married woman and the obsessive Baker is an unexpected study of the psychology of a frustrated woman which goes a bit deeper than the rest of the film. The impression that the scene was shot with a hidden camera (hidden to the woman?) does a lot for its success. Technically, *I, A Man* is Warhol's best film to date with an almost consistently focused photography and an interesting attempt at doing the editing inside the camera.

Warhol's personal vision of heterosexual frolicking makes for the interest of what would be otherwise a tedious and repetitive film. But Frank Simon, because *The Queen* is aimed at the general public unaware of the existence of female impersonators, on the contrary de-fuses the explosive subject of the queens. It would be truly fascinating to know who these men are who compete each year for the drag Miss-All-America beauty contest. But Simon has simply shot a sort of travelog of the preparation for, and the performing in, the 1967 contest of a group of men with no attempt at getting their *vérité*. They are shown trying on wigs and gowns, modifying their faces or eyebrows, removing the hair on their chest or legs or eliminating their beards. The commentary remains on a superficial and informational level. There are a couple of confessions, one about parental relationships and the other about draft-board difficulties, but nothing is very deep. Worst of all, instead of digging into the personality of the 1967 winner, Richard Finocchio, a truly beautiful feline hermaphrodite who looks like Twiggy, by following him through the film and making him speak, *The Queen* lingers on a fat

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man who could not appear in bathing costume at the contest because of his size. At that point, the film leans toward the vulgarity and the grotesque of *Mondo Cane*. By lacking central direction and by adopting a vignette form, *The Queen* stays at a certain distance from its subject. Hence it neither exploits it nor does it shock. At best, it is an eye-opener with, behind the camera, a man who has not dared display his compassion and his understanding of the drag world.—CLAIRE CLOUZOT

Planet of the Apes would seem to have everything —science-fiction fantasy, violence, campy farce, satire, serious message—and given the current taste for bizarre potpourri, no wonder it has been the biggest hit in months. Unfortunately, the film's eclecticism does not give it the sophistication that was intended, but only suggests the uneasiness of the writers (Rod Serling and Michael Wilson) about trusting their own material. Most film-makers today assume—and this is one of the worst effects of the run of spoof films a couple of years back—that they have to protect themselves from ridicule by taking a few pokes at themselves. It makes some sense in *Bonnie and Clyde,* because that film is *about* the creation of legend, of myth, of art really, but it makes no sense at all here. The script as a whole contains the kind of clever, facile writing that we have come to expect from Rod Serling—full of irreverence that will not shock anyone, plotted methodically, with the obligatory trick ending. But visually the film is astonishingly dynamic, especially in the exteriors. Director Franklin Schaffner and photographer Leon Shamroy have searched out magnificent Southwestern landscapes that look at once eerily otherworldly and vaguely familiar, in a way that turns out to be entirely appropriate. The opening scenes, the astronauts' crash landing and their nervous exploration of the planet, are chilling; and so is the hero's journey from the ape city back to the desert as he searches for the planet's secret at the end of the film—a journey that has some of the same sense of primeval mystery and foreboding as Marlow's voyage from civilization to the Congo's heart of darkness. The hunt scene in which we see the apes for the first time, thrashing through high grass and fiercely rounding up the mute human savages and throwing them in cages, is a brilliant fantasy sequence that startlingly throws us off balance. In a very unsettling way the film, at its best, convincingly takes us to another world that provides frightening, pertinent perspective on our own—and so more's the pity that the illusion is compromised by campiness, and that Serling and Wilson do not have the talent to do much with the philosophical issues they raise in the middle sections of the film; most damagingly, they are unable to take full advantage of the satiric potential in the trial scene, an ingenious reversal of the Scopes trial. Still, Schaffner and Shamroy and, indeed, all of the technicians (that wonderful make-up!) deserve highest praise. Charlton Heston is excellent in the rather well-written part of the chief astronaut, and the actors who play the apes—Maurice Evans, Kim Hunter, Roddy McDowell—seem to be good too. The surprise ending would, on paper, probably seem no more than a glib joke; but it has considerably more force than that on film. The last image, when Heston finally discovers his "destiny," is extremely powerful and haunting. Audiences have a good time at the movie, but they don't walk out smiling.—STEPHEN FARBER

The Producers. Two Broadway moneygrubbers (Zero Mostel and Gene Wilder) over-finance an intended flop, in hopes of making a killing, but the plot backfires, the flop becomes a hit, and the two producers go to jail. Not a bad idea for farce. And not a bad idea for a film, as author Mel Brooks conceived it. Granted, it is tasteless, eccentric, perverse, audacious, outrageous and offensive. All to the good, these things. But who would presume that it would also be completely without art or, except for a few bright patches here and there, humor? Director Brooks has given author Brooks, and us, possibly the worst movie of the year. Even worse, director Brooks has committed the absolutely unpardonable sin of making Zero Mostel appear obnoxious. Which is to say, he has failed to discipline him. The result is saddening, for audacity is the key to true entertainment, and, if this show of audacity fails, as it must now, might not this make some other potential creative minds hew more closely hereafter to the tediously conventional line? I don't want to make too much of a bad thing, but, in a way, the defeat of *The Producers* is the defeat of us all.—DAN BATES

The Secret War of Harry Frigg is such tired satire that you'd swear it was made for TV: safe subject, leaden technique, bored actors. Five Allied generals in good old World War II are luxuriously incarcerated in an Italian villa, owned by a beautiful countess. Escape-artist Frigg, temporarily elevated from

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The Scalphunters is, at the very least, a happy relief from *In the Heat of the Night*. Another confrontation of an illiterate white bigot and an educated Negro, this film has the advantage of being a comedy. It also has the advantage of Ossie Davis in a part that Sidney Poitier would have smiled to death. Davis is very fine as a runaway slave adopted by the Comanches, then captured by the Kiowas, finally bartered—by force—to a trapper (Burt Lancaster) for his supply of furs; the stormy relationship that develops between the trapper and the slave is one of the few engrossing Negro-white relationships in American film history. The Negro is no saint—crafty, proud of his abilities, cowardly, obsequious when need be; and the trapper is neither any better nor any worse—crafty in his own right, crude, selfish, stubborn, at moments almost heroically tough. Both parts are extremely well written (the script is by William Norton), and Davis and Lancaster play together vigorously and believably. Because it's set a hundred years back, the film can afford to be more daring than the contemporary problem pictures; without any self-consciousness, the script poses a sharp, provoking fable about the growth of black power. The Negro, a shrewd Uncle Tom (perhaps more a hip variation on Brer Rabbit) who humbles himself to get what he wants, is scorned by the trapper as long as he remains passive and submissive to the whites. Only when he accidentally kills the man whom he has served, and sees the necessity of fighting, does he win Lancaster's respect; only through violence is he accepted as an equal. It's an interestingly ambiguous victory. There is much to admire in the film, so it may not immediately be clear why it is unsatisfying. The problem is an old one in Hollywood—the film has unconventional elements, but it nervously strains for entertainment at *any* expense. We are treated to a subplot about a group of scalphunters and the whore who travels with them (Shelley Winters smoking a cigar), that at first promises some counterpointing to the central racial conflict, but quickly gets diverted into a series of lengthy, irrelevant adventure scenes. These scenes—especially an avalanche and a stampede of horses—are well directed, by Sidney Pollack, but they have no real purpose. The action repeats itself, the characterizations are underlined instead of deepened, and genuine wit gives way to gags and thrills. What could have been a really good movie becomes only an enjoyable one; *The Scalphunters* is interesting and pleasant enough to watch, but there is no pressing reason to see it.

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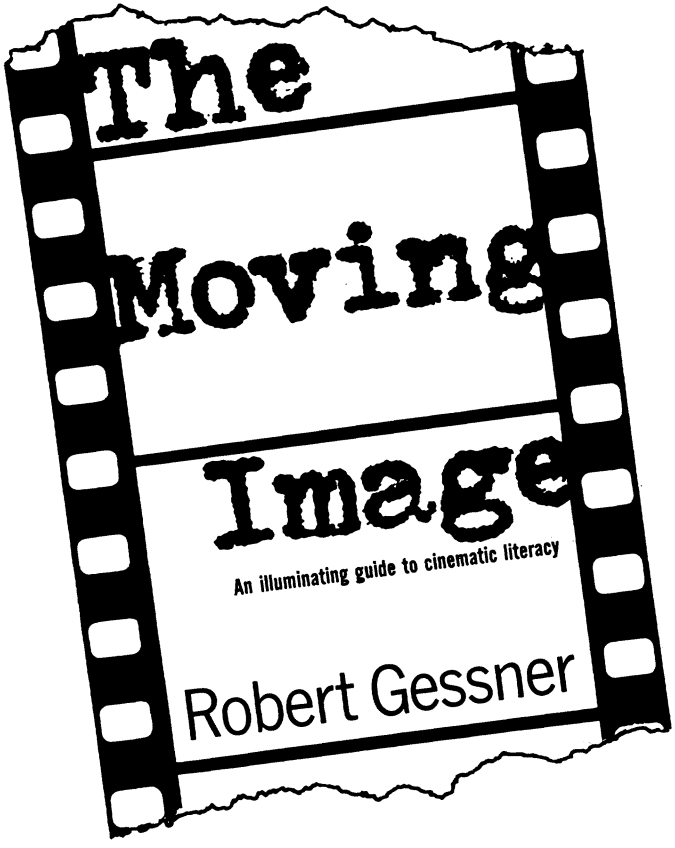
lectualized conception some flickers of life. But in the scenes with the sniper the film really comes alive. The suspicion that Bogdanovich cannot write dialogue is quickly dispelled by the chillingly accurate conversations between the killer and his vapid young wife, who works the night shift at the phone company and is so absorbed in the paralyzing triviality of her life that she does not know how to listen to her husband's groping efforts to tell her he is disturbed. Everything in the portrait of the killer's San Fernando Valley home is tersely, brilliantly done. Bogdanovich tells us all that we need to know about the family (the killer lives with his parents as well as his wife) in quick, lacerating strokes—for instance, just the stupor on their faces as they listen to Joey Bishop on television. The details of furniture and of placid noncommunication are so exact that we do not need any clinical examination of the killer's "motivation." We understand him from what we *see*—feeling has been effectively displaced by politeness; the clean, smiling family has long ago chosen death over life. It is one of the angriest—because coolest and subtlest—protests at suburban Americana ever registered; and the protest is reinforced by skillful use of the shiny Los Angeles terrain—freeways, oil refineries, endless rows of car lots and ranch homes—in scenes somewhat reminiscent of *Point Blank*. The sniping scenes are frightening because the killer's habits are so bland and fastidious. There are many little touches—the killer taking a breath before firing his rifle, the way in which his car radio turns on with his motor, impassively cheerful even after he has slaughtered his wife and mother—that increase the horror because of their homely, unsinister quality. Bogdanovich has clearly learned Hitchcock's lesson about the terror that lurks in the most ordinary places. There may even be a pragmatic message in the film—I don't think anyone who sees it could help but be convinced of the necessity of restrictions on the sale of guns. Tim O'Kelly as the killer has precisely the right fraternity-boy look, and never once seems to be acting. At the end he is defeated in a kind of singlehanded combat by Karloff, so the film seems to conclude that movie stylists can triumph over the banality of real evil; you may not believe it, but I think Bogdanovich means it as a declaration of faith in the superiority of art to life, not as a realistic ending. His film debut is an imposing promise, and suggests that the critic-turned-film-maker may not be an exclusively European phenomenon.—STEPHEN FARBER



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