FALL 1969

FILM QUARTERLY

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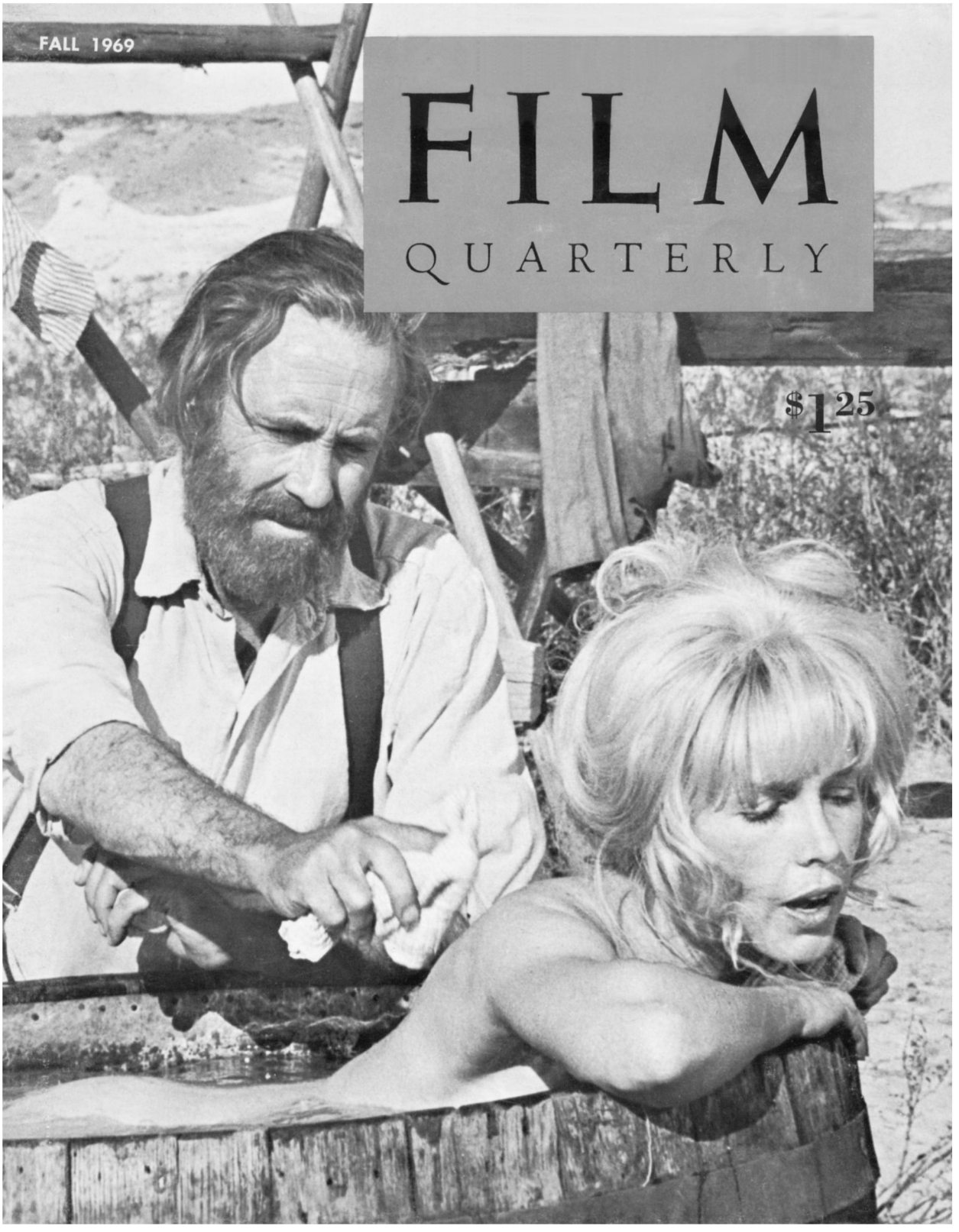

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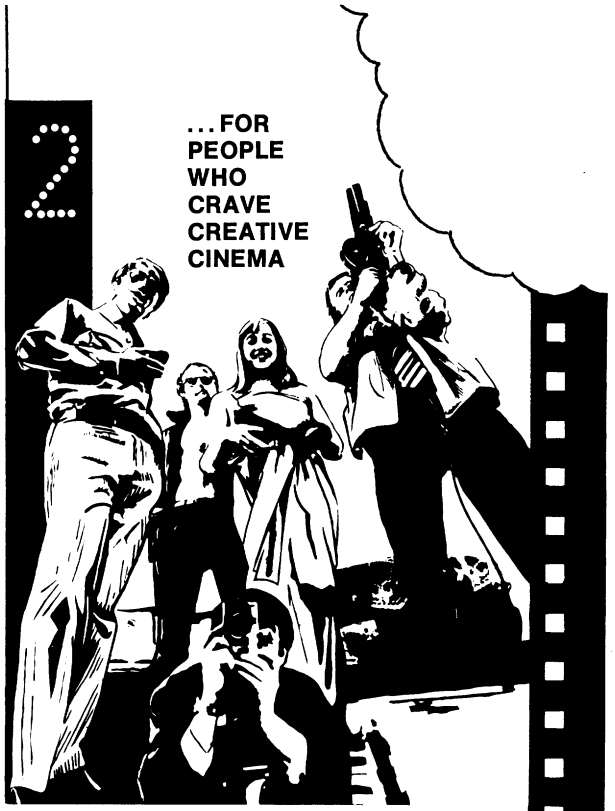

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DAN BATES is an editorial assistant on Castle of Frankenstein. LEO BRAUDY teaches literature at Columbia. ROBERT CHAPPETTA lives in New York. R. C. DALE teaches at the University of Washington and is now in Paris working on a study of

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to have emerged from television in years. Nothing he does could be called brilliant or innovative, but most everything is enhanced by grace, style, modest but thoughtful imagination. This is a Universal picture, and every shot has a slightly unnatural pallor that is the studio's hallmark, so Goldstone's ability to keep us interested in *looking* at his movie is all the more impressive. He has an intuitive feeling for the language of film—whether he wants to convey the tawdry Americana of the Indianapolis 500, the violence of the race itself, the loneliness of the hero at a victory celebration—that makes his next movie worth looking forward to.

Number One, listlessly directed by Tom Gries, needs some of the same flair; an awkward, old-fashioned flashback dissolve technique is enough to make anyone head for the exit. But looking beneath the surface, one can admire the skeleton of a potentially serious and important film. *Winning* is constructed around the Indianapolis race itself—a sequence that lasts almost thirty minutes—but *Number One,* about an aging football player's last season, provides little of the action that the sports enthusiast wants to see. This is an austere, even somber film, and I can't think of another film that deals in quite this way with the crisis in a professional athlete's life when he begins to lose command of his body. Sports movies used to ignore this crisis and confine their canvasses to rousing moments of glory, while in recent years the movie athlete has become simply a caricatured symbol of the Establishment (see *The Graduate* or *Goodbye, Columbus*). So this bleak but sympathetic portrait is doubly unfashionable; it won't please the beer-bellied sports fans *or* the hip college students. The film's writing usually seems honest, as far as it goes—whether examining the callousness of the team manager, the anemic jobs that the hero has to look forward to on retirement, the young black quarterback who is all too eager to push him out, or his uneasy relationship with his wife, whose own career has been blooming while his has been waning. But nothing is taken quite far enough. Most of the scenes are a little too clearly labelled, and then cut off. Charlton Heston's performance is genuine, though; he seems the right age, and he looks slightly exhausted and humiliated too—a sensitive portrait of a man losing hold of the only skill that once supplied his life with passion. We know that some retiring football players have more glamorous options, but the great majority are still probably in the position of this character. Heston and the film as a whole give him surprising dignity.

—STEPHEN FARBER

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NEW PERIODICAL

Screen is the successor to Screen Education, and is available free to members of the Society for Education in Film and Television, 81 Dean Street, London WIV 6AA, England (membership fee 30s.). The first issue features informative, nonpolemical articles and reviews, most of them interesting to a wide audience but some especially aimed at teachers.

Books

GROVE PRESS SCRIPT BOOKS

General Editor: Robert Hughes. (New York: Grove Press, 1969. $1.95 per volume)

The four books listed below are the best recreations of films yet to be achieved in book form. They will probably be surpassed only when 8mm or EVR copies of films are available for home use and study. Each volume presents a script based on the film itself rather than drawn from the working papers of the film-makers, as is customary with script books. The advantage of this system, obviously, is that it provides an accurate record of what is really in the films—an aim often only fitfully accomplished otherwise. (Moreover, in the case of *Masculin Fem-*

STEPHEN FARBER

Peckinpah's Return

I hate that word "comeback." It's a return.
—Gloria Swanson in SUNSET BOULEVARD

The Wild Bunch is Sam Peckinpah's first film after more than four years of forced inactivity, and it is gratifying, in a way, that the most recent outcast from Hollywood has directed, for his "comeback," not just a good movie but a commercially successful one too. Nothing makes the industry forget its grudges quicker than the sound of money. The critics have responded as Peckinpah hoped they would, with either ecstatic raves or angry denunciations; almost no one is neutral on this film. *Ride the High Country* was a sensitive, modest film, but Peckinpah has aimed much higher this time. *The Wild Bunch* is not a minor film; it's a sprawling, spectacular, ambitious, wilfully controversial picture, an assault on a audience's senses and emotions, an aggressive bid for the spotlight. Fortunately, the film deserves the spotlight. Its first impression is literally overpowering; *The Wild Bunch* is much more dazzling than *Ride the High Country,* but it loses some of the reflective qualities that made Peckinpah's early film so quietly memorable. There were stark images of violence in *Ride the High Country* too, but violence is the subject and the controlling passion of *The Wild Bunch.* Let me say right away that the violence does not offend me, even though this is the goriest film I have ever seen. But the gore is not gratuitous; the film is intelligent about the significance of violence in America, and in addition, the images of violence are quite simply beautiful. I don't believe that the violence in this movie (or in any other movie) will send children out on the streets to murder, nor do I feel that Peckinpah's obvious fascination, even obsession with violence is more degenerate than other film-makers' obsessions with religion or sex or decor.

I do object to some of the film's equivocations, and its tendency to sacrifice characterization to action and spectacle. The individual characters are just distinct enough to be believable, but none of them are really very interesting. The only way to accept the characters at all is to see them as one conglomerate character, the Wild Bunch. Peckinpah is interested in these men as a *group,* and he uses them to epitomize a major generic character, the Outlaw. But even granting this, the film, particularly on a second viewing, seems flat and underwritten.

The characters in *The Wild Bunch* are not complex, though the film's attitudes toward what they represent, toward violence, and toward the Western myth in general, are very complex; but complexity is very close to confusion, and the film often seems out of control (which is a corollary of its high emotional charge). But I respect even the film's confusions, for they always seem to grow out of Peckinpah's most profound doubts and uncertainties, a very rich, intense self-questioning; they never seem concessions to the audience.

One first notices these confusions in the visual style of the film. The material is straightforward and conventional in many ways, and there are several elegant panoramic shots that are a staple of Westerns; but there are also some very contemporary tricks of film-making—slow motion, subliminal cutting—that testify to Peckinpah's dissatisfaction with the Western form, his desire to break it open and reconceive it. The sophistication of his technique does not always match the simplicity of the plotting and characteriza-

tions, and audiences encouraged by Peckinpah's mastery of the medium to expect a more subtle film are probably bewildered by the crude humor and old-fashioned melodrama of many scenes. The middle sections particularly lack dimension—effectively photographed but protracted, essentially hollow action scenes. And even the technique can turn surprisingly old-fashioned, as in some turgid flashback dissolves (just recently cut out of the film) or the sentimental superimposition of the laughing faces of the Bunch over the final scene. At these moments the film recalls vintage John Ford, while in the editing of the gun battles Peckinpah shows that he is a contemporary of Kurosawa, Truffaut, Arthur Penn.

The Wild Bunch, like the traditional Western, is concerned with honor among men. There are exuberant scenes of masculine camaraderie on the order of Ford or Hawks—the Bunch laughing over the abortive results of a robbery attempt, drinking and whoring and taking baths together, nostalgically reminiscing about old times over the campfire. The grittiness and ribald humor of these scenes should not blind us to their familiarity and robust sentimentality. The film sometimes bathes the Wild Bunch in a soft golden haze, particularly during the lyrical scene of their exit from the Mexican village where Angel (Jamie Sanchez) lives, serenaded by the peasants, handed roses by the women. But at other moments the film sees them with a harshness that *is* unconventional and bracing—as limited, slow-witted, mercenary opportunists ruled by an unnatural blood lust. *The Wild Bunch* has been compared to *Bonnie and Clyde* because of its sympathy for the outlaw and its mockery of all forms of "law and order"—whether the temperance union and railroad men in South Texas, Pershing's incompetent army along the border, or the coldblooded *federales* fighting Villa's revolutionaries in Mexico. But in one respect the film is sharper and more honest than *Bonnie and Clyde*—it does not flinch from showing the brutality of its heroes. One thing that has always bothered me about Penn's film is its uneasy unwillingness to acknowledge the same sadism in Bonnie and Clyde that looks so appalling in the police. Bonnie and Clyde kill only in self-defense, and the camera almost never puts us into the position of their victims; we always identify with *them,* suffer with the violence inflicted on them but never with the violence that they inflict. Even in the scene in which the Texas Ranger spits in Bonnie's face, Clyde's reaction is surprisingly mild and gentle—he gets angry and throws the man into the water, but he doesn't really hurt him. *The Wild Bunch* is more hardheaded because it admits the heroes' attraction to violence. We can't delude ourselves that the Bunch are innocent; they're clearly depraved and vicious—savages who love the thrill of slaughter.

And yet they do retain our sympathy. Perhaps one reason is that in a world where the "respectable" people seem equally sadistic, where indeed violence seems the primary fact of human nature (as Peckinpah emphasizes by his repeated shots of children responding enthusiastically to torture), the qualities of candor and resilience that distinguish the Bunch seem especially precious. They are at a disadvantage in comparison with the respectable people, not just because they are outlaws, but because they are old men trying to find their way in a land that is beginning to change beyond recognition. There is one striking shot of the Bunch leader, Pike (William Holden), stumbling to get onto his horse and then riding off, weary, beaten, hunched over, and still unafraid, that crystallizes the film's admiration of these men for their refusal to submit to time and inevitable decay. They are outsiders, failures, with nowhere to turn and no place to go, but they have not been defeated. They have the strength to endure.

To give a better idea of the richness of the film's attitude toward the Bunch, I'd like to consider the conclusion of the film in some detail—a series of sequences with a quite remarkable gradation of moods. Angel has been taken prisoner by Mapache's *federales* for giving a carton of stolen guns to the revolutionaries, and the Bunch, though regretful, casually decide to leave him to his death—the first twist on the

THE WILD BUNCH: *The final massacre.*

Western myth of loyalty. But they return to Mapache's village to take refuge from the bounty hunters who are pursuing them. When they see Angel being dragged along the ground by the German general's automobile, they are disgusted, but not disgusted enough to try to save him, and they accept Mapache's offer of whores for the evening. But the next morning—in an unusually sensitive and understated sequence—Pike is haunted by feelings of remorse and embarrassment that he cannot quite interpret. As he watches his woman wash her body, the delicacy of her movements as well as her humiliation when he offers her money make it clear that she is not really a whore, and he is troubled because of his insensitivity to her and his obliviousness to the torture of his friend. So when he calls the others to help him retrieve Angel, the decision grows convincingly out of a sense of guilt and self-revulsion.

As the Bunch begin their walk into town, Peckinpah changes mood, swells the music, and films the march with the classical rhythm and dramatic flair of all archetypal Western showdowns. The Bunch look imposing and heroic, but this vision is shaded by irony if we remember to place it against the uncomfortable preceding scene and the horrifying one that is to follow. Mapache cuts Angel's throat before their eyes, and they respond with rage, turning their guns against him and the rest of the village, massacring the Mexicans who are too drunk to make much of a stand against them. Eventually they get hold of a machine gun that is mounted in the center of town, and with that they are able to take a toll of hundreds of lives. Peckinpah films this battle with great urgency and passion, drawing it out with almost hallucinatory, surreal relentlessness, yet punctuating it with jagged, electric shock cutting. (Lou Lombardo's editing is the finest editing of an American film since *Bonnie and Clyde.*) When Warren Oates takes hold of the machine gun and shrieks like a maniac as he fires in a fit of orgasmic release, it is one of the most appalling images of human bestiality ever filmed—an echo of a primeval war cry. The Bunch may go into the slaughter in search of honor and retribution, but the blood quickly washes away their noble sentiments. There is a fine moment when Pike, shot in the back by a woman, turns and without flinching fires directly at her breast, that economically conveys the Bunch's mindless, automatic instinct for brutality—an instinct that overwhelms their moral aspirations. When the massacre is over, and the town is littered with bodies, including those of the Bunch, Deke Thornton (Robert Ryan), their former partner and tireless pursuer, rides in, and the bounty hunters under his command, a vile pack of gutter scavengers who make the Wild Bunch look saintly, begin stripping the bodies of boots, watches, gold fillings. Peckinpah has daringly shifted mood again, from a shattering vision of apocalyptic horror to the grotesque black comedy that has always been one of his specialties as a director; the comedy seems an effective way

of underscoring the senselessness and absurdity of the massacre—a bitter, nihilistic laugh at the Bunch's pretensions of virtue.

But the film does not end quite there. There are some sere, mournful images of peasant women in black moving among the bodies, then gathering their belongings and leaving the village in desolate, silent exile. Thornton sits at the gates to the town, revolted by what he has seen, exhausted by the effort of life itself. But when the old man who is the last survivor of the Wild Bunch rides in and asks Thornton to join him again, Thornton comes to life and the two of them laugh together as they ride off in search of adventures. "It won't be like the old times," the old man tells him, "but it's something." And it is over this affirmative conclusion that the laughing faces of the dead members of the Bunch are superimposed. The final image is a reprise of the Bunch's resounding farewell to Angel's village, their one moment of grace and glory.

During these last twenty minutes of his film Peckinpah so disturbs our emotions that we are literally drained by the conclusion. Just as we are convinced of the meaninglessness of the Bunch's life and death, Peckinpah once again twists our response and forces us to pay a final tribute to their irreverence and their resilience. It may be because of the tremendous complexity of the film's evaluation of the Bunch that many critics have been so outraged. What *is* Peckinpah trying to say? If he means to repel us by the life of violence, why that strangely sentimental finale? And if he means the film as a celebration of the outlaw, why must he so immerse us in the outlaw's brutality? There are no easy interpretations of *The Wild Bunch*. Peckinpah is feeling out his own responses to his characters' way of life, and he is asking us to struggle with him to make sense of the experiences on the screen. For all of its technical assurance, this is an unfinished, open-ended film, a tentative exploration of a peculiar, vanishing way of life, rather than a clearly formulated thesis film. Peckinpah has not resolved his own feelings about the masculine code of honor of the Westerner or about the violence of the outlaw, and *The Wild Bunch* reflects his confusions. We rightly demand more clarity from an artist, but at the same time, the genuinely agonized temper of *The Wild Bunch* makes it a searching, unsettling film.

The film opens on a group of children "playing" by placing a couple of scorpions in a container filled with red ants, then setting fire to both, and at the very end it is a child who murders Pike; the film's vision of children is perhaps most revealing of its ambivalence. After the massacre in the Texas town near the beginning, a group of children run among the corpses in the street firing make-believe pistols and imitating the gunfighters with admiration and delight; later, even more devastatingly, as Angel is dragged around Mapache's village, children chase after him laughing and shouting. With these images Peckinpah clearly means to say that violence is an inherent part of human nature, but it is interesting that the faces of the children almost always contain expressions of innocence and wonder that are not quite accounted for by the philosophical statement about their intuitive cruelty. When the children in Angel's village look at the Wild Bunch, with shy curiosity and admiration, we cannot help but be touched by their responsiveness to these lost men. One of the Mexicans says to Pike shortly afterwards, as they observe the playfulness of the Gorch brothers, "We all dream of being a child again. Even the worst of us." For the faces of the children are still unformed, open to possibilites, and it is that sense of possibility that makes us dream. Children may be instinctively violent, but the freshness of their faces teases us to believe that they are capable of *something more* than violence. It is this something more that Peckinpah searches for in the Wild Bunch too—call it an inchoate sense of honor or loyalty or commitment—and just as often as he is wryly skeptical about the Bunch, he asks us to believe that they are redeemable. The children in the film embody innocence and evil, beauty and corruption, gentleness and brutality, and the film as a whole

wavers between a harsh, very contemporary cynicism and an older, mellower belief in grand human possibilities that has always been the most sentimental affirmation of the Western. Traditional Westerns wallowed in this sentimentality and became rosy parables of virtue triumphant, while some very recent Westerns have gone to the other extreme and opted for a cynical stance that is often just as hysterical and glib. It is Peckinpah's effort to play these two attitudes against each other that makes his Westerns seem so rich; his mixture of realism and romanticism (a mixture that was already recognizable, on a much smaller scale, in *Ride the High Country*), even if not yet quite rationally proportioned, illuminates the Western myths so that they seem relevant, not remote.

I spoke with Peckinpah about *The Wild Bunch* and about his career generally several months ago, while he was still completing the editing of the film and simultaneously making preparations for the shooting of his next film, *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*. During the afternoon that I spent with him, he was running down to the editing room, testing girls for a secondary role in *Cable Hogue*, looking at the art director's drawings, making arrangements for rehearsals, ordering horses. His ability to keep in command of everything was impressive, an ability that shows through the following conversation. But what is most interesting about this interview is that it reveals many of the same uncertainties that can be "read" in more disguised form in the film itself. Peckinpah is an instinctive director, not an intellectual one, and his instinct for cinema is unquestionably masterful. But I would say that if he is to continue to grow as an artist, he needs to strive for more intellectual clarity; he needs to order and question his hidden assumptions even more ruthlessly, so that he can go on testing himself instead of simply repeating and reworking the themes of *The Wild Bunch*. I hope that his next film is not a Western.

★

It's well known that you had a lot of trouble before you started working here at Warners, and I wanted to ask about your working relationships here. Apparently they're very satisfying.

Very satisfying. Delightful. I work very closely with my executive producer, Philip Feldman, and very closely with Ken Hyman, who is the president of Warner Brothers-Seven Arts. I find them to be very creative, tough, stimulating, and damn fine people to work with.

And you find that you have all the freedom that you want?

I think Ken Hyman described it as limited total carte blanche. And I find I work very well under these circumstances. I wouldn't want to change a damn thing. I like it.

How did you get involved with them?

Both Ken Hyman and Phil Feldman had seen *Ride the High Country* and *Major Dundee* and knew the circumstances behind the mutilation of *Dundee*, and they knew some of my television work also, and both wanted me to make pictures for them and with them. I was *delighted* in their trust and their encouragement, because I literally hadn't worked for four years because of the fiasco with Jerry Bressler on *Dundee* and Martin Ransohoff on *The Cincinnati Kid*. To some degree I have to take the blame, because I was an idiot to start to make a picture with those two people in the first place; their approach to films was so completely different from mine.

During the interim you did some television?

Some television and a screenplay or two, and wrote and directed *Noon Wine* for Stage 67, which was a *joy* to do. That was with Jason Robards, Per Oscarsson, Olivia de Havilland. Dan Melnick of Talent Associates produced it. I worked very well with Dan. We were all very pleased with the way the show turned out. I received two nominations on it actually, one from the Writers Guild, one from the Screen Directors Guild.

But you didn't have any opportunity to work on films during that period?

No. I was known as a troublemaker—I think for all the wrong reasons actually. When you set out to make a certain type of picture, it's very difficult to change in the middle, particularly if you don't respect the people who are suggesting the changes, and if the changes are bloody fucking awful. Ransohoff talked one kind of picture on *The Cincinnati Kid* to me, but he didn't really want the kind of picture that I wanted to make; he wanted the kind of picture he got, which I thought was very very dull.

Yes, I did too. What was the original intention?

The intention was to give a fairly honest look at life in the thirties, in a Depression area, and what happens to a man who plays stud for a living, how it affects his life and those around him. I thought the picture came out just like a story in an old *Cosmopolitan* or something, although I enjoyed the color. But I was dead set against casting Ann-Margret in that picture. I had a feeling I would never do the picture, but I didn't really expect to be fired after I got started. But that was just Marty's way. I found out later that no matter what I'd shot—and I thought it was some astonishingly good footage—I was going to be fired, or shall we say sandbagged. But he has his way of making films, and I have mine.

What about Major Dundee? *Did you have a lot of trouble while you were making that, or was it mostly in the cutting?*

A great deal of trouble all the way through. *Unbelievable* situation.

Was that also a case of starting out to do one kind of film and then being pressured to do something else?

Absolutely. It was a very tight script, intricately intertwined; you know, if you removed a part of it, something else would fall out fifteen pages later. Bressler wanted to cut after we started shooting, and we tried, but it didn't work.

And it was this bad reputation that kept you from working?

Yes. I know several people who wanted me for pictures, and the studios wouldn't touch me in any way, shape, or form. I couldn't even get on the lot at Columbia.

That's one of the frightening things about the whole industry.

I think it's changing. I hope it is.

Do you think you'd have less trouble now?

Well, I *am* less trouble now, let's put it that way. Maybe I've learned a lot. I will not start a picture until we know the ground rules, how we're going to work. And thank God I don't have to. I can more or less pick and choose the properties I want to do, and who I'm going to do them with. It's a very good feeling.

With Mr. Feldman and Mr. Hyman, is it that they don't interfere as much, or is it that you feel that their attitudes are very close to yours?

THE WILD BUNCH: *Traditional march to the showdown.*

They're enormously creative people, and I feel we work together very well. I respect them, and they respect me. They let me do my thing, so to speak, and whenever they can, they highlight it, and give me all the help that I could possibly need. They're *damn* good, they're tough, they've got good ideas. And I either have to get a better one, or I use theirs. You don't mind working with people like that, it's a delight.

I was listening to what you said earlier about the unions and guilds. Do you have trouble with them?

You always have problems with them. They make it very very hard to make a picture, particularly the kind we're doing now on *Cable Hogue,* which is a low-budget picture. We are right on the line of not being able to make it. But it doesn't make any difference to the unions whether you only have a limited budget, or whether you're making a multimillion dollar picture; the same rules go into effect. And I think that's detrimental to the industry. I think they should encourage low-budget pictures, and a lot more pictures would be made. I think they ought to have two rates. I *believe* in the unions, but I think they're hurting themselves and they're hurting a lot of us who want to make particular stories that we have to do out of price. We should be *encouraged* by the unions to do these stories rather than being penalized—perhaps something like deferred payment if the picture makes money.

Was The Wild Bunch *an expensive film?*

That was a $4 million picture. But if we'd tried to do it here, it would have been impossible to bring it in for 6 or 7 million, because of the extra problem and the sets, which are all Mexican. It was a difficult picture because of its size. We had a large cast and an enormous amount of action.

Are you more comfortable working on a smaller, more intimate film?

No, the amount of concentration is about the same. Both are challenging.

I ask because I've noticed that in your films the interplay of characters is something you are always very interested in, and handle very well. So I was curious whether the epic scope of Wild Bunch *gets in the way of that concern with character.*

Well, I wasn't trying to make an epic, I was trying to tell a simple story about bad men in changing times. I was trying to make a few comments on violence and the people who live by violence. It's not a means to something, violence is an end in itself to these people. I enjoyed making it. We all worked very hard. I was talking to Bill Holden and Ernest Borgnine and some other members of the cast, and they all want to do another one. I guess we all knew we were making a serious picture when we were down there; there's a certain delight in that.

Everybody is so concerned right now about violence in films. What was your attitude about the violence?

Actually it's an anti-violence film because I use violence as it *is.* It's ugly, brutalizing, and bloody fucking awful. It's not fun and games and cowboys and Indians, it's a terrible, ugly thing. And yet there's a certain response that you get from it, an excitement, because we're all violent people, we have violence within us. I don't know if you can legislate against it. It's in children, as I bring out in the film. I don't know about violence on television. I object to it because I think it's usually so goddamned dull. They just have a lot of violence for its own sake, it's not motivated. Violence is a part of life, and I don't think we can bury our heads in the sand and ignore it. It's important to understand it and the reason people seem to need violence vicariously. We had five million years, you know, of surviving, and I don't see how the species is going to survive without violence.

You say that the film is really anti-violence because it shows how ugly violence is. But as you also say, obviously a lot of people who watch it won't respond to it in that way.

I think they will, because there's enough of it.

You don't think some people will just get a kick out of it?

I don't think so. I think everybody will be a little sickened by it, at least I hope so, or a little dismayed, at least dismayed—which is the effect that I'm trying for. On *Dundee* they cut 80% of

the violence out and made it very attractive and exciting; but the really bloody, awful things that happen to men in war were cut out of the picture, which I thought was *unforgivable*—along with most of the story and all the character interplay and the rest of it.

Did you face any sort of pressures to tone down the violence in this film because of all the uproar about it last summer?

No. We discussed it, but we had a particular story to make, and we thought that we had a point to make about violence, that it's awful, this *kind* of violence. Other kinds of violence may be very necessary; the violence in a pro football game is certainly fascinating to millions, and I thoroughly enjoy it. But I don't think we should say it doesn't exist and we should *destroy* violence—by what means? You can't legislate against it. On the one hand, you have the violent protests of these kids today, which I believe in. Some of the racial problems have only been brought to the public attention through violence. Then you can deal with the *horror* of President Kennedy's assassination and his brother's death. But a political assassination has very little to do with film violence. I don't think television had too much to do with training either Oswald or Sirhan.

Yes, I agree that people are really much too willing to jump to the conclusion that just because there have been violent acts, television and films must be the cause.

You know, that's *bullshit*, that's absolute bullshit.

Well, that's why I wondered whether you had been affected in any way by this talk.

No way whatsoever. I think war is a hideous thing, and we show a small part of a war; we show what kind of people get into the situation, and how they end. We try to make them human beings, and not all black, but there's certainly very little white in them.

One thing I felt in the early parts of the film was that the "good guys," the people on the side of the law, are really more ruthless and more brutal, even, than the criminals.

This was shot before the Chicago incidents, but I think they more or less prove the point I was trying to make, that power corrupts just as much as lawlessness.

Is Cable Hogue *a contemporary film?*

No, 1908, 1909—about people in the West, but it's not a Western.

That general period seems to be one that you're interested in.

No, I'm just trying to get out of the 1870 period. Right now I'm up to 1913, 1914. The next one is going to be even later.

In Wild Bunch, *why did you want to do a film about a group of criminals?*

The outlaws of the West have always fascinated me. They had a certain notoriety, they were supposed to have a Robin Hood quality about them, which was not really the truth, but they were strong individuals; in a land for all intents and purposes without law, they made their own. I suppose I'm something of an outlaw myself. I identify with them. But our characters in *The Wild Bunch* are limited and adolescent, they're not too bright. They're fascinating characters. I've always wondered what happened to the outlaw leaders of the Old West when it changed. It's been a fascinating subject to me, and I thought this story by Walon Green dramatized it, set it up well. So I wrote the screenplay with him and made the picture. It's a very uncompromising film—the language, the action, the details, the lives of these people are as I imagine they were. We tried to recreate an environment, an era, and I think we were reasonably successful with it. It's a disturbing film, people who've seen it call it a *shattering* film. The strange thing is that you feel a great sense of loss when these killers reach the end of the line.

Did you write Cable Hogue *too?*

No, Warren Oates gave me a script that he'd read and liked, and I liked it enough to buy it. Gordon Dawson did the rewrite on it. John Crawford and Edmond Penney did the script, and I think it's a *lovely* script, I'm very happy to be doing it. It's got a lot of warmth, it's a love story really, but again it deals with some degree of morality.

Going back to what you said earlier about having a reputation as a troublemaker—I know

this is an industry where people get labelled very easily. Does that reputation still affect you in any way?

I make trouble with shoddy workmanship, and with shoddy, shabby people, people who don't do their job, and the whiners, and complainers, and the bitchers, and the sore-asses who talk a good piece of work and never produce. I don't know why the hell they went into motion pictures in the first place. It's certainly not to make pictures, it's just a sort of masturbation or something, and I don't like to be around them. I was very lucky. I started in television with Dick Powell—an extraordinary man, who always encouraged you to do your best, and was creative and had good ideas, and with him I was able to do *The Westerner,* which turned out to be quite an extraordinary little series. So he spoiled me, you might say—that dedication and enthusiasm and talent that he brought to the organization where I more or less grew up; and I was appalled to find out that there were so many self-centered idiots floating around who have other interests than making a good film. Again, it's my fault that I didn't understand this. I understand it better now.

Have you found a lot of sloppy work among studio people and technicians?

Well, I've found enough of it. I think Mr. Feldman and I fired 22 people off *The Wild Bunch.* That's not all studio people of course. Some of them were independent, some of them were from the Mexico City Syndicato. But we work very hard. The days are certainly not 8-hour days for all the people concerned. There's actually a very fine staff here at Warner Brothers.

Do you plan to go on working with Phil Feldman?

We've got two other projects that we're preparing. And I'm up for two other pictures off the lot, and it depends on which one is going to be put together first. As I said, I like working with Phil very much. I expect to be working with him in the future.

It's interesting to know what kind of relationship between a director and a producer works best. Very few film-makers are able to find a producer whom they can work with congenially.

You have to be very careful with Phil, because if I would casually say, I would like to shoot past the top of a mountain, that night he would have the top of the mountain gone. He's beautiful. And he will do it at a cost that is hardly anything. He's a miracle man. He's interested in making good pictures.

And you feel that you and he have the same interests?

Absolutely. Absolutely. We have *enormous* differences sometimes, thank God. It keeps me stimulated. And sometimes he's very right indeed. Phil is executive producer on *Cable Hogue.* We're forming, I think, a fine staff here, and we have some great plans.

Was The Wild Bunch *almost all shot on location?*

Every bit of it.

And how about this new film?

Every bit of it is on location. And then I think I will take a couple of months off. By June it'll be two years I've been working on *Wild Bunch.* I will have completed two pictures in two years, which is a lot of work when you're involved in writing and directing and producing. But I don't like to work any other way.

Did you have difficulty working in Mexico?

Not really. The staff of the Syndicato is difficult to work with. The workers, the crews, the technicians are marvelous, they're as good as they are here, very enthusiastic. But their unions present problems as unions do here. But I like Mexico very much. I have an ex-wife there, many good friends.

Did you do a lot of reconstruction work, or did you find that you could use the locations as they existed?

No, we did some reconstruction work in the town of Paras. It's an old town, built in the 1600's, so we reconstructed some of the buildings to give it a little more of an Anglo look, like a Texas border town, and it came out very well. The film looks exactly like the newsreels of 1916, of the Revolution. I got a lot of old newsreels from the Mexican government. And actually I wanted to make the picture in black and

white. We have no choice. I think black and white evokes a different kind of feeling. We have scratched prints in negative of some of the film, but I'm using it, I'm scratching other prints to give it a newsreel quality. I think it'll play.

How much actual visual planning do you do? Do you try to conceive all of the shots very carefully before you get to the set?

Every one. I'm up at 4:00 in the morning, looking at my day's work, which I've already sketched in before, and I go over it again and again. Light changes, action, something may come up, so I try to know every single possible approach, and then I pick the one I want. I always prepare. That's why I lose 15 to 20 pounds on every picture, it's like an endurance race or something. No, I don't like to go on the set and start "creating." We do that before in rehearsal. But we know our work so well that if some new idea does come up, we've gone through everything else, and we know exactly where to go. For example, the exit from the village in *Wild Bunch* was not in the script. I shot that in less than a day, and it's one of the high points in the picture. All of a sudden we knew the picture needed it. But that couldn't have happened unless we'd been so well-prepared. . . .

Saw *Red Desert* the other night. Jesus, it's a beautiful film, extraordinary, I loved it. A little self-indulgent here and there. That thin line of doing something right and then getting carried away. I've only seen two Antonioni films, that and *Blow-Up*. I thought *Blow-Up* was flawless. And I think that's the only film outside of *Bonnie and Clyde* that I've seen in the last two years. I ran *Bonnie and Clyde* when I got back from *The Wild Bunch*.

What did you think of it?

Loved it, *loved* it, they did all my *shtick*. I thought everything about it was great. Although our picture is completely different in many ways, there are strange similarities. I don't know *how* they are similar, except they both deal with violence and the people involved in violence. Our people are not as attractive as Faye and Warren, but yet they are attractive.

Again, it's that sympathy for the outlaw.

I just tried to make them honest. Yet they come off as human beings, which possibly is a frightening thing.

They're going to really get disturbed about this, I'll tell you. I'm exhausted when I see it, I'm literally exhausted for hours, and all it is really is a simple adventure story. . . .

JOSEPH McBRIDE

Welles's Chimes at Midnight

Back in the days of the Mercury Theater, John Houseman was asked when Orson Welles's production of *Julius Caesar* would open. "When Welles finishes writing it," he replied. The feeling that Welles hurls himself against Shakespeare merely to gratify himself with the sound of the collision is as common as it is misleading. This assumption arises in part from the boisterous, uneven quality of some of Welles's adaptations and from the bravura aspects of his style, but it fails to take into account the common source of both the imperfections and the achievements. Shakespeare was Welles's first dramatic love, and whenever he has wanted to

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find himself artistically he has returned to Shakespeare's plays. In them he finds not only themes compatible with his own and characters large enough to justify his most grandiose conceptions, but also a standard against which he can measure his own egotism, a theatrical ideal which challenges him to reconcile his subjective obsessions with the demands of universality.

Welles has refused to dramatize *Crime and Punishment,* explaining that he finds himself in complete agreement with Dostoevsky and would not be content just to illustrate the book. In Shakespeare, however, he finds a superior power whose dramas are capable of broadening, not merely confirming, his own ideas. When he adapts Shakespeare he is able to enlarge his conception of the hero without, as in *Mr. Arkadin,* limiting his social perspective in the process. "Shakespeare is the staff of life," he has declared, and it is clear that Welles sees Shakespeare as his artistic conscience, the consummate example of the fusion of a personal vision with the full ironic complexity of human nature. If, like Shakespeare, he refuses to judge his characters and never violates his conception of character to make an ideological point, he also, like Shakespeare, at every point makes clear the precise moral structure under which his characters live. In Shakespeare also he is able to find an appropriate setting for his kingly characters to inhabit. Just as John Ford leaves the unheroic present for the American frontier, Welles finds in medieval castles and battlefields a setting congenial to true grandeur of spirit. In *Touch of Evil* and *Citizen Kane,* he is able to create fittingly heroic universes for his heroes to rule, but in *Mr. Arkadin* and *The Trial* the moral smallness of the heroes collides with Welles's attempts to conjure up an egocentric universe. The Shakespearean form, however, minimizes such dangers by allowing Welles to freely allocate social power to Macbeth and an Othello and a Falstaff which would be difficult to justify in a less feudal world.

As a young man Welles approached his master with boundless ego. He staged an all-black production of *Macbeth* in Harlem, turning the witches into voodoo doctors and changing the locale to Haiti; he played *Caesar* in modern dress as an allegory of fascism; and, most spectacularly, he combined eight of Shakespeare's history plays into a monstrous spectacle called *Five Kings,* which sealed the doom of the Mercury Theater. His three Shakespearean films—*Macbeth* (1948), *Othello* (1952) and *Chimes at Midnight* (1966)—have been more and more faithful to the letter of Shakespeare but, paradoxically, less and less faithful to the spirit as he acquires more grace and confidence in uniting his own vision to Shakespeare's. If Welles no longer pulls a stunt like the voodoo *Macbeth,* he takes a larger, subtler liberty in changing the emphasis of the Falstaff-Hal plays from the moral awakening of the ideal king to the willful destruction of innocence by a young man newly conscious of power.

Welles's theme was there all the time, of course, and the kingship theme is as subsidiary to Welles as it is paramount to Shakespeare, but the point is that Welles's vision has finally matured, so that we no longer feel the damaging pull between one moral system and another, as we do, for example, in his *Othello,* in which both the text and Welles's acting resist his inchoate attempt to make Iago the hero. What Welles has conquered is the diffusion of emphasis and statement, so that he no longer tries to tell the whole history of England from 1377 to 1485, but concentrates instead on the moral drama behind the story of a single king. The audience of *Chimes at Midnight* is scarcely aware of the extensive textual revision and rearranging that Welles has unobtrustively performed on the plays; for *Five Kings* that was one of the central fascinations.

A Welles adaptation of Shakespeare is not an *ad hoc* project but the result of a lifetime of scholarship and creative experiment. The genesis of *Chimes at Midnight,* for example, extends even beyond *Five Kings.* Welles had written a first adaptation of the chronicles when he was twelve years old and a student at the Todd School in Woodstock, Illinois—where he was director of a student company that performed

not only Shakespeare but also more obscure Elizabethan playwrights such as Jonson, Marlowe, Dekker, and Ford. The project incubated until Welles staged *Chimes at Midnight* in Belfast in 1960; he was finally able to raise money for the film in 1964, and completed it in 1966 after almost forty years of contemplation and experimentation. Shakespeare has been his touchstone for nearly his entire life. As he tells it, his mother had read him Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* when he was two, and when he discovered that they were not the real thing but had been watered down for children, he demanded that she read him the plays themselves. She gave him his first book, *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* for his third birthday, and he quickly began to assemble the complete works of Shakespeare in his library. He attended productions of the plays from an early age, and directed his own adaptations of Shakespeare (as well as his own plays) in his puppet theater for his family, supplying all the voices himself. By the time he was seven he could recite any speech from *King Lear,* and by the time he was ten, he claims, he had learned all the tragic parts. At the age of nine he had played Lear in a condensed version in his back yard. He delighted in playing the great monsters—Richard III, Brutus (and Cassius in the same production), Scrooge, Judas. He proved his versatility by playing the Blessed Virgin in one play, Christ in another. When he was a teen-ager he declared that *The Duchess of Malfi* was his favorite play, though as he has grown older he has proved more partial to *Lear,* which he still hopes to film.

Leni Riefenstahl has made an interesting comment on Welles's Shakespearean films: "Orson Welles draws marvellous pictures in the margin of Shakespeare, but his films are like operas or ballets suggested by Shakespeare, not Shakespeare himself." Welles's position is similar: "I use Shakespeare's words and characters to make motion pictures. They are variations on his themes. . . . Without presuming to compare myself to Verdi, I think he gives me my best justification. The opera *Otello* is certainly not *Othello* the play. It certainly could not have been written without Shakespeare, but it is first and foremost an opera. *Othello* the movie, I hope, is first and foremost a motion picture." If Welles changes Shakespeare's emphasis to ally it more closely to his own, his intention is not to distort, attack or ignore the text. The problem he explores in *Macbeth* and *Othello* and brings to fruition in *Chimes at Midnight* is primarily one of integration and stylization. The two early films are seriously handicapped, *Macbeth* by extreme budgetary restrictions and a resulting crudeness of tone (which in some ways, however, helps to create the necessary atmosphere of monolithic superstition, though it hinders Welles in smoothly integrating his concept of Macbeth's character with Shakespeare's), and *Othello* by inadequate sound synchronization (which necessitates some evasive camerawork and blurs the impact of much of the dialogue), and by the problem of reconciling Iago to the text.

But most vital to Welles's concerns, and resolved partially in *Othello,* is the question of striking a stylistic balance between poetry and setting. *Macbeth* is performed in papier-maché sets, and only in the foggy exteriors do we find the necessary naturalistic counterpoint. For *Othello,* Welles was able to shoot his exteriors in Italy, Morocco and on the island of Torcello, and the resulting freedom in selection of settings adds immensely to the mood. The scene of Duncan's arrival at court in *Macbeth,* for example, cannot, for all its details of pagan drummers and horrific costumes, avoid the distracting appearance of a sound stage with painted backdrop for sky, constructed rocks, and so forth. We are thrown back on our sense of the play as a theatrical spectacle, and Welles's style is too expressionistic to accommodate such totally unreal surroundings without disturbing the ironic tension he requires between the hero's overweening ego and the strictures of social responsibility. The miniature long-shots of the castle in *Citizen Kane* work well because Welles juxtaposes them in the newsreel with documentary shots of the actual Hearst castle;

since we have already seen aerial views of the castle in the daylight, we can then easily accept the stylization of the darkened castle seen through hazy trees with tiny lights flickering here and there in the gloom. The tension of setting is perfectly allied with that of character: as Kane retreats farther and farther into a self-enclosed fantasy world, we no longer see the castle as a real object but as a projection of his imagination. Similarly, Welles takes great pains in the early parts of *The Magnificent Ambersons* to establish the documentary verity of the mansion and the town surrounding it; as the mood becomes more claustrophobic, we see less of the total view and more of the expressionistically shadowed and distorted interiors.

We can conclude that the more stylized the Wellesian character, the more carefully considered must be the deployment of landscape. If the settings of *Macbeth* make such considerations impossible, and drive the work into pure expressionism with its attendant virtues and limitations, the settings of *Chimes at Midnight* solve the problem brilliantly. First of all, Welles filmed in Spain—not merely because Spanish money was behind the production, but because in Moorish castles, towns, and faces he could find a world which, like the hellish border setting of *Touch of Evil*, is not slavishly literal and historical but permits any latitude of shading from the naturalistic to the grotesque. We see this too in *Othello*, perhaps most clearly in the scene on the parapet in which Iago goads Othello's jealousy. The photography is that of an eerie, slightly unreal twilight. Othello wears a massive white robe, light from the left casting a hazy aura on his profile; he strides back and forth, driving Iago closer and closer to the edge of the precipice below which, from a dizzying height, we see the waves smashing. Kurosawa achieved a similar stylization in the forest scenes of *Throne of Blood*, his version of *Macbeth*, in which the two men on horses wheel around violently in the throes of a wild thunderstorm, their movements foreshortened and made more spasmodic by the compressed perspective of a long-focus lens. The problem of a world-style has been solved in Westerns and in Japanese period pictures, Welles explains, because of the long evolution of a tradition. With Shakespeare, as he puts it, "These are people who have more life in them than any human being ever had. But you can't simply dress up and *be* them, you have to make a world for them. . . . In *Henry V*, for example, you see the people riding out of the castle, and suddenly they are on a golf course somewhere charging each other. You can't escape it, they have entered another world. . . . What I am trying to do is to see the outside, real world through the same eyes as the inside, fabricated one. To create a kind of unity." Welles is raising here the problem of *mise-en-scène*, of the integration of character and poetry with visual rhythm, which is our particular concern in discussing Welles's Shakespearean films.

Chimes at Midnight is Welles's masterpiece, the fullest expression of everything he had been working toward since *Citizen Kane*, which itself was more an end than a beginning. The younger Welles was obsessed with the problem of construction, and solved it perfectly with a geometric style which locked the apparently powerful hero into an ironic vise of which he was almost totally unaware. We could not be farther from the characters, and perhaps this distancing, however suited to the telling of a story of futile omnipotence, was an acknowledgment of artistic immaturity on Welles's part: faced with the problem of defining himself, he contrived a style to prove that definition is illusory. In *Chimes at Midnight*, Welles has merged his own viewpoint and that of his hero into a direct communication of emotion. His style, though it is every bit as deliberate and controlled as in *Kane*, no longer demands our attention for itself. There is nothing here to correspond with the trickery in *Kane;* there is a battle sequence which is one of the greatest achievements in action direction in the history of the cinema, and which moreover is constructed in a highly rhetorical pattern, almost as tightly as a fugue, but it presents itself to the audience not as an artistic demonstration but as an over-

Orson Welles, Margaret Rutherford, Jeanne Moreau in CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT

whelming physical experience.

I think that here Welles finds himself where Beethoven found himself when he replaced musical instruments with voices in the Ninth Symphony: he has broken the bounds of his tools (the camera and the cutting bench) and has given everything over to human instruments (his actors). When told that no one could possibly sing some of the notes he had written, Beethoven replied that it was no concern of his. Welles is more pragmatic—since he himself must make the actors correspond to his purposes —but there is the same rhapsodic exhilaration in his submersion into faces and voices. As Pierre Buboeuf puts it, "He broods with a disquiet like Rembrandt's over his own face, and it is not inconsequential that he finds there other attunements, accents less brilliant but more human, which he substitutes for the dazzling flashes of the past." We feel, as we do in *The Magnificent Ambersons,* that Welles is rejecting the mask of self-conscious stylization in order to find himself in a relaxed, sensual spontaneity. A crucial difference, however, is that Welles hid himself behind the camera in *The Ambersons,* revealing himself through his attitude toward other people, and here he looms before us buoyantly fat, literally and figuratively much more himself than he has ever been before.

And, appropriately, the story he is telling is the story of a man who is completely candid, a liar who expects no one to believe his lies and so exaggerates them to the point of absurdity, a man whose complete lack of pretense, when confronted with the world's demands of responsibility and self-denial, becames the very cause of his destruction. During production, Welles explained his intentions: "*Chimes* should be very plain on the visual level because above all it is a very real human story. . . . Everything of importance in the film should be found on the faces; on these faces that whole universe I was speaking of should be found. I imagine that it will be 'the' film of my life in terms of close-ups. . . . A story like *Chimes* demands them, because the moment we step back and separate ourselves from the faces, we see the people in period costumes and many actors in the fore-

CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT: *Keith Baxter and Welles.*

ground. The closer we are to the faces, the more universal it becomes. *Chimes* is a somber comedy, the story of the betrayal of friendship." And after the film was completed, he observed, "*The Ambersons* and *Chimes at Midnight* represent more than anything else what I would like to do in films . . . what I am trying to discover now in films is not technical surprises or shocks, but a more complete unity of forms, of shapes. That's what I'm reaching for, what I hope is true. If it is, then I'm reaching maturity as an artist. If it isn't true, then I'm in decadence, you know?"

The reader of these descriptions should not suppose that *Chimes* is as fluid and deceptively nonchalant as a Renoir film; far from it. When I talk about a "plain" style, I mean that the camera is at the service of the actors, and not vice versa (as in *The Trial,* for instance). When a director matures, his work becomes more lucid, more direct, allowing room for deeper audience response; as Truffaut has put it, what is in front of the camera becomes more important. And "direct," in the complex rhetorical world of Welles's films, means not that the issues are simplified, but that their presentation is—we feel them with more intensity and passion. Compare the climax of *Kane,* in which Kane slaps Susan, to the muted climax of *Chimes at Midnight,* in which Hal banishes Falstaff and the old man murmurs, "Master Shallow, I owe you a thousand pound." The scene in *Kane* is exciting and moving, but its theatricality tends to widen the gulf between Kane's emotions and our comprehension of them. If *Citizen Kane* has a flaw, it is in its relative dispassion—a scheme in which we are so far removed from the hero that we may easily watch his struggle with mere fascination; *Kane* is perhaps too mathematical in conception. The true hero, it is not unfitting to say, is not Kane but Welles himself. But in *Chimes* there is finally no distance between Welles and Falstaff; a simple exchange of close-ups between Hal and Falstaff conveys emotions infinitely deeper than does Kane's explosive action. It is the difference between the expression of an emotion and the sharing of an emotion.

Welles's liberties with the text generally escape our notice, extreme as they are, not only because he has so smoothly transformed Shakespeare's concerns into his own but because his concentration on Falstaff enables him to achieve a dramatic focus which Shakespeare's historical concerns tend at times to dilute. The story is taken from *1 Henry IV* and *2 Henry IV,* with bits from *Henry V, The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Richard II,* and a narration from Holinshed's *Chronicles.* Shakespeare seems to have intended Falstaff as a relatively simple comic counterpoint to the King-Prince-Hotspur story in the first part of *Henry IV* (as the rather awkward alternation of historical and comic scenes would suggest) and only gradually discovered that Falstaff was so profound a character that he all but overshadowed the drama of kingship. Not only the greater length given to Falstaff's scenes, but the immeasurably more fluid structure of the second part—in which the imbalance threatened by Falstaff's pre-eminence becomes qualified by the crisis in his relationship with the Prince—attest to Shakespeare's fully ripened understanding of Falstaff's meaning. We of course have been prepared for the rejection of Falstaff by the great tavern scene in the first part, but in the second, not only in Hal's eyes as a threat to his princely dignity but in his own as well, Falstaff takes on a graver aspect. Images of age, disease and death suddenly proliferate, and the gay denunciations of honor give

way in the second part to sober, more closely reasoned (and more witty) inward reflection. Shakespeare also creates four new companions for Falstaff—Pistol, Doll Tearsheet, Shallow, and Silence—as if to compensate for Hal's growing absorption into himself. "In the first part of the play," Welles comments, "the Hotspur subplot keeps the business of the triangle between the King, his son and Falstaff (who is a sort of foster father) from dominating. But in my film, which is made to tell, essentially, the story of that triangle, there are bound to be values which can't exist as it is played in the original. It's really quite a different drama."

We can see in Welles's decision to make Hal a subordinate figure to Falstaff not only an extremely ironic attitude toward the idea of the "Christian king" (a concept as alien to Welles as it is central to Shakespeare and, in a modern guise, to John Ford, from whom Welles borrows greatly in this film), but also a more definite emphasis on the essential *goodness* of Falstaff's character, the tragic nobility of even those attributes—his disregard of health and social discretion—which will inevitably destroy him. The act of banishment by Shakespeare's Hal is not a tragic decision; it is the seal of moral maturity, the "noble change" he proclaims to the "incredulous world." The war he will wage on France as Henry V, which Shakespeare is at pains to present in that play as the God-given and ancestrally determined right of empire, becomes in *Chimes at Midnight* a totally unmotivated, madly willful action. On our first sight of Hal after the ceremony of coronation, he proclaims the war with no reason given but for a sentry's cry of "No king of England, if not king of France!" In other words, Hal, on accepting responsibility, immediately puts it to blindly destructive ends. Welles does not invoke, as Shakespeare does, a higher imperative for Hal's action, presenting it solely as a function of his will. Welles's Hal is as truly a tragic figure as is his father, who had wrested his kingdom illegitimately from Richard and was then doomed to face unceasing rebellion.

Hal comes into his crown legitimately, by right of birth, and in Shakespeare's terms is thus rightfully able to purpose the building of an empire. But for Welles (for Shakespeare too, but to a lesser degree of emphasis) Hal has lost the better part of himself in his rejection of Falstaff and all he stands for. The banishment is inevitable if he is to acquiesce to his position of power, but the price of the world dominion he will thus achieve is the subjection of his own moral nature, as Welles makes clear in the arbitrariness of his first action after the banishment. Hal's final words to Falstaff have a meaning entirely opposite to their meaning in the play: "Being awaked, I do despise my dream. . . . Presume not that I am the thing I was . . . I have turned away my former self." And his last words in the film show how much he has deluded himself: "We consider it was excess of wine that set him on." Welles holds on the new king's pose of bemused reflection for several long seconds, and in the next shot shows us Falstaff's coffin.

For Shakespeare, Falstaff is essentially a comic figure because, while completely innocent, he is destructive of kingly power, and must be sacrificed without question to the demands of a greater order. For Welles, the greater order *is* Falstaff, and Hal sacrifices both Falstaff and himself in the submission to his own will. Hal is as destructive of innocence as Falstaff is of kingship. And Welles gives us a strong sense of a curious moral trait of Falstaff's which several Shakespearean commentators have pointed out: though innocent, he seeks out the very force which will destroy him. In this we can see a quality in Falstaff which precludes calling him a merely comic figure. If we can call *Chimes at Midnight* the tragedy of Falstaff (and we can, even though he makes moral decisions only by instinct), it is tragedy perhaps more in the Aristotelian than in the Shakespearean sense of the term. Welles's description of Falstaff is profound: "What is difficult about Falstaff, I believe, is that he is the greatest conception of a good man, the most completely good man, in all drama. His faults are so small and he makes tremendous jokes out of little faults. But his goodness is like bread, like wine . . . And that was why I lost the comedy. The more I played

it, the more I felt that I was playing Shakespeare's good, pure man."

We do not see in Falstaff an essentially noble man of extraordinary gifts who destroys himself through a grave flaw in his nature which is also the source of his nobility; we see in him something rather more subtle and less absolute—a man of extraordinary gifts which destroy him because he fails to acknowledge their irreconcilable conflict with the nature of the world. His moral blindness (which is to say his childlike candor, an attribute he is sometimes apt to use as a ploy) is his only flaw. Much as Othello was blind to the existence of the kind of power Iago possessed, Falstaff is blind to the possibility that Hal could reject his gift of absolute love. A. C. Bradley remarks of Othello that we share his "triumphant scorn for the fetters of the flesh and the littleness of all the lives that must survive him." Falstaff we can say has a triumphant acceptance of the absoluteness of the flesh and a spontaneous respect for all the lives around him.

The mention of Iago is more than casual. Just as his father has been careful to cover the illegitimacy of his kingship with actions which assert his legitimacy—the vanquishing of internal rebellion—Hal schools himself in hypocrisy. From the first, Welles makes clear that Hal's merry-making with Falstaff is fraudulent, both a distraction from his impending moral crisis and a testing of his ability to withstand the temptations of instinct. Iago's "I am not what I am" finds many echoes in Hal, from his first soliloquy (" . . . herein will I imitate the sun, /Who doth permit the base contagious clouds/ To smother up his beauty from the world"), delivered with Falstaff musing vaguely in the background, to his final "Presume not that I am the thing I was," which leaves Falstaff destitute and uncomprehending. A great deal of the film's pathos and irony comes from the reversal of old and young men's roles. Falstaff's innocence is a sublimely defiant gesture on Welles's part. As a young man he played both Falstaff and Richard III in *Five Kings,* as if to impart a Jekyll-and-Hyde duplicity to the character. Now, as an old man, he makes Falstaff's constant protestations of youth an accusation not only of Hal's unnatural suppression of youth but of death itself. Much more than in Shakespeare, the spectacle of an old man shepherding the revels of a saturnine young man strikes us as a bitter defiance of age and the logic of destiny. Falstaff seeks out Hal because Hal is the least capable, due to his princehood, of casting off responsibilities and the promise of power, and when this ultimate test of his goodness fails, Falstaff fails with it. The heroism lies in the disparity between the greatness of the purpose and the inadequacy of the means.

When a tragic hero is destroyed, Bradley remarks, the primary impression is of *waste.* Waste is our feeling when Welles, at the end, shows Falstaff's huge coffin being wheeled slowly across a barren landscape with only a quiescent castle breaking the line of the horizon, the narrator telling us of Hal, "a majesty was he that both lived and died a pattern in princehood, a lodestar in honor, and famous to the world alway." We know that what the narrator is saying is literally true (it was written of the historical Henry V, who had Sir John Oldcastle, Falstaff's prototype, executed for treason), but we cannot help to sense the tragic irony as we see the remnants of Hal's humanity being carted away. His expressions and carriage during the banishment speech convey that mingled grandeur and grief-stricken horror that came so naturally to his father after a lifetime of scheming, and when he turns away from Falstaff into a tableau of banners and shields, he becomes a smaller and smaller figure vanishing into the endlessly repetitive corridors of history. If we never sympathize fully with Hal, if we feel, as Welles does, that there is something "beady-eyed and self-regarding" about him even after he becomes king, we never cease to admire him, even in his tragic folly.

Thanks to Keith Baxter's marvellous performance—next to John Gielgud's incomparable Henry IV the finest in a near-perfect cast—Hal is dignified and comprehensible even at his cruellest and most vain. Welles's instincts are acute here, for the unpleasantness of Joseph K is almost fatal to *The Trial,* and Hal, who

quite resembles K in his self-righteousness, needs a sense of human dignity and compassion to make him a suitable subject of Falstaff's attention and to make him fully aware of what he is rejecting when he banishes Falstaff. Hal fills us with awe in that chilling moment when he turns from Falstaff and whispers to himself, "At the end, try the man," as if reciting a prayer; in his sudden childlike humility when his father appears, wraith-like, and demands his crown; and most of all in his powerful, serene silence after the battle, when he drops his pot of ale and walks mutely off to follow his destiny. Welles creates a mythic finality about Hal when, cutting away from Hotspur resolving to duel him to the death, he shows us a cloud of dust, which rises to reveal Hal standing helmet and shield in hand on the battlefield (a copy of Ford's introduction of John Wayne in *Stagecoach*, dust rising to show him with rifle in one arm and saddle in the other).

Death hangs over the entire film, and the gaiety seems desperate. Both Hal's foster father and his real father are dying, and he is too preoccupied with his own legendary future to be of solace to either. His fun takes odd and vicious forms, as if he were reproaching both himself, for wasting time, and the butts of his humor, for encouraging him. He wants to see Falstaff "sweat to death" running from the Gad's Hill robbery, wants to expose him as a monstrous liar, wants to "beat him before his whore." One critic has suggested that in the first part of *Henry IV*, Hal is killing his patricidal tendencies (by killing Hotspur, his father's rival), and in the second part is killing his libido, his narcissistic self-adoration (Falstaff, of course), in order to prepare himself for the assumption of kingship. Welles replaces this sense of "penance" with a sense of vertiginous self-destruction. Like his father, like Hotspur, like, indeed, Falstaff, Hal has sought precisely the course which will destroy him. Hal is frightening because he is so young and yet seems so old. Welles draws a striking parallel in the feelings of Hal and both his "fathers" when he follows the king's speech on sleep with Hal telling Poins, "Before God, I am exceeding weary," and Falstaff murmuring, "S'blood, I'm as melancholy as a gibbed cat or a lugged bear."

Bells ringing in the distance give funereal punctuation to the very first scenes in the film, and motifs of rejection and farewell are dominant throughout. The battle scene, the cataclysm of destruction at the center of the film, begins in splendid romantic exuberance and ends with agonizingly slow, ponderous clouts from soldiers writhing dully in the mud. Welles edits the battle on the principle of "a blow given, a blow received," and the predominant feeling is of a monumental impasse, of incredible exertion without effect. Falstaff's flesh finally gets the better of him, and he lies helplessly sprawled in bed as Hal and Poins taunt him before Doll Tearsheet, his wit his only reprieve. The king seems chilled and mummified in his huge tomb-like castle. Hal and Hotspur seem almost inert when they duel in their armor shells. But Falstaff! Falstaff runs with a breathtakingly funny agility through the charging troops (a stroke of genius), and weaves his way through an unheeding, mindless tavern full of dancers. But he does not disappear into the aimless masses; he seems doomed to stand out awkwardly from the landscape, like a castle. Everything in the film is on the verge of slowing to a standstill.

Chimes at Midnight has none of the violent movements from exhilaration to dejection of Welles's earlier films; its equipoise reflects an achieved serenity. Throughout the film, most bitterly in the strained play-acting between Hal and Falstaff in the tavern scene which foreshadows the climax, the awareness of destruction is present even in moments of "respite." Falstaff battles this awareness throughout; his attempts to ignore it provide the comedy. He has none of Kane's guile and worldly ability, and his greatness presents itself as a monstrous jest impossible to ignore but easy to dismiss. He demands nothing but attention, and offers all of himself in return. His egocentricity, like his body, is carried past the ridiculous into the sublime, to the point of melancholia. He fears nothing but death, and reproaches Doll Tearsheet with, "Thou'lt forget me when I am

gone." It is unlikely that Welles as director or actor will achieve again so moving a scene as that of Falstaff's expulsion. With the author's consent we may feel superior to Kane, but we are never superior to Falstaff. He is naked before us. *Chimes at Midnight* is Welles's testament.

Reviews

MIDNIGHT COWBOY

Director: John Schlesinger. Producer: Jerome Hellman. Script by Waldo Salt from the novel by James Leo Herlihy. Photography: Adam Holender. Music: John Berry and Nilsson. UA.

Darling, an earlier movie directed by John Schlesinger, was almost ruined by a profusion of satirical "points" and cheap ironic contrasts that never added up to a coherent view of the bitchy darling of the title or the society she was climbing through. The film produced the depressing effect that comes from listening to some terribly sophisticated person, witty and knowing, who can't concentrate his mind on a single line of analysis or attack and settles for an easy show of superiority over any material brought to his attention. In *Midnight Cowboy* the central material—derived directly from James Leo Herlihy's novel—is stronger, simpler, and mostly free of opportunities for moral one-upmanship on the part of film-makers and audience. When Schlesinger relies on his great skill with actors and lets this material play, as he does in the scenes with Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight alone together, the film is very moving, even great. But he doesn't appear to recognize his best moments, since he is always undercutting them, and this time he has a new trouble: as well as the weakness for ironic decoration, Schlesinger's style has taken on that chic brutality, made popular by Lester and others, which is now considered essential in important English and American movies.

Herlihy's story is a paradox of innocence—of innocence surviving and health flourishing in the vilest of circumstances and through the vilest of acts. The beautiful and dumb Joe Buck leaves Houston to make his fortune in New York, where, he believes, hordes of wealthy women have been sexually stranded by the town's population of "tootie-fruities" and will gratefully empty their pocketbooks for his services. His analysis of the situation may not be entirely wrong, but Joe doesn't make it, he's not ruthless enough for success: he suffers from being used, as a prostitute is used, for a variety of unusual purposes, his clients are far more corrupt than he, and the city grinds him down. Because he's always been neglected and taken advantage of, Joe is rather afraid of people; he wants companionship but can't get it, and offers his body because it's the only way to make contact with anyone—these aspects of Joe's character are blurred by Schlesinger, despite a mess of flashbacks that are supposed to bring them out.

This buckskinned ingenue stumbles around in the city of night, completely lost, until he finds a friend and guide in Ratso Rizzo, umpteenth child of an Italian immigrant family from the Bronx and the complete expression of the New York ethos. In New York a man is nowhere if he doesn't have something going for him, some interior knowledge of the city's mystery, a way of surviving its aggression; and Ratso is all know-how, inside dope, and queer dishonest skills. But this time skill isn't enough. Like the brilliant decaying city, Ratso is incurably falling apart. As the winter draws on, the

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two friends decide to go to Florida, which Ratso imagines as a paradise of sunshine and cocoanuts, the two fundamentals necessary to sustain life. With his mind now concentrated on raising enough money to get to Florida and save Ratso's health, Joe allows himself to be picked up by an elderly faggot, whom he beats, robs, and nearly kills—at the poor man's invitation. The two get on the bus, chucking New York and their old clothes; but just as they draw into sight of Miami, Ratso dies.

In a peculiar way, Joe is the latest version of the prostitute with the heart of gold; he always does what the customer asks. But any possibility of cliché is averted by the unusual combination of qualities that Herlihy gives him. He is both sensitive and dumb, vulnerable and violent, willing to take advantage and strangely possessed with an earnest desire to make contact and give pleasure. One can say of Jon Voight that he holds all these paradoxes in place. He takes this character, so self-absorbed he can think only when looking in the mirror, and registers his increasing pleasure in learning to care for someone else. At no point does he betray the presence of a clever man only appearing to be stupid, as some actors will do unconsciously, letting us know they feel superior to the character they are playing; it's one of the most cleanly and beautifully possessed roles in recent movies.

Waldo Salt's adaptation fills out Ratso, but not enough. Still, at its best the character has a Dickensian richness of gesture and manner, and the familiar pathos of an alert mind miserably trapped in a vile body. Dustin Hoffman looks really awful. His right foot is deformed, his teeth are mouldy and cigaret-stained, and when he laughs you don't hear anything. Mannerism and heavy make-up are a great temptation for an actor; if he gives way to them completely, he will settle for best-supporting-actor "effectiveness." But Hoffman doesn't settle, he makes it a major role by showing us that Ratso feels everything that happens to him.

That as far as I want to go in praising *Midnight Cowboy*. Much of it is crudely shot,

MIDNIGHT COWBOY

directed, and edited. I only wish Schlesinger would take his stylistic cues from certain modern writers like Hemingway and Babel and directors like Buñuel and Jancso, all of whom have worked extensively with brutal or sordid subjects. The narrative styles of these masters, though various, are precise, restrained, fastidious. The calm in the style, in relation to the violence of what's going on, sets up an ironic situation: these may be disastrous events in the lives of the characters, but, the manner of telling implies, they are routine events in the world we inhabit. Although Herlihy's style has no particular distinction, it belongs roughly in this tradition, and his manner implies that Ratso and Joe are part of a great moral and social dislocation.

Schlesinger gives us this dislocation, but it's all violent, frenzied, unprecedented. Visually, the film relies on shock effects piled one on top of another. Flashbacks come crashing in on the action with rapid cutting, distorted wide-angle shots, and clangorous sound—and if you haven't read Herlihy, you may have no idea what's going on in them, despite all their portentous "expressiveness." Every time the script calls for Joe to have sex with someone, Schlesinger goes berserk. The first encounter, with an aging blonde, is played for comic grotesqueness. As the couple work out in bed, they fall on and off a remote television control, and commercials,

movies, and a sermon flash on the TV screen—but what's the point? It's one of those ideas that are supposed to be dazzling even if they don't mean anything. Later, when Joe allows a young man to perform fellatio on him in a movie theater, we see the science fiction movie they are watching, and at the appropriate moment a spaceship takes off. Terrible. I don't see how Schlesinger can afford to light all these Roman candles; they almost blind us to his crucial point, which is Joe's feelings during these two experiences.

When a film-maker wants to shock an audience out of its complacency, he often loses all taste. With the highest motives, he brutalizes us. In case there is an idiot somewhere (where?) who hasn't understood that New York is sordid, there are scenes of meaningless obscenity to punish his stupidity: a man lying unattended on the pavement in front of Tiffany's; people doing nasty things to a dog on television; a woman in a cafeteria exciting herself by running a rubber mouse over her arms and face and then over a little boy. It's true you can see all these things in New York, but when a director uses them to fill out the corners of his set and provide atmosphere, he both demonstrates his incapacity to arrange his materials into art and puts the audience in the same position, against its will, as the people who idly watch a man dying in the street or enjoy the spectacle of a poodle trussed in a G-string. It's amazing how moviegoers who knew precisely what to think of a film like *Mondo Cane* haven't objected in this case to being treated like a reader of the *National Enquirer.*

In the last scene, Joe Buck takes his dead friend into his arms as the bus pulls into Miami. It's a fine moment; we're moved by the desolation of his losing his only friend, particularly as his even *having* a friend and caring for someone else has been so difficult. It's one of the few moments of unabashed emotion in recent films that's completely earned—and then Schlesinger, or maybe his editor Hugh Robertson, rather than allow this achievement to hold the screen until the movie's end, cuts to people gawking at the dead man and to a woman powdering her nose. If you experienced this cut as I did—not only as a failure of taste and art but as a betrayal—then you may also be wondering if a sensibility so obsessively eager to demonstrate the world's indecency isn't half in love with what it holds up for our disgust.

—David Denby

EASY RIDER

Directed by Dennis Hopper. Produced by Peter Fonda. Script by Hopper, Fonda, and Terry Southern. Photography: Laszlo Kovacs. Columbia.

Easy Rider is a motorcycle film and also a kind of latter-day Western. What makes it remarkable, aside from the fact that it contains none of the idiocies of the former genre and few of those of the latter, is that it is perhaps the first feature film to capture successfully the conflict between the new hippy, "tribal," drug-oriented generation and their opposite numbers in the straight world. It is honest, almost always convincing, beautiful, and engrossing.

The film opens with Wyatt (Peter Fonda, who also produced) and Billy (Dennis Hopper, who directed) in Mexico making a purchase of cocaine. In the next scene they are selling it to a well-heeled pusher with whom they rendezvous under the landing approach at the Los Angeles airport. The morality of this operation is not commented upon, though the background rock band at this point sings "God Damn the Pusher." Their new wealth gives the two young men freedom, and immediately we see them riding off on their spectacularly shiny motorcycles, Wyatt's embellished with an American flag (he calls himself "Captain America" throughout the film).

Significantly, the titles appear at this point, as the two men begin their journey through a landscape familiar to us from many Westerns. Now the film takes on an epic and episodic

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The film opens with Wyatt (Peter Fonda, who also produced) and Billy (Dennis Hopper, who directed) in Mexico making a purchase of cocaine. In the next scene they are selling it to a well-heeled pusher with whom they rendezvous under the landing approach at the Los Angeles airport. The morality of this operation is not commented upon, though the background rock band at this point sings "God Damn the Pusher." Their new wealth gives the two young men freedom, and immediately we see them riding off on their spectacularly shiny motorcycles, Wyatt's embellished with an American flag (he calls himself "Captain America" throughout the film).

Significantly, the titles appear at this point, as the two men begin their journey through a landscape familiar to us from many Westerns. Now the film takes on an epic and episodic

quality, the grandeur of the landscape and the freedom of the ride enhanced by Laszlo Kovacs's poetic photography. They stop for an al fresco lunch with a farmer and his large family, then pick up a hippy hitch-hiker and accompany him to his commune. Always the tension is present: motel owners won't rent rooms to them, farmers regard them with reserve, Billy is nervous that the hitch-hiker will find the money hidden in a piece of plastic tubing in Wyatt's gas tank. Casting himself as the suspicious, paranoid, unkind Billy enables Hopper not only to escape the holy-hippy syndrome but to get some interesting contrasts of manner and feeling between the two men. Wyatt is truly cool, but Billy has a lot to learn, and in the end his truculence leads them to disaster. Some farmers and people along the roadside accept them, the commune-dwellers—at least the girls—want them to stay; but Wyatt, clearly the leader, has to push on. It is part of the legendary American quality of the film that they have to keep moving, heading vaguely for New Orleans and the Mardi Gras.

As they get closer to their goal, the natives become more and more unfriendly. In a little town they spontaneously join the tag-end of a parade and are arrested for "parading without a permit." Their cell-mate George, a drunken young local aristocrat, turns out surprisingly to be on their side ("Ah'm a law'r—done a lot of work for ACLU"), and in the morning when they are all released, they quite easily convince him that he, too, wants to go to New Orleans. Superbly played by Jack Nicholson, George rides in his white suit and football helmet behind Wyatt, swigs from his whiskey bottle, and after some protest joins the other two in their nightly marijuana-smoking. George is both a type ("What's that? Marijuana? Oh, ah couldn't do *that*!") and yet a truly original character, and during his brief time on the screen he becomes the most lovable of the three, combining the familiar vices and charms of the old with a gleeful inclination to try the untried. His role, moreover, offers the non-hip viewer someone to identify with in the film: Fonda may be slightly sinister, and Hopper slightly nasty or uptight, but American audiences know where they are with an amiable drunk.

The atmosphere grows increasingly hostile, and in a café somewhere in the south, while the teen-age girls giggle and flirt, the local sheriff and his cohorts make loud remarks about long hair and fairies. Wyatt, Billy, and George leave without being served. That night, in a brutal but economical scene, the locals come out and beat up the men in their sleeping-bags, killing George.

Wyatt and Billy finally reach New Orleans, and, clean shaven for the first time, visit the brothel that George had told them of, because "he would have wanted us to." The omens of disaster become more intense. The brothel is reminiscent of a decaying baroque church, and in an episode filmed in grainy 16mm, the two men and their whores have an eeriely bad LSD trip in a cemetery. It is a grim yet fitting climax.

The ending is bloody, equally grim and fitting. Billy gives the finger to two hicks who are trying to scare him with a gun, and they let him have it. Then, for good measure, or to make sure that Wyatt doesn't report them, they finish him off also. As his gaudy bike leaps high into the air, the film is over.

In a way, freedom is what *Easy Rider* is about—the craving for freedom and the inability to use it once it's been attained. The small-towners who hound and imprison Billy and Wyatt are, as George says, afraid of the freedom they represent. "Don't ever tell anybody they ain't free, 'cause they're gonna get real busy killin' and maimin' to prove they're free," he adds. The Southwestern farmer, who has a horde of children because his wife is Catholic, had aimed for California when he was young, he says, but "you know how it is. . . . " To Billy and Wyatt, the money stashed in the gas tank represents freedom. Yet when they get to the commune, where they could perhaps live as freely as anywhere, Wyatt feels that he has to leave. Later, by the campfire, he says enigmatically, "We blew it." Whether "it" refers to a chance for happiness in the commune, or something else, isn't quite clear; we are left to speculate for ourselves whether Hopper intends

Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda in EASY RIDER

some criticism of the individualist ethic the cyclists have lived and will die by.

The film's one weakness is the mystical tone that overlies some parts of it (was the country ever the tolerant place the script imagines?) and the romantic gloss given to a couple of the episodes, notably the farm lunch and commune episodes. The commune-dwellers are too uniformly clean, friendly, well-housed, and pious to be true; and the mime troupe which suddenly appears is not only implausible but also faintly embarrassing: a bit of Los Angeles "culture" worked up for the commune sequence, which seems to have been shot somewhere in the LA hills.

Wyatt himself radiates this romantic aura, but Peter Fonda brings the part off so that the character is appealing rather than offensive. Lonely, driven, yet kind and generous to strangers, he is a modern variation of the classical frontier hero and not so very far from characters Henry Fonda used to play. If instead of a white Stetson he wears a red-white-and-blue crash helmet, this chiefly indicates a change in forms of locomotion. More significant of changing times is the fact that his quest leads him to the east instead of to the west, and that violence and death come from the longer-established settlers rather than from the Indians, Mexicans, or nouveaux-tribesmen of the commune.

Easy Rider is a film which will probably be appreciated by many people for the wrong reasons. The squares will come for the sensationalism of pot-smoking and naked hippies; the hippies will come to see their stereotypes about cops and southerners reinforced; and everybody who loved *A Man and a Woman* will come for the lapses into facile loveliness of open roads in the photography. Nonetheless, *Easy Rider* is an important film for our time, one of the few that shows America as it is today.

—HARRIET R. POLT

TEOREMA

Script and direction: Pier Paolo Pasolini. Photography: Giuseppe Russolini. Music: Ennio Morricone. Produced by Franco Rosselli and Monolo Bolognini.

"The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse."
—Gerard Manley Hopkins

Teorema is one of those peculiar, bad, yet original movies which intrigue movie buffs by their very impurity. Pasolini's metaphoric images are often static and uncinematically developed, but they have a content more memorable than

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those of more cinematic films like *Point Blank,* in which the abstractly sensuous use of the medium is often dazzling but finally empty. Pasolini's title, *Teorema,* underlines his didactic intentions: to demonstrate poetically the spiritual squalor of the bourgeoisie; and, like Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade,* to provoke the audience to commitment by showing it alienation. In its bourgeois family, *Teorema* has four de Sades for its images of alienation, and in the family maid, one saint as its Marat sacred figure. But Pasolini's sense of commitment is not so simple as Weiss's, and Pasolini's use of Artaud's ideas makes *Teorema* a richer kind of failure than *Marat/Sade.* Although *Teorema* fails, part of it fails strikingly: toward poetry not of words but images, and a tragedy not of characters but presences—who, though real and immediate, shake us with their strangeness, and who act out, beyond well-plotted narrative, frightening but beautiful dreams.

Pasolini's film poetry comes out of neorealism. *Teorema* is shot in a direct, unadorned style, and like past neorealist films, it deals with contemporary reality from a left-wing political vantage. No longer, however, is the focus of advanced Italian film-makers on the working class or the poor, the sympathetic victims of Zavattini's scripts, but the class from which the directors come, the bourgeoisie, which they may depict with either an acid detachment, as in Bellocchio's *China Is Near,* or a lyric irony, as in Bertolucci's *Before the Revolution.* Pasolini has tried in part to use his own homosexual neurosis as a metaphor for the anomie of the bourgeoisie: in *Teorema,* the bourgeois family is not a family, but a collection of atoms, each going on its own anguished path alone and apart from the others. And the film itself—though it was mainly shot out of doors, naturally, in both sunlight and overcast sky—has, with its spareness of dialogue, and slowness of action, a dream-like aura. And in its metaphysical anguish, its sense of blocked vistas, its mixture of modern and classical allusions, it recalls de Chirico's paintings—with their mannequin figures driven by a rage of restlessness from their stillness.

What is not neorealist in *Teorema* is Pasolini's use of the classic past. Seeing the movie is meant to be a religious experience as it was for the Greeks watching tragedy: the catharsis—or, in *Teorema,* the purgative sense of alienation—is to come through one household or family. As we experience the anxiety and disorder of the bourgeois family, in some of its guises—art, sex, and madness—and at the end, in the void of the volcanic desert itself, we are meant to be moved, to feel their anguish, and be purged. In so far as Pasolini draws upon the classic past, the sense of tragedy largely does not work. Can a bourgeois family merely by being representative have the stature of the House of Atreus? The fall from bourgeois contentment more readily evokes laughter than pity or terror, as evidenced by Bellocchio's satire, *China Is Near.* (Bellocchio's first film, *Fist in the Pocket,* though more like *Teorema* in its gothic frenzy, also has humorous overtones, black and Buñuel-like.) At the beginning of the film, Pasolini tries to give us a sense of the family's status, if not their stature: we see the children going to the best schools, and jerkily edited shots of the source of the family wealth, the family factory. But to show the family as representatively affluent is to make them blank and lacking in mythic resonance. More effective is the neorealist device of a media newsman seeking the workers' reactions to the gift of the family factory. This interview, which sets the main action of the film back in time, gives us a sense that the destiny of the bourgeois family is already fated: once the visiting god had come, its tragic suffering was ineluctable. Yet whatever force their suffering has for us is Artaud-like, more like litany than classic tragedy: Can a bourgeois . . . (father, son, mother, daughter) cope with the power of the divine? With the power of the divine, a bourgeois . . . (father, son, mother, daughter) can not cope.

The visiting god of *Teorema* is a cunning reversal of the traditional Christ-figure returning to earth: it is the bourgeois family, not "Christ," who this time is "crucified" or alienated. Like the God of the Old Testament, at least as Pasolini has conceived him, the visitor

has come, not merely to comfort his chosen people, but to shake them up, radically—with a carnal knowledge of the divine. Aside from the maid, the carnal knowledge is as traumatic for the bourgeois household as it was for Oedipus to lie with his mother. The trauma does, however, arouse the family members from the false tranquillity of their everyday lives, and brings them an increase of consciousness. "Sex" is here being used as a metaphor for a concrete, transcendental mode of knowing, as "knowing" has traditionally been used as a metaphor for sex. Since the holy is ineffable, it must be conveyed, as Pasolini has said, beyond language, signs and symbols, concretely, as in sexual experience. The actual handling of the sexual encounters, however, is ritualized and robbed of sensuousness. For example: while the servant lies on the bed, only half-revived from her suicide attempt and looking like Mantegna's *Dead Christ*, the god lies limply on top of her fully clothed, to "resurrect" her, in what seems more an extreme case of Caritas or Christian charity than the physical act of love. The "sex" should have had the sensuousness, say of Titian, if not the sexual ecstasy of Bernini's statues, like *The Vision of St. Theresa.* Or, at the very least, the earthiness of the fat whore, Wanda, in *Nights of Cabiria*—for though Pasolini uses sex as a metaphor for the holy, sex in itself does not seem holy to Pasolini. If the bourgeois wife is at fault for reducing love to sexuality, Pasolini seemes to me to be at fault in excluding real sexuality from spiritual love. Pasolini is more effective in conjuring up, Artaud-like, disturbing images of nymphomania and homosexuality, intended to shake up the bourgeois audience as the visiting god shakes up the bourgeois family.

In outward appearance, the visiting god, played by Terence Stamp, has the peculiar smile, calmness, and lean muscularity of archaic Greek statues. His sparring with the father, and his racing of the family dog also suggest a youthful springiness. With his entrance scene, Pasolini makes two contrasting little jokes. Near the beginning, for a short stretch the film is in black and white, and Stamp's entrance scene wittily brings color back into the film, as if he were indeed some kind of god. On the other hand, the dialogue that greets his presence points to his human shape: in the only bit of English in the film, an allusion perhaps to Stamp's nationality, a guest asks, "Who is that boy?". The daughter shrugs and answers equivocally, "A boy . . . " Although Stamp is too old for the part, he is, I think, meant to suggest "a boy" or young man as in the archaic Greek statues. Further, Pasolini's repeated crotch shots of Stamp, if limp and desexualized as the god's sexual encounters, suggest a homoerotic idealization of the male figure. The son anguishedly compares his undeveloped body with Stamp's and his sense of inadequacy drives him to self-loathing queerness. The god's reading to the father from Rimbaud recalls the homoerotic relationship of Verlaine and Rimbaud, the foolish virgin and the infernal bridegroom. Even the nymphomania of the wife, played by Silvana Mangano—now stylishly slim, no longer the voluptuous figure of *Bitter Rice*—is on the homoerotic model of a furtive and restless search. Each member of the bourgeois family exemplifies Plato's myth of recollection: the ideal once having been experienced, each is driven to search for what each had concretely if too briefly known. As Santayana has said: to love things as they are is to make a mockery of them.

Although some of Pasolini's images are striking, his clumsy handling of the medium weakens their effectiveness. Even a non-auteur director, say W. S. Van Dyke, who shot such films as *San Francisco* with peremptory speed, had a sure and graceful flow of images lacking in *Teorema.* This unsureness in the use of the medium, coupled with an anxiety about communicating his points, leads to one of Pasolini's worst faults: an overseriousness of tone. To underline the theme of death-in-life, Pasolini repeatedly uses excerpts from Mozart's *Requiem* as heavyhandedly as Hollywood mood music. To show that they are suffering terribly, Pasolini has his actors emit absurd little cries of anguish. And to make clear that bourgeois life

is a wasteland, Pasolini mechanically inserts repeated shots of the volcanic desert, with Biblical quotations as graffiti of doom. The cries of anguish and the shots of the desert are largely unnecessary as preparation for the final images, nor do they work in themselves as poetic effects. Whether intentionally or not, simple, mechanical repetition in movies is likely to have a comic effect. Repetition of motif is better done musically, as variations on a theme, as in Antonioni's *Blow Up,* a playful and intricate symphony of useless, mock and uncompleted actions: the hero fights for the broken guitar, orders a meal he doesn't stay for, asks a girl to call him back and then has nothing to say. Unlike Antonioni, Pasolini has failed to work out some of his subthemes and especially the details of the action with the same sense of musical variation. Even without a more varied use of motifs, Pasolini's effects could have been considerably toned down and better orchestrated.

The device of the visiting god enables Pasolini to give a loose structure to the film without having a detailed narrative, and to emphasize the images rather than the story. Directly, the god brings to consciousness what is buried inside the characters, fantasy material that would not otherwise be acted out. Other Italian directors have used parallel devices: Bertolucci, the "double" in *Partner;* and Bellocchio, metaphoric epilepsy in *Fist in the Pocket.* In *Teorema,* the fantasy material seems less personal in that it is more conventionalized and clearly metaphoric. A partial exception is the wife's pickup sequences, in which Pasolini displays a homoerotic lyrical feeling, as in the shots of a nude male sleeping, his hands over his genitals like a Venus of Modesty. It would be wrong to say, however, that the wife's pickup scenes are merely a masquerade for homosexual encounters. Such reductionism doesn't respect the very real sensual reality of surfaces, for it it were a man rather than a woman picking up the young men, we would not experience the episode in the same way. To that extent, then, even these pickup scenes are conventionalized. In any case, the theme of masquerade is integral to the film.

The women in the film hide behind some sort of mask: the daughter, played by Anne Wiazemski, wears a blank, plain look; the maid, Laura Betti, a marvelously impassive face; and the wife, Silvana Mangano, her usual movie star make-up (which Mangano satirizes in Visconti's episode, *The Witch Burned Alive,* in the anthology film, *The Witches*). Whatever identity a woman may have is hidden, and some may have no identity at all; which is, I think, expressed in the extreme metaphor of the daughter's catatonic state. What Pasolini shows as alternatives for women is narrow even for Italian society: withdrawal, promiscuity, or sainthood.

After the visiting god departs, the fates of the four members of the bourgeois family are intercut and counterpointed with that of the servant who becomes a saint. The blank, white walls of the daughter's room where she lies in a catatonic state contrast sharply with the rich and irregular forms of the village to which the servant returns. One can almost touch the uneven, slanting roofs and the worn walls, with their patches of brick showing through. While the daughter's scenes are necessarily indoors, the maid's are attractively shot outside where, in addition, crowds can form to give us a sense of community. Although the maid, like the daughter, seems at first to be in a comatose state, within her there is not a blankness but the old peasant myths that allow her to transcend herself as an individual. Admittedly, Pasolini does have a real feeling for landscape and the picturesqueness of rural poverty, but his sense of the miraculous, and of the power of peasant myths, is as over-conventionalized and lifeless as the works of art in most American Catholic churches (whose taste reflects that of the European peasantry who came here, rather than that of the ruling classes who stayed behind). What Pasolini is saying may be true—my grandmother, of Southern Italian peasant stock, was sustained to a very ripe age by the old myths—but, in *Teorema,* the old myths no longer have the power of art.

The maid's last sequence is a foil for the father's, the final images of the film. After hav-

ing risen over the roofs of the village, the servant-saint, with an unwitting sense of Marxist dialectic, asks to be buried in earth, with her eyes uncovered, near a new housing site. Although the sense of the sacred may be buried within us all, the maid's burial more specifically represents the sense of the sacred buried within the working class and peasantry: through the earth, the eyes look out and tears renew the ground. By contrast, the father wanders in a desert, where no buildings are, dry as volcanic ash. The maid is in purgatory; the father, in hell.

The final images of the film—the father wandering, hairy and naked, alone in a shadow-swept desert, screaming—though distinctively Pasolini's in style, have their source in both Tolstoi and Francis Bacon. In Tolstoi's *The Death of Ivan Ilych,* though Ivan Ilych screams in agony the last three days of his life, he had achieved an inner peace. Unlike Ivan Ilych, the father does not achieve any peace; yet, as evidenced by the gift of the factory to the workers, in his dissolution he does attain some sort of humanity. What we do not get, however, is the feeling of compassion and renewal Tolstoi gives us; whatever sense of renewal there is in the maid's sequence does not carry over to this one. The force of Pasolini's images is more like that of Bacon's paintings, which Pasolini uses, though not for compositional or formal effects (he is not a painterly film-maker), but for their castration-obsessed content. The symbol of castration or crucifixion occurs in several of Pasolini's films: in *The Gospel According to St. Matthew,* the Christ is so prissy and arrogant he seems to be asking to be crucified; and in *Accatone,* the death or "crucifixion" of the hero seems merely contrived. In *Teorema,* the castration image is given to us more directly and powerfully. As in Bacon's Pope paintings, and Tolstoi's *Death of Ivan Ilych,* Pasolini has given us as Victim not one of Zavattini's poor, but a figure from the exploiting class. Pasolini's screaming factory-owner father has less to do with Marx than Freud: the castration of an authority figure is more terrifying than one of the exploited. It is Pasolini's most effectively used image, and the only one that, in terror if not in pity, recalls the classic sense of tragedy.

On the whole, however, Pasolini's natural gift may be less for tragedy than for humor. In *Teorema,* the most likable sequence is that of the struggle of the bourgeois son to be an artist; and in the otherwise poor anthology film, *The Witches,* only Pasolini's episode, *The Earth As Seen from the Moon,* with Toto, in the style of silent film comedy, is any good. Pasolini's sense of humor seems more complex and generous than his sense of tragedy, which is often too mechanical, lacking the manic sense of discovery of Bertolucci's *Partner.* What is good about the son's sequence is that even in his anguish, there is something sympathetically spontaneous and playful—as in that natural act and logical extension of abstract expressionist body gestures in paint. Pasolini, to be sure, disapproves of his lack of seriousness, as reflected in the last shot of the sequence in which the boy turns glumly away from a failed drip painting on the wall. Still, as the short, skinny, freckled son, played by Jose Cruz Soublette, mocks himself, there is in his voice real feeling and resonance. If, in his lack of the sense of the sacred, the son can only profane, his profanity is richer in feeling than the anguish of the other bourgeois family members.

Teorema's real importance is as part of a resurgence of Italian films, marked by this tendency to extreme or odd metaphor—Bellocchio's *Fist in the Pocket,* Bertolucci's *Partner,* and Antonioni's *Blow-Up.* (The rather odd disappearing corpse in *Blow-Up,* I take to be a *memento mori,* intended to shake up the pleasure-seeking, restless hero, and to give him, as in the final distancing shot, pause). These works recall surrealism without actually being surrealist, for though they have moved a considerable way from neorealism, their metaphoric wildness is contained within a loose but natural frame. Perhaps "neosurrealist" would be a better word. However flawed, *Teorema* suggests strongly the possibilities of such a neosurrealist cinema. And in the best neosurrealist work so far, Bertolucci's *Partner,* which has not been

released in the United States at the time of this writing, there is a shadowy lyricism, a poetry of both the fantastic and the natural, that is both uniquely Italian and uniquely cinematic.

—ROBERT CHAPPETTA

LE SOCRATE

Written and directed by Robert Lapoujade. Photography: Jean-Jacques Renon. Music: Bernard Palmegiani. New Yorker Films.

What is pleasing about *Le Socrate* is that it arises not so much out of other films, but, like Cocteau's work, out of broader movements of art in general. As such, Lapoujade is as subversive in form as he is in his rejection of the conventional screen image, eschewing both conventional storytelling and the New Wave habit of dressing an avant-garde narrative in some more traditional garb (e.g., *Band of Outsiders* as a gangster picture, *The Bride Wore Black* as suspense drama, or the Czech *Firemen's Ball* as neorealist comedy.) Indeed, construction-wise, Lapoujade film is perhaps closest to pre-*Petulia* Lester, being, to stretch an analogy, a ninety-minute, semi-abstract, partially animated experimental short, to Lester's ninety-minute TV commercials.

What there is of story is hardly remarkable, a sort of *chichi,* typically French parable on individuality and philosophy, the police mentality, role-playing, and most of the accompanying fashionable themes which, perhaps not without justification, comprise today's intellectual's reservoir of profundity. In outline and on the surface it goes something like this, calling to mind the pseudo-poetic plotting used in works like *Vertigo* or *Sundays and Cybele*: Policeman tails mysterious person, an unorthodox but precious relationship develops between the two, outsiders do not understand and destroy the relationship. Yet the person tailed here is a philosopher rather than a standard pretty girl, the relationship is intellectual rather than emotional, and our sorrow is not for stifled love but for stifled ideas.

The story is, however, surprisingly sufficient to carry the movie. Le Socrate (played by a hard, square-faced, gray-haired Pierre Luzan) and Lemay, the mustachioed police inspector (R. J. Chauffard) develop not only thematically but comically. Whether indulging in projected nuclear war, rearranging the geology of the earth, pantomiming an existence as circus animals, or just lying in the sun, their little charades are funny, but also wise and winking, like an existential Laurel and Hardy. In contrast, the picture's love interest is brooding and neurotic. Lemay's daughter Sylvie (Martine Brochard), a pretty but unremarkable girl, has broken up with Adam (Jean-Pierre Sentirer), presumably a stage director, in favor of an equally unremarkable Pierre (Stephane Fäy). Adam is a dark-haired, sunken-eyed, black-turtleneck type who demands his love directly and rudely. Strangely enough we side with him rather than Pierre, for the two lovers' self-absorption seems callous and isolated; they do a lot of walking in the woods but their attraction seems banal; we sense that somehow their love has left them short-sighted and less self-aware, that it is merely a product of the mediocre world around them. Perhaps it is because they are lovers with so little personality beyond their love; they are, in themselves, boring to outsiders. It is logical, then, that Sylvie's lover is Le Socrate's downfall. Worried about her father, she tells him about the pair's seemingly inexplicable doings, and it is he who tips the press off to the philosopher, knowing that his ideas will be destroyed through the exploitation of publicity.

Sylvie and Pierre do, however, offer Lapoujade an opportunity to carry off one of the more original erotic scenes in recent memory. Instead of tumbling nude around a bed for the umpteenth time, our lovers are seen seated at the breakfast table, in bathrobes. They rise, embrace, he exposes her breasts and proceeds to bite them. The camera pulls back and he is slipping her panties from under her robe. Laughable? Perhaps, but there hasn't been a scene like that since *Un Chien Andalou.*

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What is pleasing about *Le Socrate* is that it arises not so much out of other films, but, like Cocteau's work, out of broader movements of art in general. As such, Lapoujade is as subversive in form as he is in his rejection of the conventional screen image, eschewing both conventional storytelling and the New Wave habit of dressing an avant-garde narrative in some more traditional garb (e.g., *Band of Outsiders* as a gangster picture, *The Bride Wore Black* as suspense drama, or the Czech *Firemen's Ball* as neorealist comedy.) Indeed, construction-wise, Lapoujade film is perhaps closest to pre-*Petulia* Lester, being, to stretch an analogy, a ninety-minute, semi-abstract, partially animated experimental short, to Lester's ninety-minute TV commercials.

What there is of story is hardly remarkable, a sort of *chichi,* typically French parable on individuality and philosophy, the police mentality, role-playing, and most of the accompanying fashionable themes which, perhaps not without justification, comprise today's intellectual's reservoir of profundity. In outline and on the surface it goes something like this, calling to mind the pseudo-poetic plotting used in works like *Vertigo* or *Sundays and Cybele*: Policeman tails mysterious person, an unorthodox but precious relationship develops between the two, outsiders do not understand and destroy the relationship. Yet the person tailed here is a philosopher rather than a standard pretty girl, the relationship is intellectual rather than emotional, and our sorrow is not for stifled love but for stifled ideas.

The story is, however, surprisingly sufficient to carry the movie. Le Socrate (played by a hard, square-faced, gray-haired Pierre Luzan) and Lemay, the mustachioed police inspector (R. J. Chauffard) develop not only thematically but comically. Whether indulging in projected nuclear war, rearranging the geology of the earth, pantomiming an existence as circus animals, or just lying in the sun, their little charades are funny, but also wise and winking, like an existential Laurel and Hardy. In contrast, the picture's love interest is brooding and neurotic. Lemay's daughter Sylvie (Martine Brochard), a pretty but unremarkable girl, has broken up with Adam (Jean-Pierre Sentirer), presumably a stage director, in favor of an equally unremarkable Pierre (Stephane Fäy). Adam is a dark-haired, sunken-eyed, black-turtleneck type who demands his love directly and rudely. Strangely enough we side with him rather than Pierre, for the two lovers' self-absorption seems callous and isolated; they do a lot of walking in the woods but their attraction seems banal; we sense that somehow their love has left them short-sighted and less self-aware, that it is merely a product of the mediocre world around them. Perhaps it is because they are lovers with so little personality beyond their love; they are, in themselves, boring to outsiders. It is logical, then, that Sylvie's lover is Le Socrate's downfall. Worried about her father, she tells him about the pair's seemingly inexplicable doings, and it is he who tips the press off to the philosopher, knowing that his ideas will be destroyed through the exploitation of publicity.

Sylvie and Pierre do, however, offer Lapoujade an opportunity to carry off one of the more original erotic scenes in recent memory. Instead of tumbling nude around a bed for the umpteenth time, our lovers are seen seated at the breakfast table, in bathrobes. They rise, embrace, he exposes her breasts and proceeds to bite them. The camera pulls back and he is slipping her panties from under her robe. Laughable? Perhaps, but there hasn't been a scene like that since *Un Chien Andalou.*

The relationship with Adam is almost more tantalizing. Apart from some brief scenes presenting their break-up, all we know of them comes from some quick flashbacks which are repeated periodically throughout the picture: the girl, lying on a stage in a chartreuse leotard and tights, performing some strange movements to Adam's directions; a dog, tied to a pole, barking and running; the fall of an ocean breaker followed by some flying birds. Indeed, long before the whole is put into a context, the conflict between opposing forces of freedom and slavery is evoked, if not exactly stated. Toward the end of the film we see the entire rehearsal, intercut with what is presumably an actual performance. The sick-minded Adam is directing the Living Theater in a strange sado-masochistic dance, in which men and women in turn exchange roles in portrayals of dominant-submissive relationships. Clearly, Lapoujade seems to be saying, a perverse society produces perverse artists, and he offers our heroine a choice between two equally questionable lovers. The scene is more, however. Its juxtaposition of both rehearsal and performance is not only kinetically exciting, but gives some feel of the theatrical act of creation, making *Le Socrate,* momentarily, a kind of backstage musical of the Living Theater, merging into a single few minutes the intertwined thrills of experiment and realization.

Le Socrate takes place in *Weekend* country, that provincial France where the bourgeoisie reigns, where evil is all that is contrary to the given order, and where, in desperation, people seek freedom by anarchic perversion of establishment standards. Yet there is nothing in *Le Socrate* comparable to the exotic beauties of *Weekend.* Lapoujade's images seem, at times, almost intentionally mundane, seeing the countryside on its own microcosmic terms, small, rather than scenic; actions are presented as of questionable significance rather than as epic; words are functional rather than elegant. *Le Socrate* is a small movie—small both as its limited world is small, small also in its simultaneous confronting and acting out the profundities of life in terms of tiny games.

Small, too, is the kind of fairy-tale quality it achieves, not only in its story (at times a sort of egg-head *Curse of the Cat People*), but also in physical appearance. Buildings look like doll houses, and even much of the countryside has an odd two-dimensional appearance. Apart from some footage of police brutality during demonstrations, little visual reference is made to the outside world; it is a rotogravure, storybook environment, a landscape filled with nature and comfortable middle-class living, disrupted only by a few misfits, with little else. One beautiful scene, a variation on *Weekend's* rotating barnyard, sums up the lives of this mini-world's small inhabitants. The camera begins a continuous pan about the house of the police inspector. As it moves, we see, through a kind of jump-cut semi-animation, the figures of the characters as they dress, undress, go to bed, get up, eat, shave, read, make love: the assortment of diurnal actions that make up their everyday lives. The fragments of film are arranged so that the circular movement of the camera is carried through, so the continuity of life is suggested, even when fragmented into its constituent parts.

Such choppy editing abounds in the film, and reminds us of Lapoujade's background as an animator. When used in this work it is not so much a separate stylistic device as it is a logical extension of the jump-cut, used for punctuation rather than attenuation. Continuity is aborted, actions are cut into, space is fragmented. People pop in for a few frames, then reappear elsewhere dressed differently. Rocks move about, sky is pieced together as a series of short, jumping camera pans, and as the milieu changes without a word, time and space become all the more irrelevant to the people in it. The materials of the film are arranged not so much horizontally, as it were, but vertically, not so much according to literary sequence, but in a kind of subliminal relationship to each other, a mosaic rather than a linear approach to film-making. This is not just mere trickery, for as we become more and more spatially and chronologically disoriented, the story becomes more and more universal. Just as the landscape

is unreal, so too Lapoujade bends and twists the actions in it to his own fancy. By the end of the film, its characters cannot possibly be confused with anyone recognizable; their identities are too inseparable from their environment. Neither real nor imagined, they are closer to pieces in a Richter-like chess game or figures in a Paul Delvaux landscape than representations of humanity.

Indeed, *Le Socrate* is far more out of Dada and surrealism than it is out of the New Wave, for the impression it leaves is that of a kind of clarity-confusion, of exacting images serving incongrous subject matter, of anarchic freedom in ignoring the boundaries between the relevant and the arbitrary, the precise and the playful. Surely in image it is more Magritte than Monet, and in tone more *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* than *Guernica.* And while Jean-Jacques Renon has photographed it in the logical, clean-edge Coutard manner, the movie is composed with a kind of Dada anti-aestheticism. The images jar at first. Colors and objects don't balance, but cancel each other out, like dresses on a rack or ads in a magazine. Like Antonioni, Lapoujade paints his landscape, but the result is neither poetic, nor satisfying, nor reasonable, but distracting—not in a negative sense, but in the sense that things distract our eyes in real life. It is as if the director, in realizing the neat containment the screen achieves, has sought to open it up by putting back the world's incongruous elements. Paint is smudged around, in seemingly random colors, pretty, but hardly thematically meaningful. Lapoujade gives his actors strangely made-up faces, American Indian-like at times, with lines and figures drawn in child-like pastels. (Perhaps he intended some reference here to the painting of Greek statues; it hardly matters, for the effect, unreasoned as it may seem, is pleasantly defiant of conventional logic.) People are clothed like mannequins in refrigerator ads, too well dressed to be quite human, too calculatedly average to be chic. Almost everything on screen is familiar, but it disturbs, because it is all left askew.

Le Socrate is filled with sight gags, employed

LE SOCRATE, *by Lapoujade*

throughout the picture to turn ordinary images into pleasant surprises. While they evoke no belly laughs, it is remarkable how efficiently Lapoujade keeps them coming. In one, the cop is tailing the philosopher as the latter walks awkwardly down the street, bouncing, one foot in the gutter, the other in the sidewalk. The policeman takes up this odd manner of walking in order to coordinate their footsteps. At one point the film stops, reverses a few frames, runs again to the same point only to reverse several times over in the same manner, as though dribbling the figure between two invisible walls. The humor is purely visual, quirky in the best manner of the cinematic non-sequitur. Later the two are lying in the grass. The camera pans down Le Socrate, whose feet touch Lemay's head, then, all in one stroke, pans down Lemay, whose feet touch Le Socrate's head, and so on. The normal continuum of space and time is suddenly extended. The point is not that they are stretching out in the sun at a particular time in a particular place, but the experience itself.

Even the framing of the individual shots, too direct to be attractive and too ambiguous to be functional in the traditional manner, works in an unexpected way. One of the best examples of this occurs in a scene where Sylvie rejects Adam. She is sitting outdoors (on the left side of the screen) slicing carrots for dinner, as he approaches her (from the right). The camera is a questionably characterless mid-

length away from them, and there is some paint pointlessly daubed around the trees behind. The shot works in a way that close-ups of faces or symbolic (maybe) carrots, scenic indulgence or nervous cutting could not have. Since at this point in the film we are almost totally unacquainted with the two of them, we identify, not with the personal tension, but with the uneasiness of the situation as a whole, as evidenced only by the way they look and what they're saying. To focus the situation or even to give it too much visual significance would have been self-defeating, for our attention and consciousness would then be drawn to the couple themselves, rather than to their place in the work as a whole. It is cinematic indirection of the highest order.

This, Lapoujade's first feature, represents both a nice extension of and reaction to where movies, particularly the French cinema, have been going lately. In a way it is the first post-Godardian French film to use such techniques and content for ends quite distinct from the master's. In its deliberately artificial, dry, hermetic, sometimes even cute look, it becomes an appealing alternative to the sombre Utrillo cityscapes, cool Matisse interiors, and pretty Renoir countrysides which provide backdrops for those bunches of grubby, semi-intellectual, semi-Bohemian characters who wander around so much of the French-influenced cinema today. Even the music is a refreshing change from the plunk-plunk Delerue and Legrand scores which make me want to stop up my ears every time they start tinkling away—not because they weren't a refreshing change from the excesses of Max Steiner or Maurice Jarre at the time, but because their simplicity has lapsed into simple affectation. Bernard Palmegiani's music for *Le Socrate* seems in this context a model of invention, slipping gracefully from abstract electronic sounds to recognizable instrumental pop-tunish figures.

What is more, however, *Le Socrate* is a movie that seeks out its own form, a movie which doesn't look for solutions to cinematic problems in other films, but goes back to the nature of visual and mental processes themselves, avoiding the tendency which threatens to turn film-making into a kind of visual song-writing, an art which, for all its ability to move and be beautiful, becomes dependent on its conventions in order to define itself.

—George Lellis

SHAME

(Skammen) Director: Ingmar Bergman. Script: Bergman. Photography: Sven Nykvist. United Artists.

With *Shame* Bergman returns to the territory of *The Seventh Seal,* his first international triumph in the cinema: a world swept by chronic senseless wars, in which sensitive men are battered and even cynical men cannot thrive. Von Sydow and Björnstrand reappear—older now, tireder, still more lost. The figure of faith in Seventh Seal, the radiant Bibi Andersson, has vanished; in her place is the earthier Liv Ullmann, playing a musician who reveals a peasant endurance, but whose grace has been destroyed by the end of the film.

In a way *Shame* is a disapointment. *Persona* was a dazzlingly subtle work that seemed to open up new, disquieting, intriguing avenues for Bergman, refining the harsh observational austerities of *The Silence* and the other "chamber films" with a contemporary, self-conscious ambiguity of point-of-view, yet incorporating Bergman's usual richness of psychological nuance. *Hour of the Wolf,* it seems to me, was an over-reaching from *Persona,* a stylistic extension which did not work. The earlier film, whether you interpret it largely "objectively," or as a drama entirely within one psyche, or as a projection from Alma's perspective or Elisabet's, is at any rate a film that *can* be felt and considered as a coherent work, visually and psychologically. (I'm inclined to think it's Alma's film.) But *Hour of the Wolf* cannot be contained within any one coherent point-of-view; its structural problem is insoluble. Each character evidently perceives the fantasies of the other, and the camera for its part sees the

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characters within their fantasies as well as at other times; but the film never lets on how we are seeing all these things. (The device of the diary would only work in a novel). And I find it impossible to argue, like one imperturbable friend, that there's nothing wrong with a film just because it's insane. I think that, in the disbalances of *Hour of the Wolf*, Bergmann was paying some of the immense psychological price that must be exacted for working so near the line between sanity and madness; of all directors, he is the most personally brave in the sense of being willing to work with dangerous psychic material—to dredge, as he himself once said, down into the primitive levels of infancy where we are all frighteningly psychotic.

Shame returns nearer the surface again; it is safer, less daring. The photography is almost documentary, with a grey neutral light even in interiors; none of the strangeness of *Persona*, or the expressionism of *Hour of the Wolf*. There are many long takes, and some of them were evidently unscripted although carefully planned—a very startling development for Bergman. In the years since *Seventh Seal*, a great deal of excess stylistic baggage has been abandoned. There are no "ideas" in *Shame*. Except perhaps for the last shot, the film would make sense without its sound track. Indeed, much of what the characters say does not really make much sense anyway. Bergman has long abandoned the role of the Great Dubber, who used to put into his characters' mouths important thoughts about God, life, and the loneliness of man in an inscrutable universe. His characters now nag fiercely at each other; the mild, wishy-washy husband proves capable of bestial physical cruelty quite outside the psychological repertoire of *The Seventh Seal*, where evil was a metaphysical abstraction and Death a symbolic figure in a theatrical black cloak.

This is not only a political development. The film does take place during a war which is vaguely like Vietnam but in a fairly precise Swedish context. (There are invaders with frightening technology, and guerrillas in the woods sympathetic to them; the old government recaptures the territory, executes some collaborators, and in a terrifying but not bloodthirsty way re-establishes itself, perhaps not for long. The war has evidently been going on for years, and the central characters, both former musicians, have retreated to an island for safety.) But the idea that the world is hell is hardly new for Bergman. *Shame* chiefly adds military and political aspects to the emotional, theological, social, and sexual hells of his earlier films.

SHAME

I have never personally been caught up in war or paramilitary actions (except as Berkeley citizens have observed the latter recently) but *Shame* seems bloodcurdlingly effective on this level, and in a way more humanly affecting than the super-terror of *The War Game*. The swooping planes, sudden haphazard destruction, and above all the sense of being unable to tell what is happening beyond one's immediate sight range, seem to me a convincing portrait of what "small wars" are like for civilians. Only the drive among the flames has any feel of contrived "special effects."

Shame is in fact quite remarkable among war films, and takes its place among a tiny honorable handful that may be considered genuinely antiwar. The usual "antiwar" film gains its laurels by including a certain amount of obviously senseless gore and destruction. It may even allege conscious or unconscious villainy on the part of war-makers, like Kubrick's *Paths of Glory*. But the battle scenes prove to have a purposeful choreographic grace and power

lacking in the rest of the movie (or indeed in most movies). War may be hell, but it sure does give the camera something to photograph! More subtly, war films almost universally provide an artificial and reassuring orientation to what is happening, both through dramatic devices and dialogue and through the elementary tactics of coherent screen movement (especially having one army move to the right and the other to the left). Whatever the script may say, battles on film thus are given *visual* sense. But *Shame's* war scenes, like the documentary Vietnam footage in *The Anderson Platoon,* but closer up, never make visual sense. If we found ourselves magically transported, like Keaton's little projectionist, suddenly catapulted into *Shame,* we wouldn't have the faintest idea what to do: which way to run, where to hide. We would be, in other words, in exactly the position of a Vietnamese peasant upon whose village the B-52s, too high for the eye to see, are raining bombs in a carefully computerized random pattern.

Naturally enough, this aspect of the film is enormously depressing, and doubtless it largely accounts for the film not proving popular—though it is also true that it lacks jazzed-up sex scenes. In the long run, it will probably seem the film's greatest achievement. For there *are* defects in the characterization and plot structure. The initial relationship between the rather childish husband and the wholesome wife is convincing, as is her seduction, in its dolorous way; and we may accept the immediate murderous aftermath as a particularly violent Nordic *crime passionel.* (It is a little reminiscent of *Virgin Spring.*) But thereafter Von Sydow seems to have gone berserk, utterly and totally. This might have been made emotionally credible in a film with another tone; but the whole last part of the film leaves us asking awkward literal questions that should not have been allowed to arise: Why do they decide to return to the presumably even more hazardous mainland? Why, in the final scene when they drift at sea among the corpses, do all the bodies float so magically together? And why do the people in the boat not rig a sail?

Thus the power the ending should have had is somehow diffused. The boat is adrift, its people apparently doomed to starvation. When all possibilities of action in the outside world have been blocked or made senseless, human beings turn inward; they curl and die. The wife can only recount her dreams. This reaction of humanity to the utterly monstrous, the unbearable, is perhaps what Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* calls "the horror." To Bergman it is the shame of modern man. —ERNEST CALLENBACH

GOODBYE, COLUMBUS

Director: Larry Peerce. Producer: Stanley Jaffe. Script: Arnold Schulman, based on the novella by Philip Roth. Photography: Gerald Hirschfield. Music: The Association. Paramount.

You don't have to be Jewish to enjoy *Goodbye, Columbus* (though it helps), but you do have to be old enough to have strong memories of what it felt like to live through the swollen Fabulous Fifties. For it is as a very specific social document that the film first impresses one—the story of a poor Jewish boy from the Bronx, a forerunner of today's dropouts, who has a summer romance with an upper-middle-class girl from Westchester. The differences in their background turn them on to each other—Neil is attracted to Brenda largely because of the exotic glitter of her *nouveau riche* world, while she is attracted to him because he is outside that world and therefore can be used to bait her snobbish parents. And it is this same class difference that ultimately separates them—the romance ends when Neil realizes that he can never belong to Brenda's world and that she can never escape it. Philip Roth's novella has even been read as a fifties-style satiric analogue to *An American Tragedy* or *The Great Gatsby.* The ethnic humor is really only incidental; the novella's main achievement is its brilliant, exact dissection of affluent Eisenhower America.

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and literal transcription (especially of Roth's marvelous dialogue)—have today? Eisenhower is dead. Mantovani and the country-club dance no longer seem to be representative Americana. Period is the film's biggest problem, and the major stumbling-block to its appreciation. All of the people who last year hailed *The Graduate* for being so "contemporary" are not about to make the same mistake again. They have read the sociological analyses of *The Graduate* by E. Z. Friedenberg and Jacob Brackman, and they know that Benjamin should have talked about the draft and Vietnam and communal sex and LSD; so now they are making the same demands of Neil and Brenda. I agree that it's discouraging that no American film has yet dealt honestly with the tone and attitudes of contemporary youth, but it seems unfair that *Goodbye, Columbus* is getting the criticisms that should have been levelled at *You're A Big Boy Now* and *The Graduate* and *Three in the Attic,* for at least this film does not belabor the obvious; all of the "youth" movies are dated, but *Goodbye, Columbus* is the first to examine late-fifties suburban excess with insight and compassion. The film's only mistake is in updating Roth's story; ideally it should have been a period piece, set, like the novella, in 1956. But without making apologies for writer Arnold Schulman and director Larry Peerce, it is easy to see why they decided against the extraordinarily difficult—and probably expensive—effort of reconstructing the recent past. They were intelligent enough to keep the references to 1969 to a minimum. In fact, except for some gratuitous "psychedelic" editing and one confusing discussion of The Pill, the film deliberately avoids details that would specify its period. And this was wise. The film would have been much *worse* if Peerce and Schulman had tried to insert some references to drugs and Vietnam, because then the entire story would have collapsed; it would make no sense at all in a world of SDS and McLuhan. The only sensible way to "read" *Goodbye, Columbus* is as an interpretation of the fifties *zeitgeist.* (This is not to suggest, of course, that suburbia has disappeared, but it is probably somewhat less insular than in the time of the Patimkins.) To say that the film is irrelevant because it does not have the look and sound of "today" is to have a curiously narrow attitude toward art. Surely one purpose of art, rarely attempted, is to make us consider the *influences* on our lives, the boundaries of a world that once shaped our values and expectations. *Goodbye, Columbus* illuminates a segment of our common past, ties not quite broken, scars not quite healed.

The second recurring criticism of the film also relates to its social satire. Again the same people who loved the two-dimensional supporting characters in *The Graduate* have attacked this film for caricaturing the *nouveau riche.* There *is* some caricaturing in *Goodbye, Columbus,* particularly in Michael Meyers's portrait of dense, all-American brother Ron, who washes out his jockstrap every night, collects Mantovani and Kostelanetz, and goes into a trance whenever he listens to recorded excerpts of his last college basketball game; but Meyers is simply too funny to complain about. (Peerce reportedly discovered him at a wedding while researching the film.) Other heavy touches are less excusable—too much sagging flesh in the country club scenes, too many close-ups of food during the Patimkin dinner scenes, too many cute Yiddish inflections from Neil's Bronx aunt and uncle. But for the most part, the film is too harsh to be called caricature. I think the reason that nobody minded the lampooning in *The Graduate* was that it was so good-natured; no one watching the film could possibly feel that he had anything in common with *those* comical suburban harpies. Even the straightest, fattest middle-class audiences could laugh comfortably at Benjamin's parents and their friends. But it's not so easy to chuckle over Mrs. Patimkin in *Goodbye, Columbus* (except for an occasional cheap moment, like the scene in which she puts on rubber gloves before retiring); she's too ugly and recognizable a figure to be condescended to. The supercilious rich bitch-mother, brittle, waxy, bleached, jealous of her husband's affection for her daughter, coldly protective of her family's "standing," always on

the verge of hysteria but controlling it—this is an angry and compelling characterization, perhaps slightly stylized, but unnerving too. Simply the disparaging tone she uses to call her Negro maid to the dinner table is chilling. We *almost* laugh when her voice changes from its silky hostess whisper to shriek *"Carlotta!"* but the shriek is such a startling accusation of the contempt with which an assimilated minority group treats a still-unassimilated one that the laughter sticks in our throats.

Similarly, the long wedding scene has been attacked as gross and vulgar and viciously exaggerated, which probably means that it strikes too close to home. On the other hand, maybe this scene *does* look exaggerated to someone who has never attended a Jewish wedding. I found the details witty and observant—the compulsive guzzling of food, fat women and little girls waltzing together, the bridegroom dancing amiably with his maid, the two uncles from the carpet business measuring the length of the dance floor, women waddling off with centerpieces at the end of the evening. The scene is twisted slightly so that it looks larger-than-life and more appalling, but in essence it is truthful. And when Neil recoils from this ghastly spectacle, we know that *he* knows, finally, who he is. I suspect that what really bothers people about the film is that it is completely honest about the fact that this is a *Jewish* milieu; to non-Jews the harshness probably seems like anti-Semitism (even though the film was made by Jews). But this honesty, this willingness to offend is refreshing—again in comparison to *The Graduate*, where the mixture of WASP and vaguely Jewish (though never specified as such) faces and mannerisms was unpleasantly evasive.

For that matter, in spite of all its cruelty, *Goodbye, Columbus* can be much more compassionate than *The Graduate* too. Mr. Patimkin, excellently played by Jack Klugman, is a boorish bourgeois predator, yet the film allows him a measure of humanity, even more than Roth did. His affection for his children is genuine, even though he can express it only by offering money or clothes. And in one moving scene, Neil visits him at his store, and Patimkin presents a side of the Generation Gap not usually acknowledged: "You kids look at us as if we were a bunch of freaks and you were something special. You know something? At your age I felt exactly the same way. Surprise you?" And because Neil responds to this outburst *with* surprise, and respect too, he seems appealingly unfashionable, a giant step ahead of the swinging sixties youth who refuse to be shaken out of their stereotypes of the older generation.

But it is in the characterization of Brenda that the film gets most profoundly *inside* its satirizable milieu to present a complex, searching portrait of the victim of affluence. Our first impression is that Brenda has an irreverence to match Neil's; she can see the absurdity of her parents' conspicuous consumption, and she brazenly flaunts her own sexual liberation in defiance of her family's puritan smugness. What she loves in Neil is his skepticism of her parents' values. Intuitively she identifies him with her idealized memories of her own past. For after a nasty and frustrating fight with her mother, she rushes up to their attic, where the furniture they brought with them from the Bronx—"when we were poor"—is now stored, and she demands that Neil make love to her there, among the dusty chairs and lamps. She feels she will be refreshed if she can get in touch with her roots, and Neil represents a link with the past—he has the honesty and integrity that she associates with poverty, with alienation. She is *using* him to try to discover and test a comparable strength in herself.

But the attempt is doomed because Brenda is too dependent on the values of her family. She makes fun of her father and her brother, but it is clear that she essentially *loves* them both for their crudeness. At her brother's wedding she dances with joyful abandon before the guests, and cries guiltily when her father takes her aside to congratulate her on her high morals. And when she and Neil sleep together night after night right in her parents' house, down the hall from their own bedroom, it is an interestingly ambiguous gesture—she is shame-

lessly attacking their prudishness, but at the same time, like a spoiled child, making sure that when she violates bourgeois decency, she does it from safe inside the family home. It may also be that she secretly wants to be caught and punished. For when she meets Neil outside the home, in a shabby hotel room in Boston, she is suddenly more frightened and uncomfortable. His poverty and alienation had a certain forbidden thrill in juxtaposition to her parents' world, but when she must confront them on their own, she backs off. Once her parents have discovered the diaphragm that she "accidentally" left behind in her drawer, she feels ashamed to bring Neil home again. She cannot free herself of the guilt that traps her in her parents' comfortable world.

For her rebellion against the family is really oedipal rebellion, not an articulate moral rebellion; it is expressed almost wholly in sexual defiance—a direct enough strike against her mother. But although Brenda's disdain for the materialistic way of life is confused with incestuous longings and hostilities, it still contains an inchoate fury. Like so many middle-class girls, her only outlet for all of the hostility —personal, sexual, social, moral—that she feels toward her family but barely understands is an incongruously fierce competitiveness with her mother; the oedipal rivalry must bear all of her muddled resentment against suburbia too, and so it surfaces in inappropriate flashes of venom and rage.

But we care about Brenda just *because* she is confused, struggling to break free of her environment with all the wrong gestures of protest, but still protesting in the only way that she can. And what makes the film even more disturbing is that Neil is unable and unwilling to help her. He takes a little too much delight in mocking her, her parents and her friends, delivering stern, godlike judgments on their moral failures. There is something unpleasantly fastidious and self-righteous about Neil. This limitation was occasionally implied between the lines of Roth's novella, but the film-makers have explored it much more fully. In the story Neil was more simply right, Brenda more simply wrong. The film complicates both characters.

At first Ali MacGraw seems almost too intelligent and too charming for Brenda, but gradually we begin to appreciate how those qualities strain against the limits of the part and enrich it. Her Brenda is witty, alert, penetrating, yet almost simultaneously petty and shallow; we see a tentative, unexplored capacity for feeling and perception smothered by abundance. She was a somewhat smaller character in Roth, less adventurous, more easily overwhelmed by her wealth. And Neil was less vulnerable and fallible, too close to Roth's own spokesman. Richard Benjamin is an enormously intelligent actor, and he has a reflective quality that is a rare pleasure to see in an American film; we feel he has the brains to understand exactly what is so monstrous about suburban America. But he scoffs at the bourgeois world with a little too much complacency of his own. He wears a constant wry, superior smile as a defense against feeling and commitment—and perhaps to conceal his envy of the Patimkins' affluence. Neil is at least sensitive enough to recognize that he has a problem. In an interesting scene that was not in the novella, Brenda angrily objects to his jokes about her country club friends: "You turn down your nose at everything." Neil acknowledges the criticism, admitting that he can't locate himself anywhere in his world, neither inside the affluent society nor in radical opposition to it: "Everything looks ridiculous to me." One reason that he needs Brenda is that she finally gives him something to connect with; her directness of feeling seems a meaningful alternative to his own aloofness. In some ways Brenda is bolder than Neil: it is she who goes swimming nude a few hundred feet from where the country club dance is going on; Neil would be terrified of taking that kind of chance. And although Roth meant to suggest that this kind of daring was essentially superficial and hollow, Ali MacGraw's freshness and passion suggest something more complicated—in Brenda's sexual brazenness there is an appetite for life that Neil shies away from. Neil is not adventurous

enough to help her explore her instinctive rebelliousness so that it grows into genuine self-knowledge and integrity. He could help her shake off her parents' values, and at the same time, if he would let her, she could help him overcome his defensiveness and his intellectual detachment from life.

This intuitive understanding of what they can offer to each other gives their scenes together great vitality—at least the scenes with dialogue. Unfortunately, when he wants to create a "visual" romantic scene, Larry Peerce returns to Marlboro country—slow-motion swimming scenes, soft-focus shots of the lovers riding bicycles through the woods. Peerce has not the slightest feeling for cinematic movement or imagery; the photography and cutting in this film are pretty consistently poor. But to say that Peerce is a poor director is only half of the truth; he is a poor director of the resources of film, but he is a very fine director of actors (a gift that was intermittently apparent even in his two forgettable preceding films, *One Potato Two Potato* and *The Incident*). Peerce's sensitivity to people pays off in the astonishing rapport that Richard Benjamin and Ali MacGraw show when they are playing together. Their love scenes are frank, tender, witty, passionate, exhilarating.

Because the love scenes *are* so charming, the ultimate failure of their love is all the more affecting. The dialogue in the bleak parting scene is Roth's, but the direction and playing of the scene once again complicate Roth, and make it difficult to side with Neil against Brenda. He is almost certainly right that she must have deliberately—though unconsciously—left the diaphragm at home so that her mother would find it and thus give her an excuse to end the relationship. And yet Neil is quite harsh in this scene, almost relieved to find Brenda guilty. As he accuses her of betraying their love, he never once looks at her; he stares straight ahead, implacably passing sentence on her, and then almost compulsively picks up her father's letter to mock it: "Why does your father capitalize all these letters?" Scorn is Neil's only natural reflex. It is clear to us—but not to Neil—that Brenda needs *help;* if she left the diaphragm deliberately, it was not out of bitchy connivance but out of fear and desperate confusion. But he is unwilling to acknowledge the confusion of her feelings; he wants an easy explanation and a quick resolution. Whether they would ever be able to work out the overwhelming problems between them is uncertain, but what is most interesting is how reluctant Neil is even to try. His lack of generosity to Brenda is depressing. The film's first impression may be its fifties-style social satire, but its strongest impression is its pained, bitter vision of young love—love too weak to compete with Brenda's social conditioning and Neil's self-satisfied morality. Peerce is technically clumsy, his *mise en scène* is dated, but *Goodbye, Columbus* lives because it pricks romantic movie fantasies with an unsparing skepticism that is not just timely, but timeless too.

—STEPHEN FARBER

BELLE DE JOUR

Director: Luis Bunuel. Script: Bunuel and Jean-Claude Carriere, based on the novel by Joseph Kessel. Photography: Sacha Vierny.

In *Belle De Jour,* Buñuel again subverts reality by creating a character whose emotional isolation makes "everyday life" as remote and fantastic as a dream. One way Buñuel achieves this validation of fantasy is by his choice of an elegant, "traditional," visual style, a neutral camera position, and simple, straightforward editing.

Buñuel cuts back and forth between fantasy, dream, and reality very economically and without self-conscious structural emphasis.* There

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are no shock cuts or wildly differing shot lengths. He only uses one dissolve, near the end of the film: a double image of autumn trees moving against the apartment building where Sévérine and Pierre live. The way the shot is composed it could actually be a straight shot, but it works like a dissolve because it suggests a compound linkage between the autumn woods of Sévérine's fantasies and the prison flat she seeks to escape.

Sacha Vierny's camera establishes a cool middle distance and rarely deviates from it. An occasional long shot is introduced to great effect, such as the carriage shots in the beginning and end, but rarely does the camera come any closer to the actors than a head and shoulders close-up. Even hands and feet are established in a setting, as when we see Sévérine's hands nervously stroking a marble table top, or her feet walking up the tacky art-nouveau staircase to Mme. Anais' *maison de rendez-vous.* This middle-distance camera establishes a cool objectivity which enables Buñuel to show us erotic dualism without tipping the scales for or against fantasy or "real life."

Sound patterns are as revealing as images in this film. Raymond Durgnat has sugested that *Belle de Jour* can be seen as Sévérine's attempt to create her own movie. Sounds serve as clues to Sévérine's relative states of mind, and by summoning up varying combinations, Sévérine modulates and varies her own score.

For instance, in the opening scene where she imagines herself and Pierre riding through the woods in a landau, we hear carriage bells intermixed with the melancholy of a train whistle. This combination of sounds establishes two modes of perception: Sévérine is creating a synthesis between the (presumed) imagined carriage bells and the (presumed) real train whistle.

The carriage sounds change in the final scene. When Husson tells Pierre about her life as a prostitute, Sévérine retreats to fantasy again. With this knowledge Pierre has regained his moral superiority and with it, the power of isolating Sévérine. Thus he becomes "revived"

BELLE DE JOUR

in Sévérine's eyes and her guilt feelings drive her back to masochism. In her final fantasy, the carriage returns empty and we hear the meowing of cats mingled with the sound of bells. Two imagined sounds have merged, and we are left with the assumption that Sévérine has moved completely into the world of fantasy.

The punning references to cats that recur throughout the movie are one way that Buñuel hints at Sévérine's sexual fears. In her fantasies, cats are whips or fetishes. In the opening scene with the coachman, Sévérine asks the one with a whip not to let the cats loose. In the dream which ends when Pierre and Husson pelt her with mud she asks if bulls have names like cats ("expiation and remorse"). In her fantasy about the necrophiliac duke, cats are actually present, but their role remains veiled.

Following this line a bit further, Sévérine's fantasy about the necrophiliac duke can be seen as her attempt to reinstate herself in her own self-esteem after she had failed at playing an aggressive role with Mme. Anais' masochistic client. This scene is one of the funniest and saddest that Buñuel has ever done—full of marvelous touches like the doctor's happy anticipa-

tory expression as he opens his suitcase full of gadgets, and his impatient "Not yet!" when Charlotte begins to hurry through her accustomed role.

When Sévérine watches Charlotte whip the doctor she is seeing one of her own masochistic fantasies being acted out, and the sight repels her. To compensate, she invents an entirely passive part for herself in the next fantasy: that of a dead child who is nonetheless sexually attractive. Her choice of this particular role combines her needs for erotic role-playing, expiation (the duke invites her to take part in a "religious ceremony"), and punishment (she is thrown out of the chateau when the ceremony is over).

Other punning images exist in temporal succession and establish narrative connections. The fire in which Sévérine burns her panties after her first day with Mme. Anais becomes the dream campfire which cannot warm the soup Pierre and Husson are cooking, and later crackles in the salon of the necrophiliac duke. Buñuel uses literal reality—things photographed as we know them to exist in three-dimensional space rather than juxtaposed into atypical relationships—to give an implicit authority to Sévérine's fantasies. To paraphrase Bazin, the camera creates factual hallucinations.

Sévérine places her fantasies in an elaborate romantic world of candlelit chateaux, coaches and footmen, and black-clad figures duelling at dawn. A fairy-tale world such as this is a familiar setting for frightening childhood fantasies, and Buñuel has long been observing the dark side of childhood. In his movies, as in the unbowdlerized fairy tales of Grimm and Perrault, children are often the innocent victims of a particularly nasty fate. Two flashbacks to Sévérine's own childhood indicate the patterns of fixation and guilt that she seeks to escape: in one she is furtively caressed by a heavy-handed workman, and in the other she turns away from a priest offering the communion Host. In the bordello, the maid's small daughter is shown as a potential victim of Mme. Anais, and Charlotte's reference to the Aberfan disaster in the newspaper establishes a link to another childhood fear—that of being buried alive. To Buñuel, childhood is a monstrous trap and there is nothing romantic to him about innocence.

Buñuel's trapped victims often find that they must fall back upon atavism to become free: the sacrifice of the child in *Diary of a Chambermaid,* the repetition ritual at the end of *The Exterminating Angel.* Sévérine seeks total freedom, but to achieve this she invents elaborate rituals of humiliation and servitude.

Buñuel establishes the relationships inside the house of Mme. Anais with great care. Mme. Anais, whose cashmere sweaters and *comme il faut* manners barely conceal a monstrous feral possessiveness, commands a nursery-schoolgirl world of treats and punishents. Each customer brings a special climate of feeling with him, and so the women wait with happy anticipation, boredom, or nervous apprehension. Husson had called them "enslaved women," but Mathilde and Charlotte are actually commonsense working girls who depend on what the day brings for gratification and reward. They admire Sévérine's St. Laurent wardrobe, but go about their jobs with no apparent need for her shuttle routes between conscious and unconscious experience.

Sévérine is also playing a game with herself all through the film, assembling a private collection of image-feeling clusters which make more sense to her, logically and erotically, than her life as the wife of a rich bourgeois doctor in Gaullist France. The film eventually becomes Sévérine's own surrealist creation, like the game called *"le cadavre exquis"* which was invented by Breton and his friends in Paris during the twenties. In this game, drawings or poems were created by each participant adding a line without seeing what had gone before. The fact that Sévérine herself plays the role of an exquisite corpse in one of her fantasies is perhaps coincidental, but nonetheless interesting.

Buñuel's connection with the early surrealist movement in Paris is well-known. To the surrealist philosophers, dreams, fantasies, and even

madness were considered legitimate escape routes from the snares of reality. Automatic writing, "exquisite corpse" drawings, *frottage,* and even hysterical states were utilized as avenues to the psychic automatism which expressed the unconscious. The first *Surrealist Manifesto* hailed Freud for "recovering the rights of the imagination". And later on Breton and Aragon were to enthusiastically state that "hysteria is not a pathological phenomenon and can be considered in every respect a supreme means of expression."*

Sévérine's story is a narrative based on the logic of the unconscious, and as such, *Belle de Jour* becomes an essentially surreal work. "We are all at the mercy of the dream," wrote the editors of *La Revolution Surrealiste,* "and we owe it to ourselves to submit to its power in the waking state."† Since Buñuel made two important early surrealist films, *Le Chien Andalou* and *L'Age d'Or,* it is hardly surprising that his later work should also reveal affinities with surrealism.

However, since the early films, Buñuel's imagery has become less emblematic and polymorphos, and less concerned with conventional surrealist iconography. In *Belle de Jour* it is the fact that the narrative structure alternates between fantasy and reality without establishing priorities between them which provides the film's surreal frame of reference. The dead donkeys and truncated hands typical of early emblematic surrealist imagery have been discarded in favor of a cinematic narrative which expresses surrealism's original iconoclastic spirit.

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VIVA AND LOUIS

A film by Andy Warhol (also known as "Blue Movie" and "Fuck").

"If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface: of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it."—From an interview with Gretchen Berg, *Cahiers du Cinéma in English,* May, 1967.

I see no reason not to take Warhol at his word. His marvelously banal interviews prove the point, and when reading them one is struck with a certain integrity, a sense that the different parts of him fit perfectly together. To be sure, there's nothing "behind" his emptiness, the celebrated nullity of works and personality; and with that lucidity that forms his one admirable characteristic, and that appears to be denied to many of his enemies, Warhol knows exactly where to place himself—"I could be forgotten tomorrow." Much of the reaction to Warhol has been muddled, personal, and beside the point. People respond with defensive annoyance and indignation or, much worse, desperate attempts to get with it and find something complex and revelatory. My favorite in this genre is the writing of Gregory Battcock in *Film Culture* and his anthology, *The New American Cinema,* particularly his ineffable "interpretation" of *Empire,* the eight-hour moving-still picture of the Empire State Building (e.g., "Sound is dispensed with also, and its absence is consistent with the object photographed, since the Empire State Building does not, *qua* building, make noise").

No matter how one writes about Warhol, he gets the last laugh. With his recent activities, he has managed to extend the subject matter of movies beyond permissiveness into the range of profitable scandal, make some money, find employment for his friends, and—what is least important to him—gain acceptance in certain quarters as a leader of the New York avant-garde. All this has been accomplished without producing anything of more than marginal

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No matter how one writes about Warhol, he gets the last laugh. With his recent activities, he has managed to extend the subject matter of movies beyond permissiveness into the range of profitable scandal, make some money, find employment for his friends, and—what is least important to him—gain acceptance in certain quarters as a leader of the New York avant-garde. All this has been accomplished without producing anything of more than marginal

value (although it is work of great *interest*, a curious paradox I'll try to explain), all achieved without any more effort than is required by—as he puts it—"staying off the streets and keeping busy." But once you get too excited about any of this and break into print to complain about it, Warhol has made a fool of you. That is why the smartest among those who loathe him say nothing.

If the New York avant-garde is falling apart, as some have claimed, then its degeneration really isn't Warhol's fault. Warhol created the Brillo Box sculpture, but not the sensibility that made its triumph possible. What he did was to perform the final extension on the great modern doctrine that any subject—human or material—can be aestheticized by an act of will. Only in his case the extension amounted to a nihilist mockery, both of the grand doctrine and of all those already insecure about what was art and what wasn't. In a similar manner, he takes the voyeurism that is inherent in all movies and adopts it as the sole principle of his work, showing you literally everything, with the result that anyone who actually sits through his pictures winds up in a miserable position to raise objections to anything in them. Perhaps the one thing behind Warhol's facade is a sly malice, an impulse to punish the audience for its tolerance or curiosity.

Even his enemies give him credit for commercial shrewdness (while hastening to point out that in all other ways he is appallingly, one might say vindictively, stupid). Not only has he figured out how to stay one and a half steps ahead of art and movie fashions, but he judged correctly the historical moment when his natural sensibility—that weird mixture of sub-lumpen bohemia and Madison Avenue*—would be echoed by the widespread mood, the national disgust; when there would be an audience, too careless for art but too sophisticated for conventional material, that would accept him cheerfully as their own.

Warhol's works are virtually defined by their severe withdrawal of effort and conscientiousness. It's silly to give something that is half put-on the fullness of response implied by the usual essay form; something less formal is in order, so I offer the following descriptive notes on *Viva and Louis:*

CINEMATIC INNOVATION: *Viva and Louis* is 130 minutes of film about two of Warhol's people who are spending a day together in a West Side apartment to make a movie—the one eventually called *Viva and Louis.* The dramatic action of the film consists of the two characters struggling to find enough to say and do to fill up the time it takes for the film to pass through the camera. They lie about, make love, eat, and shower. At one point, they plaintively ask if "it's still running," but no one is there to answer, and they are left alone and rather frightened, huddling naked in a bathtub, while the camera grinds on. Mercifully, Louis farts, which gives Viva something to react to; soon after, the film runs out and the movie ends. It could have been an hour shorter or twenty hours longer.

Nothing has been cut out of the original footage, as is Warhol's usual practice. Most of the action takes place on a large double bed, placed in front of a window facing out to the Hudson River and the setting sun. Several shots have been lyrically "composed" in silhouette, and something approaching a rhythm, or at least a punctuation, has been established by alternating long static takes in the classic manner and machine-gun clusters of frames. As usual Warhol does a certain amount of random spotting of elbows, backs, organs, etc., but for the most part the characters are kept reasonably in frame. While everyone else making movies is playing with zooms and change-focus shots, Warhol diddles with the lens aperture, and so we have several quick rushes from dark to

*Warhol started as a commercial fashion artist and has recently begun making television commercials for Schrafft's Restaurants—which is a perverse touch, since those bland eating houses are the epitome of bourgeois gentility. But then advertising has always been the one art in which decadence and gentility coexist peacefully.

light and then back again, usually in mid-shot. In one scene, however, there is a relation of techniques to content that is less arbitrary than usual, and what results is a peculiar mixture of the obscene and the sentimental. The scene in which Viva and Louis screw (from start to finish) has been deliberately overexposed, and the unfiltered daylight floods in on the sheets, the air, and the interlocked bodies, changing them all into a heavenly pale blue—copulating cherubs, lit by Hallmark cards.

SEX: There was a funny cartoon in *The Realist* a few years ago: a policeman is peering with a flashlight into a parked car; a couple blinks out at him; the policeman says, "Making love? I saw what you were doing, you were *fucking*." Warhol has produced a scene of sexual intercourse that is so cold that the police will have even less doubts than usual about what is going on. Of course love or feeling of any kind is Warhol's greatest enemy, and by no stretch of anyone's imagination could Louis and Viva's making it together be called the result of passion. (How could Warhol's people experience "passion"? They do maintain a certain disinterested tenderness for each other, though.) It's plain old screwing, and a pretty low-key performance all around. Norman Mailer has expressed his uneasiness about actors actually fornicating on camera, on the grounds that such deep personal engagement, dedicated to creating art, would tend to debase personal engagement and the sexual act itself. I think I understand what he means, but the problem just doesn't arise here. The act is technically complete, but not much happens; there's no intimacy, no lust, no climax, and no satisfaction. The act hasn't been debased because it hasn't been fully represented; and it probably can't be fully represented, thank heaven, because the presence of the camera destroys nearly everything that makes sex a different experience than eating or taking a bath. Mailer wanted to protect the sexual act, but sex is probably safe from our grossest intrusions. When the shutter is switched on, we turn off. Afterwards, Viva and Louis loosen up and there is some horsing around in the shower that generates far greater warmth than the act itself.

Is it pornographic, then? Yes, by most legal definitions. But subjectively, it's not pornographic. It's lewd, and rather cold, and quite dull, but it has nothing of the solemn, impacted, fantasy quality of movie pornography. There's a steady flow of chatter throughout the film that breaks up any possibility of fantasy. Louis and Viva are always removing themselves from what they are doing and letting us know all about their state of mind, so that we never forget that what we are seeing isn't sex, but "sex," isn't fucking, but "fucking."

SUPERSTARS: Because they concentrate so heavily on physical appearance and modes of personal expression, the movies allow us to indulge our love of gossip, our endless appreciation of "personality"—it's often said that movies give rise to a mystique of personality. We may live our lives in constant reference to movie stars and talk about them in the most familiar terms. But as long as they are actors, as long as they are playing roles and trying to create illusions of some sort, there is a measure of respect, of reserve, and *distance* in our relations with them. In Warhol's documentaries, however, the people are always playing themselves, and because of this and what they do (taking off all their clothes), the saving distance is annihilated, we are brought disastrously close, and we can only respond with the full cruelty of personal evaluation. We judge their intelligence, their imagination, their sexuality, their nakedness, and so on. Thus, *Playboy* magazine, which has been struggling to assimilate Warhol somehow or other, has complained several times about Viva's breasts.

Responding in the same manner (there's no other way), I can quickly dismiss Louis as not terribly bright or interesting. But Viva's another story. Ah, Viva . . . With her hair pulled back she looks like a puzzled ostrich. And the voice! Its normal tone is a majestic low whine, but under provocation it suddenly and rather alarmingly modulates up, getting shriller and

shriller, until it finally levels off at a plate-rattling screech. The whole ensemble is very funny, especially when put to use in some shaggy dog story about a man in a bar or an encounter with the Long Island police or the time she called the White House to "complain" about something or other. Almost all the interest and fun in the movie comes from these stories and from both Viva and Louis talking with hopeless banality about some "public issue" like politics, police, or atomic weapons (Viva: "Didn't I talk about this in another movie"?), talk which is made more comical in the context of their lounging bare-assed before the camera.

Viva: You really know a lot of facts. Where do you know them from?

Louis: Television.

"When I read magazines I just look at the pictures and the words, I don't usually read it. There's no meaning to the words. I just feel the shapes with my eye, and if you look at something long enough, I've discovered, the meaning goes away."—From Warhol's *Cahiers* interview.

I said earlier that Warhol's output is of no value, but great interest. This paradox might be resolved by reminding the reader of Warhol's dubious relation to an important aspect of modern culture. An earlier generation of dadaist creators announced its blasphemies and negations in a series of furious manifestos. Warhol publishes no manifestos. In fact, he doesn't think of his output as a negation at all: he's just doing what he knows best and what comes easiest. He's not reacting against anything. Warhol comes after the great expression of negative energy that informs so much of modern art; he's a barnacle clinging to post-modern taste. Warhol's career has been made possible by this immense effort of modern art and the great clearing away of emotion and value that resulted from it, but he's mostly unconscious of the pain that accompanied the effort and the significance of what's been cleared away. Under his cheerful tutelage, the nothingness that has so attracted and appalled the great modern artists emerges with a ghastly innocent smile into the world of the mass media as a positive value.

"I like being a vacuum; it leaves me alone to work." —DAVID DENBY

THE IMMORTAL STORY

Script and direction: Orson Welles. Photography: Willy Kurant. Altura Films.

If this film were signed by an unknown name like Orson Baddeleys instead of Orson Welles, I might (though I hope I wouldn't) credit its faults to the director and its virtues to chance and Isak Dinesen.

The story on which it's based, from *Anecdotes of Destiny*, is typical Dinesen: cool and artificial, with a continual suggestion of symbolic depths that are hard to bring into focus. The setting is nineteenth-century China. Mr. Clay, an English merchant of immense wealth, has spent his life surrounded by dry facts. One day he encounters fiction in the shape of a nautical yarn about a sailor who's offered five guineas to impregnate the young and beautiful wife of a wealthy old man. Disturbed by the idea of a story with no counterpart in reality, Clay determines to make it come true, so that one sailor at least will tell the story as fact instead of fiction. Virginie, the daughter of a merchant he ruined and drove to suicide, is hired at a substantial fee to play the wife, and a sailor is picked up at the docks. To them, however, the night turns out to be not at all like a drama directed by Clay but an unforgettable time of love. Clay dies, and the sailor swears that he will never tell anyone the story of what happened that night.

Welles's adaptation is in places oddly careless. In Dinesen's story, Clay's first encounter with fiction, before the nautical yarn, is a passage from Isaiah. On the printed page, one is prepared to gloss over the unlikelihood of Clay's never having read the Bible. On the screen,

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however, where Welles himself makes Clay the incarnation of Victorian-Protestant self-help, the implausibility stares one in the face.

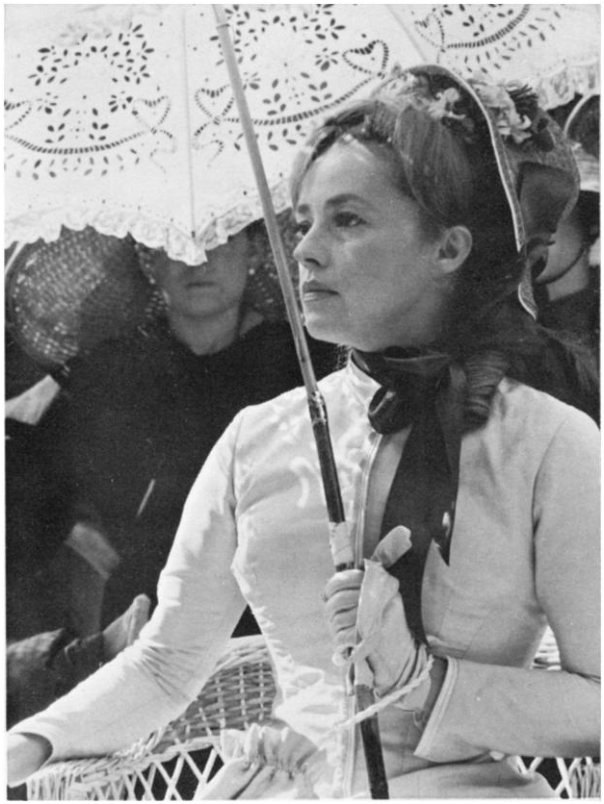
When the sailor starts making love to Virginie, she cries out that there's an earthquake. In the story it's explained that an earthquake had taken place when she lost her virginity, years before, so the reader can understand that she is now experiencing an equivalent emotional awakening. But the film omits this explanation, and the spectator can only find Virginie's cry grotesque.

Even the technical aspects of the film show signs of carelessness. Roughnesses in the dubbing and cutting may be due to budgetary and logistical difficulties, but these cannot excuse the over-lighting of the bedroom sequence. When the sailor comes to Virginie he asks her, "Are you seventeen?"—that being his age. She answers "Yes," trusting to the darkness to hide the fact that she is ten years older; and it is because she fears his discovering the truth that she urges him to leave before day-break. In the film, however, the bed is bathed in a white light strong enough to let the sailor read a newspaper's want ads, let alone the maturity of Virginie's face.

All these discrepancies blur the impact of the story as Dinesen wrote it, and if Welles's intention was simply to translate the story into cinematic terms he did not achieve a brilliant success. But was that his intention? Shakespeare had a different purpose from Holinshed; Picasso's portraits cannot be judged by their photographic likeness; Brahms's *Variations on a Theme of Haydn* rightly sound less like Haydn than Brahms.

Of course, these examples can be cited to justify any adaptation which departs from its original, whether for good or ill. But right from the beginning of *The Immortal Story* I found it casting a spell which its weaknesses failed to break.

The clue to the nature of this spell is in the screen figure of Clay. This is not one of the restless, ironic monsters of past Welles films—a Kane, Arkadin, or Quinlan. In every scene except one Clay remains immobile, rooted in his chair, speaking slowly and without a spark of humor. The one exception occurs just after the sailor has joined Virginie in bed: Clay bursts in at the door and excitedly declares, "When you two are left to yourselves, and believe that you are following the command of your young blood only, you will still be doing nothing, nothing at all, but what I have willed you to do . . . This room, this bed, you yourselves with this same young hot blood in you—it is all nothing but a story turned, at my word, into reality." (I quote from the story; in Welles's screenplay the phrasing is less literary.) Then Clay goes back to his chair and remains there until he dies.



THE IMMORTAL STORY

It's dangerously easy to read nonexistent symbolism into films, but I think it's reasonable to see Clay, the would-be shaper of reality, as a reflection of Welles the film-maker. Reality asserts itself more strongly in films than in any other artistic medium, and it can frustrate even the most skilled of directors who struggle to

shape it to their vision—just as the sailor, while following Clay's script to the letter, frustrates his desire to have the nautical yarn told as a true experience. In fact, reality asserts itself so strongly in films that audiences customarily identify actors with the characters they play. Even people who think carefully about films often refer to the actor instead of the character, if only because the actor's screen presence is so much more memorable than the character's name. Thus to most viewers, with or without symbolism, Welles *is* Clay.

There is nothing in the film to show that Welles is conscious of this equivalence: he does not openly dramatize the film-maker's predicament as Bergman does, say, in *The Magician*. But the fact that Clay suggests this predicament no doubt attracted Welles to Dinesen's story in the first place, and it certainly accounts for the film's curious fascination.

Seen in this light, the film is no longer a somewhat clumsily faithful version of the original story. It is telling a subtly different story of its own. In transforming Dinesen's prose into images and sounds, Welles gives resonance to everything that hints at the impermanence of life.

Dinesen begins her story with a series of expository paragraphs; Welles draws on these for his narration but at the same time presents quick-cut scenes of Clay riding through the seaport in his carriage and of other merchants commenting on him as he passes. The port setting itself, which remains a purely formal symbol of impermanence in the story, comes to life on the screen with Chinese hurrying to and fro in the background. Dinesen devotes two pages to describing Virginie's reactions when she enters Clay's house, which had been her father's before Clay drove him to ruin, but Welles is content with one vivid scene: Virginie looking at herself in the mirror and whispering, "The last time I looked in this I was a little girl." Welles's choice of incidental music —gentle, melancholy pieces by Erik Satie— also amplifies the film's sense of time passing.

This is a recurring theme in Welles's films,* but once again he creates new variations on it. In transferring Dinesen's four main characters to the screen, Welles focuses sharply on the different ways they respond to the impermanence of life. The sailor is young, tall, vigorous; having to part from Virginie immediately after falling in love with her is the first big blow that life's impermanence has dealt him, and although he reacts with passion he is not yet scarred; when last seen in the film, he is striding away as vigorous and confident as ever. Virginie accepts the impermanence of life, being prepared to enjoy whatever comes along and pay any necessary price in suffering afterward; and Welles conveys this with some extraordinary close-ups of her eyes as she watches the sailor undressing: the eyes themselves, calm and unblinking, suggest that she is experienced in love affairs and their aftermath, while the spatial disorientation of the close-ups, each shot from a different angle, suggests her willingness to be moved and excited. Clay's clerk, a Jew who has escaped from continual persecution and peregrination in Europe, has purged himself of any desire or regret that would expose him to the pain of life's impermanence; his one ambition is to shut himself up in the security of his room; and by showing the room from outside the window, with yellow lamplight warming the bare white walls for a few moments before the clerk lowers the blinds, Welles gives the audience a physical insight into the clerk's withdrawal from life.

Clay, of course, is the one character who tries to battle with the impermanence of life. He does have this in common with other Welles monster-heroes. Unlike them, however, Clay appears to have had no personal experience of loss; neither the story nor the film implies that as a youth he was much different from the man he grew into, one who recognizes nothing but hard facts and cold figures. Only in his second childhood does he become aware of life outside his experience; and although he wants to reduce that life to his own limited

*See my "Orson Welles: Of Time and Loss," FQ, Fall 1967.

terms, the quixotic force of his obsession lends grandeur to his undertaking. Perhaps anyone who attempts to grasp the impermanence of life, whether in art or in life itself, must have not only strength and determination but a frame of mind that will seem not quite sane to other people. Welles the actor conveys this simply and brilliantly: while his speech and manner are those of a tough, authoritarian old man, his face wears a slightly bewildered expression, as if Clay is himself astonished at what he is doing. And in the scene where Clay appears at the bedroom door, Welles gives his character a sudden charge of physical and verbal energy, as if Clay's bewilderment, now that his plan seems to be nearing fruition, has been swept away in a burst of creative fury.

It is the real-life counterpart of this creative fury in Welles himself that makes the film so arresting. In *The Immortal Story* Welles does what he wants to do and what he knows how to do—light up a new facet of the theme of life's impermanence and man's struggle against it. The film is neither a flawless gem nor a flawed masterpiece, but it is memorable and alive. —WILLIAM JOHNSON

THE THIEF OF PARIS

Produced and directed by Louis Malle. Script: Malle and Jean Claude Carriere, based on a novel by Georges Darien. Dialogue Daniel Boulanger. Photography: Henri Decae.

Louis Malle's comedy-drama about the adventures of a gentleman-thief in turn-of-the-century Europe confronts us with a vision of crime as a near-religious vocation. Towards the end of the film, the priest—right after a particularly brilliant performance in which he elegantly hoists the mistress of Belmondo's uncle on her own vengeful petard—turns to Belmondo and remarks (I'm paraphrasing): "All these people chasing around after they don't know what—they're crazy. And I am too. How to cure the sickness of the heart . . . " And with this he announces, as it were, the loss of faith, the realization that, after all, redemption and fulfillment has eluded them just as completely as it eludes the more conventional people, grubbing for money and status as "respectable" members of society. The calling has failed them—or perhaps they have failed the calling, by never taking it seriously enough. Only the escaped convict, Cannonier, with his messianic vision of society brought to its knees through a concerted program of criminal anarchy, has the strength of purpose the calling demands. The others, for all their ingenuity and daring, remain dilettantes of crime, motivated by the "secret pleasure of the heart" but lacking a purpose beyond the self to sustain them.

For them robbery is an anti-social act all right, but one they are driven to for personal reasons (Belmondo cheated out of his inheritance, i.e., out of his rightful place in society) and out of a great need to establish some kind of identity for themselves. Belmondo speaks of a house as a "thing waiting to be gutted." The sexual overtones are explicit—robbery as a kind of inverse rape, in which the power of society is forcibly withdrawn and appropriated to oneself. And, to go back to the religious analogy for a moment, it is also a kind of communion, a ritual celebration of a religion of danger, skill and destruction —a communion in which the thief asserts and makes contact with his own aliveness by staking his life on his wits and capabilities and pitting them against society and the inert material it so vainly clings to. What they lack, as the priest points out, is "self-assurance," the self-sufficiency that would raise their activities from the level of personal vendetta and rebellious ego-assertion to that of revolution. Certainly few movie societies have ever seemed riper for destruction than this one, with its reactionary misers and power-hungry demagogues, its distorted values, its aimlessness, its lack of humanity and feelings. But how is the thief to effect a cure when he is the one who is suffering most acutely these very ailments, when his behavior is a much more desperate but equally self-regarding attempt to find an individual solution to the same old problems?

The particular charm of Malle's film is the effortless way these serious considerations emerge

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bit by bit from the surface texture of cheerful amorality, as the characters stop for a minute to ponder their lack of direction before plunging back into the preoccupied life of the professional criminal. For the most part the film is quite engagingly genial and lighthearted, the thieves going about their business of depriving the obviously unworthy with great aplomb thanks to a witty, cheeky and inventive script (Carrière is Etaix's collaborator, Boulanger wrote de Broca's successes). Adding considerably to the festive air is one of the most gracious evocations of a period that I've seen. Yet Malle seldom lets these ample opportunities for pure entertainment take over the film for long—as he did for example in *Viva Maria*, to my mind a much more frivolous and also less entertaining film about ostensibly more serious revolutionaries.

For one thing, Belmondo's relationships have a casual, uncommitted edge to them that continually points back to the opportunist amorality lying just beneath the surface of his character, and on to the gaping alienation at its center. He is truly a man alone, searching within himself and through his more and more compulsively asserted role as social outcast and antagonist for a sense of identity he will never find. The pathos of his situation is suggested with beautifully cool irony at the film's end. Playfully manipulating the genre's conventions and audience expectations, Malle has his anti-hero get away with the heist we've been watching him at throughout the film. Over the garden wall and down the empty street in the grey autumn morning, his two leather bags bulging with loot; then the wait at the suburban station for the commuter train—no hitches. As he starts to get on the train an obliging porter insists on helping him with his bags—aha, now it comes! But it doesn't. The curtain gently closes over a long-held shot of Belmondo sitting at the train window as if in reverie, the brightening countryside streaming by in a blur. His face is blank with the blankness of vague disappointment and dissatisfaction, the prospect of a psychic let-down stretching indefinitely into the future. Somehow, we may guess, the secret happiness, the sense of life lived at the extreme, has gone out of his act of communion. And with the exhilaration of the *acte gratuit* gradually replaced by the tedium of a predictable routine from which even random danger seems largely absent, he comes more than ever to resemble the bourgeois he so despises. Portrait of a man on the verge of early middle age, imperceptibly succumbing to a sickness unto death.—TONY REIF

Short Notices

In **Coogan's Bluff** Don Siegel completes the diptych of the urban world he began in *Madigan*. Its New York street scenes are located a few blocks away from the scene of *Madigan's* beginning in Spanish Harlem. For studio scenes it uses the same street set; it takes place in the same New York precinct with the same precinct house; and it uses many of the same actors. But where *Madigan* was basically realistic, took pains to complicate moral issues, and imitated in its inconclusive ending the slice of life bleeding on both sides, *Coogan's Bluff* is an enclosed fantasy about the purer world that exists outside the city and about the conflicts that result when Clint Eastwood meets the corruptions of the big town. The first scenes set the primitivist premise. In the desert an Indian wearing only a loincloth waits with a rifle. Coogan (Eastwood) stalks him. In the background blares music reminicent of the bravura accompaniment to Sergio Leone's Italian westerns. Siegel is having fun with the conventions of Eastwood's role as the anti-hero of Leone westerns. Tough, taciturn, and direct, he takes "every lousy one-man job that comes along" in a world marked with naturalness, easy sensuality, and simple duties—political, social, and sexual. Then, for obscure reasons, he is sent to New York to extradite a prisoner. In New York Coogan is faced by the urban world in all its bureaucracy,

bit by bit from the surface texture of cheerful amorality, as the characters stop for a minute to ponder their lack of direction before plunging back into the preoccupied life of the professional criminal. For the most part the film is quite engagingly genial and lighthearted, the thieves going about their business of depriving the obviously unworthy with great aplomb thanks to a witty, cheeky and inventive script (Carrière is Etaix's collaborator, Boulanger wrote de Broca's successes). Adding considerably to the festive air is one of the most gracious evocations of a period that I've seen. Yet Malle seldom lets these ample opportunities for pure entertainment take over the film for long—as he did for example in *Viva Maria*, to my mind a much more frivolous and also less entertaining film about ostensibly more serious revolutionaries.

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jargon and confusion. The blunt natural man from the West blunders full tilt into the elaborate city systems of police stake-outs, perverse sex, psychological explanation, and dirty hotels. Leaving behind the good-hearted sexuality of the western girl he finds instead the social worker who lives amid filing cabinets and mishmash Freudianisms. In place of the crusty old Western sheriff he finds the New York detective lieutenant (Lee J. Cobb) who continually makes fun of Coogan's individualism. All is distorted by the prism of Coogan's pastoral innocence. The hippy scenes are gleefully depraved. And Coogan's frontier Americanisms continually collide with outraged Negroes, sinister Jews, and ironic Irishmen. Coogan has to bluff because the city isn't a place for directness. He finally gets his prisoner through a pseudo horse chase (with motorcycles) in the more comfortable medieval greenness of the Cloisters, where the grass and the river and the trees enable him to function again. Just before he takes off with the prisoner from the Pan Am heliport the social worker girlfriend, dressed in an orange-red coordinated wardrobe with boots up to her navel, runs up to kiss him goodbye. Then the camera goes up with the helicopter until she becomes an orange-red bug —another spot of artificiality amid the greater unnaturalness of the city. But it's a mistake to think this is really New York. It's New York as Coogan sees it, a caricature of urban life, with a twisted geography (for example, the title) that wryly reflects the authenticity of *Madigan*. And finally it is not even Coogan's New York, but the New York that the city man imagines is seen by the unspoiled child from the West. Siegel's acute sense of genre shows that the anti-hero, for all his cynicism, represents an ideal, and the world of bandits, cutthroats, and rustlers is yet a purer world than the jungle cities. But his insight is complex enough to poke fun at the impulse behind the ideal even while it explores its nature. The great directors play with their audiences, alternately exploiting and exposing the generic assumptions the audience brings to the movie experience. Unlike Robert Aldrich in *Lylah Clare*, Siegel never descends into the empty and reflexive invocation of the act of making a movie. *Coogan's Bluff* is a wise man's game, with a controlled caricature, irresponsible wit, and sense of play that only a practiced and intelligent director can bring off.—LEO BRAUDY

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How to Make It bears amazing similarities to John Huston's 1941 masterpiece, *The Maltese Falcon*. Roger Corman's cast of odd, fascinating characters spends practically the whole picture in pursuit of an elusive, inestimably valuable treasure: a set of five-pound-note plates swiped from the British mint. There's a delightful Sydney Greenstreet surrogate in Victor Buono's fat Turk, a nice bit of casting since Buono is reported to be a fan of Greenstreet; almost accordingly, Corman succeeds in getting a subtler, better disciplined performance from Buono than has any previous director, including Robert Aldrich who discovered him. Whereas the director's late father had a stunning guest star appearance in *Falcon*, Corman himself crops up for one wordless scene here. The hero, Vic Morrow, is an A pupil of the Bogart school, and his dialogue (by Bob Barash) is fittingly tough and sharp, as is that of all the characters. And, when in the end the beautiful heroine (Mary Astor there, the continually underrated Suzanne Pleshette here) turns out to be the film's arch villain and murderess, the hero, though he maintains a certain indistinct yen for her, unhesitatingly turns her over to the local constabulary (in this case, Cesar Romero). But you don't recognize the film as a rehash of the Huston-Hammett original until much later, after you've had time to mull it over. While you're actually watching it, you're constantly engrossed by Corman's dashing visual style and steady pacing of narrative events. Indeed, this film, apparently an independent effort of Corman's own company shot on location in Monaco and Turkey, constitutes a return to the clean, hard, economical style of his earliest American International efforts, about the best of which was *Machine Gun Kelly*. There's a remnant of the more baroque Vincent Price period in a scene of Miss Pleshette's massive Turkish wrestler hireling Milton Reid (of Hammer horror films) literally crushing the head of the plate thief's daughter (Charlotte Rampling) between his hands. We see the blood streaming down between her bared breasts. This garishly perverse scene is so out of continuity with the rest of the film that it seems to have been stuck in at the last moment; why should so unarguable a stylist as Corman include such a scene? Just thinking about it gives me a headache. This scene aside, the film is of good, hearty B-picture stock, hardly anything you'd nominate as a work of art, but a consistently above-average programmer.—DAN BATES

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The Inquiring Nuns (Intermedia Foundation, Chicago) is simply a feature-length series of filmed interviews: two nuns go about asking people whether they are happy. Film-makers Gerry Temaner and Gordon Quinn have turned in a fine technical job and have had remarkable luck with both questioners and questionees. So completely have they achieved their aim of totally objective film-making that one's responses to the film are really responses to the people interviewed, and one's evaluation of it gets all mixed up with whether one liked or didn't like this or that person. For some the film may be too long, but that will be because they are not held as I was by the image of human beings with their public faces on. Others are suspicious of the criteria used in selection and editing (most of those interviewed said that they were happy, which seemed strange to the college audience with whom I saw it). Temaner and Quinn say that their only standards were those of time and repetition and that they have done no violence, even in montage, to what their subjects did or said. The simplicity and directness of the film add substance to this claim. Throughout, the camera is focused on the inquirers and those they accost. One cannot detect even the shadow of an "editorial" comment. The film abounds in small moments of humor or revelation—but these are all supplied by the characters themselves. They are real moments: not fictionalized or stage-managed in the cutting room. A vast beast of a man turns out to be a soft-spoken and cultured mathematician, a professor lectures on the sociology of happiness, a man confesses his love with great consciousness of the irrevocability of that confession now that it has been filmed, and one nice woman thanks the nuns for asking her whether she was happy. No encounter lacks its interest. But because the beauties and the agonies of this film are those of real people one hesitates to put one's own—possibly libelous—interpretation on their actions. Each viewer must himself decide who is comic and who tragic, who has won and who has been defeated. *The Inquiring Nuns* is the closest thing to a "pure" documentary—that is, to a truly nonfictionalized film—that I have ever seen. To reach this most illusive of all cinematic goals, Temaner and Quinn started off with Jean Rouch's question. But, unlike Rouch, they never let the interaction of questioner and questioned go beyond the public realm and into the private. *Chronique d'un Eté* seemed to be saying that people will reveal their private selves to the camera. Temaner and Quinn attempt nothing of such doubtful validity. Instead they are at great pains to make clear that what we see is the public image of each of the people encountered. Two nuns do the interviewing—formal figures that to most of us are symbols rather than human beings. The interviews take place in public areas (on a downtown street, in front of a church on Sunday, in front of a supermarket, in an art gallery). The middle class (white, but in one painful sequence black) provides the subjects for the interviews. The intrusion of director and microphone are visible more than once, reminding the audience of the artificial situation in which these subjects find themselves. No documentary of which I am aware has been made with a greater consciousness of the presence of the camera, and in none has this presence been used so perfectly for what it is: a thing that makes people act as they would wish others to see them, and not a mechanism with which to reveal its subjects' secret souls. This then, is documentary without the lies of fiction. A film that does no more than it can do. It is quiet, simple, artless. It does not crash down on the viewer like a bolt from the blue. In fact, I should suppose that many people will be bored to death by it. Many people *are* bored by reality—and many more than that are bored by other human beings. *The Inquiring Nuns* is all about other human beings and about nothing else.

—William Routt

Last Summer is Frank Perry's best film by far, a refreshingly unconventional and alert dissection of an appealing quartet of young people drawn together for the summer on Fire Island. For about the first hour the conversations are exceptionally well-written (by Eleanor Perry) and performed; in the best sense, they seem overheard, not composed. The three beautiful teenagers, Sandy, Peter, and Dan, are carefully distinguished without sacrificing a persuasive sense of the very special social milieu—affluent, enervated broken homes—that links them. When a homely, more serious girl named Rhoda tries to join the group, the film grows more poignant. Rhoda is a sharply observed character—a sensitive, lonely girl who wants desperately to belong but cannot refrain from asking questions that are too disturbing for the others to tolerate. She is irresistibly touching, but I especially like the unsentimentality of the characterization. Much of the time she speaks with a moralistic, even priggish solemnity that is ludicrous but believable; the dialogue shows a shrewd understanding of the awkwardness of the adolescent intellectual. What is most gratifying about *Last Summer* is that its portrait of adolescence has universality as well as

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topicality; it is one of the few youth films that tries to encompass more than contemporary fads, capturing the exuberance, the clannishness, the innocent lustfulness, the nastiness of teenagers with rare sympathy and economy. But the film lurches out of Perry's control—not because it is rambling and episodic, but because Perry feels nervous about that haphazardness and tries to build to a more dramatic resolution. Some sensational plot twists are contrived—the quartet abandoning a Puerto Rican computer date to a group of toughs (this ruins an otherwise accurately painful sequence of the teenagers playing mercilessly with a man whom they can see only as a sterotype), then Dan's brutal rape of Rhoda while Peter and Sandy hold her down—that give an unpleasantly schematic quality to the film's conclusion. I am predisposed in favor of any movie today that says something *against* young people, but this lurid finale says it with a shrillness that is simply false to the characterizations established earlier. The small cruelties that young people can perform so casually and unthinkingly are very skillfully and convincingly delineated in the first half of the film, but to make us accept so grotesque and deliberate a cruelty as the rape of Rhoda, the whole film would have had to be much less naturalistic, much more bizarre. Until the script betrays them, the performances by Barbara Hershey, Richard Thomas, Bruce Davison, and especially Cathy Burns (as Rhoda) are superb. Perry deserves credit for these performances, and also for a more restrained, less pretentious visual style than he usually provides. He is still a basically clumsy and obvious film-maker, but the dialogue and performances more than compensate this time; in addition, Gerald Hirschfield's photography is so beautiful—and for a change, *pertinently* beautiful (many scenes are bathed in a dazzling, slightly unnatural white light that effectively implies the insularity of the lives of these golden children)—that it hides a multitude of Perry's sins.

—Stephen Farber

The Lost Man. Sidney Poitier films are subtle sermons to blacks on how to make it in a white world—be flawless and have the white attitude, and survival is a cinch. Until last year's mostly black and mostly corny *For The Love Of Ivy*, he was always the black in a field of whites. In recent years, he has been a pal to needy nuns, wooed a wealthy white coed away from her parents, made angels out of a classroom of English hooligans, and made asses out of Mississippi bigots. Heavily armed with virtues and unburdened by faults, he slithers unscathed through any obstacles that screenwriters

set before him. But now that blacks are more aggressive and noisily proud of their blackness, they expect their screen heroes to follow suit. *The Lost Man*, in which Poitier is a hip-talking militant in a Philadelphia ghetto, is his answer to the critics who have been complaining that he can't play anything but upstanding, turn-the-other-cheek blacks. The critics were right, because he is a bust as a shady black. In a sequence apparently designed to shut up his critics, he strolls down a filthy street, sidestepping garbage and smiling at the ragged black children. Poitier, however, is too aristocratic to be at home in a grimy ghetto. Hip talk, which is ill-suited to the non-hip, does not become him. As a leader in a mysterious militant organization, he masterminds a big holdup, which backfires, forcing him to kill a man before he can escape. Though he is an outlaw, he is more saintly than cold-blooded. One cannot think too harshly of a man who steals from the Establishment to feed and clothe destitute black families. Thus the film never takes its political side seriously; it remains only a thriller, with writer-director Robert Alan Aurthur creating some tense moments during the cops' hectic hunt for the fleeing bandit. One of the many times that he stoops to schmaltz and sensationalism is in the sketchily developed romance between Poitier and the daughter (Joanna Shimkus) of a white liberal lawyer. If Poitier is supposedly such a staunch militant, why is he paired with a white girl? Early in the film there is a hint of an affair between them, but it comes as a surprise when she abandons her rich father to hit the trail with a black fugitive whom she doesn't seem to know very well. Her role is skimpy, implausible, and unconvincingly acted. They end up like Bonnie and Clyde, and Aurthur does all that he can to get us to symphasize with the dead lovers—like having the camera slowly pan over their bloody, dramatically intertwined bodies. All that is missing is a soundtrack voice fervently crooning, "There's a place for us . . ."—Dennis Hunt

topicality; it is one of the few youth films that tries to encompass more than contemporary fads, capturing the exuberance, the clannishness, the innocent lustfulness, the nastiness of teenagers with rare sympathy and economy. But the film lurches out of Perry's control—not because it is rambling and episodic, but because Perry feels nervous about that haphazardness and tries to build to a more dramatic resolution. Some sensational plot twists are contrived—the quartet abandoning a Puerto Rican computer date to a group of toughs (this ruins an otherwise accurately painful sequence of the teenagers playing mercilessly with a man whom they can see only as a sterotype), then Dan's brutal rape of Rhoda while Peter and Sandy hold her down—that give an unpleasantly schematic quality to the film's conclusion. I am predisposed in favor of any movie today that says something *against* young people, but this lurid finale says it with a shrillness that is simply false to the characterizations established earlier. The small cruelties that young people can perform so casually and unthinkingly are very skillfully and convincingly delineated in the first half of the film, but to make us accept so grotesque and deliberate a cruelty as the rape of Rhoda, the whole film would have had to be much less naturalistic, much more bizarre. Until the script betrays them, the performances by Barbara Hershey, Richard Thomas, Bruce Davison, and especially Cathy Burns (as Rhoda) are superb. Perry deserves credit for these performances, and also for a more restrained, less pretentious visual style than he usually provides. He is still a basically clumsy and obvious film-maker, but the dialogue and performances more than compensate this time; in addition, Gerald Hirschfield's photography is so beautiful—and for a change, *pertinently* beautiful (many scenes are bathed in a dazzling, slightly unnatural white light that effectively implies the insularity of the lives of these golden children)—that it hides a multitude of Perry's sins.

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Monterey Pop is basically a simple divertissement: a film substitute for attending a big music festival—glimpses of the major performers (climaxed with a driving and very well photographed and edited Ravi Shankar piece) and the picturesque people who grace such affairs. But the major significance of the film lies in proving once again that a film shot in 16mm and then blown up for 35mm distribution has no problems in playing theater circuits. Both definition and color rendition in *Monterey Pop* are perfectly satisfactory to its intended audience (pretty much anyone under 30—which also happens to be the major audience for *all* films these days). Indeed probably the only audience which might find fault with it would be union cameramen. The lesson of this film, as of Cassavetes's immensely successful *Faces* and the Maysles brothers' *Salesman,* is that 16mm is here to stay as a method of making feature films.—E. C.

More Dead Than Alive. One hardly expects attempted profundity from a Clint Walker Western produced by Aubrey Schenck, but that's what you get here. Indeed, pretensions aside, this is one of the best B-Westerns since Budd Boetticher quit directing Randolph Scott. For character development and intricacy of narrative construction, it renders noteworthy the heretofore unheard names of Robert Sparr (director) and George Schenck (scenarist). Sparr gets from Vincent Price his most rounded characterization since Sam Fuller's old *Baron of Arizona.* Price is a two-bit Wild West Show boss who gives Walker, a convicted killer out on parole, his one steady job. The direction isn't flawless: Price's eventual death at the hands of a young trick artist (Paul Hampton) who is both Walker's rival and fan is done slow motion à la Penn and Peckinpah, needless gimmickry since violence and its effects do not seem to be this otherwise astonishingly erudite little Western's central point. That, rather, is perhaps the inability to ever atone really for past sins: the hand carrying the gun that will ultimately do in Walker to our shock for one of those sins (one of the murders for which Walker was originally sent to prison was of the father of his ultimate killer) is as inevitably forward-pressing as that truckload of toilets in *Lonely Are the Brave.* Of course, the film is a sleeper and is likely to remain so: while large in relative scope, it is small in advertising and distribution. Excepting Andrew Sarris, I know of no "big" reviewer who has acknowledged it. While nothing great, it is sufficiently accomplished to warrant recognition. Sadly, any notice paid it must take into account the subsequent death of its director, Sparr, 57, after a plane crash while scouting locations for his next Schenck production. From *Variety* one learns that Sparr had made "scores of telepix," including two 1957 and 1958 "Maverick" episodes for which he received Emmy nominations. The snuffing out of a career that can justly be tagged no more—but no less—than "promising" carries with it a peculiar frustration in the face of the increasing Hollywood proliferation of hacks.—DAN BATES

The Night of the Following Day, a genuinely peculiar and original film by Hubert Cornfield, sneaked into New York a few months ago with all the welcome of a snake at a garden party. Not even the presence in it of Marlon Brando merited attention. The reviewers dismissed it as a sadistic, ineptly plotted kidnap film. It is nothing of the sort. It is a dream film, in particular the dream of a sexy, mini-skirted, not very bright young lady of about twenty; her dream is a kidnap fantasy, conceived while she is on a plane flying to Paris. We do not learn until the end that what we have been watching is a dream, but this is not a gimmick ending, or a last-minute excuse, but rather the key to the film's entire conception. In the girl's erotic fantasy she is kidnapped by Brando who, in a blond wig, looks like the Brando in *The Young Lions* and sounds like the Brando of *The Wild One* and *On the Waterfront.* The element of self-parody allows Brando to give a broad, vivid performance. The girl also includes in her dream a seamy character played by Richard Boone—a sex maniac who rapes the dreamer, Boone also works with an element of self-parody in character and performance; he comes off as an aging, sinister, comic-grotesque Paladin. The exchanges between Brando and Boone are first-rate examples of macabre humor. A stewardess (Rita Moreno) is transformed into Brando's girlfriend who gets jealous because she thinks Brando is fooling around with the girl. The kidnappers, then, fulfill and flatter the dreamer's subliminal desires and vanities. That this is a dream explains the use of kidnapping film clichés: the familiar motivations of the kidnappers, their inevitable falling out, the complicated machinations for extortion of the ransom, the last-minute panic. As director, Cornfield has not used the dream framework as an easy opportunity for flashy cinematic hijinks: no psychedelic or pop-art colors and fancy editing. Instead, the details are close to the surface texture of reality, with a few things just a shade off: Rita Moreno sniffs drugs through a dollar bill, a policeman maddeningly and improbably keeps

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Popi is a comedy that gets something of the life of Puerto Rican Harlem onto the screen, and does it without the protective falsification of previous liberal movies about poor families. Alan Arkin, as Avram Rodriguez (more on that later), hits his kids when angry, makes love with his girl friend while the kids wait outside, tricks the welfare department, and schemes to give his kids away—which is fairly commonplace among Puerto Rican families and isn't regarded as anything like the moral disaster that most of the audience is likely to consider it. Arthur Hiller's direction of the street scenes produces the suggestion that for two young boys the ghetto is a dangerous but rather good place to grow up: the clutter of discarded furniture on the sidewalks, which to us looks like garbage and which has middle-class audiences clucking and sighing, appears to the boys as an entertaining series of obstacles and variations on the terrain; the mass of people—overcrowding to us—opens up the possibilities of encounter and exchange; and the violence, something terrifying and unprecedented if ever we experience it, is accepted as an ultimate but hardly arbitrary expression of personality, something you take and give back. Of course the movie adopts the point of view of "us," all the while it is expressing these things. As us, as an American, Rodriguez exercises his right to live for and through his sons, which means getting them out of the ghetto somehow. East Harlem is the negation of being an American precisely because it closes off the future of his children. When his scheme fails, and all three return home at the end of the movie, his defeat is experienced by his sons as a victory; they *want* to live there. This kind of thing may seem very elementary, but you don't often see an American movie that allows the audience to hold more than a single assured opinion about any social fact that falls within its purview. Cheers to Tina and Lester Pine, who wrote the screenplay. Alan Arkin is also quite good, but I feel badly about his being in the film at all. He's the only one who could do such an impersonation, and with his marvelous energy and sense of detail he's the next best thing to a real Puerto Rican actor—which was exactly what was needed. With a Puerto Rican actor in the part, Rodriguez's scheme to pass off his sons as Cuban refugees would probably have been played straight for its desperation and craziness; with Arkin there, one has the feeling that everyone could relax and take the project less seriously, and Rodriguez's attempted hoax—played for laughs, most of them feeble—comes out Wacky and Lovable, something out of *I Love Lucy* or *Gilligan's Island.*—DAVID DENBY

La Prisonniere. While researching *La Prisonnière,* Henri-Georges Clouzot discovered that in Paris alone there were several thousand men who (like Stan, one of the movie's protagonists) satisfy their perverse sexual needs by photographing nubile young women in submissive poses. He takes things a step further by making Stan (Laurent Terzieff) a hip art dealer anxious to establish an "art supermarket" whose assembly lines will dispense shimmering metal constructs, kinetic sculptures, colored blocks, and scintillating trompe-l'oeil designs—chic, perishable objects for the masses. As he sees it, in a world whose artworks are no different from its clothes, decors, cars, or windowshades, why haggle over the concept of "meaning" or expect any? Clouzot's peering camera, besides turning these artifacts into hard, glittering movie images, subtly uses extreme close-ups and fast cutting to translate trees, traffic, scenery, people into semi-op montages that visually state the salient qualities of his characters' lives. Stan lures into his twilight existence a pretty, plumpish film editor called Josée (Elizabeth Wiener), the mistress of one of his customers. Josée seems the very model of liberated woman, but Stan obliges her to face her capacity and eagerness for perversion. Soon she participates in his photographic sessions. In the movie's best scene, Stan's camera pores over a sweating, wriggling hired girl while the aroused Josée watches until, mortified by her pleasure, she flees. She is "la prisonnière" of the bourgeois mentality, which to Stan and doubtless to Clouzot as well means a pathological obsession with cleanliness born of a refusal to acknowledge the impulses of the flesh. However, the director fails to link art (or pseudo-

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Popi is a comedy that gets something of the life of Puerto Rican Harlem onto the screen, and does it without the protective falsification of previous liberal movies about poor families. Alan Arkin, as Avram Rodriguez (more on that later), hits his kids when angry, makes love with his girl friend while the kids wait outside, tricks the welfare department, and schemes to give his kids away—which is fairly commonplace among Puerto Rican families and isn't regarded as anything like the moral disaster that most of the audience is likely to consider it. Arthur Hiller's direction of the street scenes produces the suggestion that for two young boys the ghetto is a dangerous but rather good place to grow up: the clutter of discarded furniture on the sidewalks, which to us looks like garbage and which has middle-class audiences clucking and sighing, appears to the boys as an entertaining series of obstacles and variations on the terrain; the mass of people—overcrowding to us—opens up the possibilities of encounter and exchange; and the violence, something terrifying and unprecedented if ever we experience it, is accepted as an ultimate but hardly arbitrary expression of personality, something you take and give back. Of course the movie adopts the point of view of "us," all the while it is expressing these things. As us, as an American, Rodriguez exercises his right to live for and through his sons, which means getting them out of the ghetto somehow. East Harlem is the negation of being an American precisely because it closes off the future of his children. When his scheme fails, and all three return home at the end of the movie, his defeat is experienced by his sons as a victory; they *want* to live there. This kind of thing may seem very elementary, but you don't often see an American movie that allows the audience to hold more than a single assured opinion about any social fact that falls within its purview. Cheers to Tina and Lester Pine, who wrote the screenplay. Alan Arkin is also quite good, but I feel badly about his being in the film at all. He's the only one who could do such an impersonation, and with his marvelous energy and sense of detail he's the next best thing to a real Puerto Rican actor—which was exactly what was needed. With a Puerto Rican actor in the part, Rodriguez's scheme to pass off his sons as Cuban refugees would probably have been played straight for its desperation and craziness; with Arkin there, one has the feeling that everyone could relax and take the project less seriously, and Rodriguez's attempted hoax—played for laughs, most of them feeble—comes out Wacky and Lovable, something out of *I Love Lucy* or *Gilligan's Island.*—DAVID DENBY

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Riverrun is John Korty's contemporary variation on one of the oldest of triangles—but one little dealt with in film or fiction (perhaps because of its touchiness): the rivalry of father and lover for a beautiful girl. The girl is pregnant, and the young couple have left the turmoil of Berkeley for the misty green countryside north of San Francisco—living on a coastal sheep ranch and trying to get back to fundamental realities. Their style is the quiet, serious, honest style of most middleclass youth trying to cope with a corrupt world. Into their delicately balanced life intrudes the girl's merchant-seaman father, bringing with him out-of-date ideas and prejudices, memories of an embittered marriage (which flash in à la *The Pawnbroker*), and intense emotional demands. The resulting tensions come to a riskily dramatic birth-and-death climax, salvaged by an astringent ending. Korty's latest film is again gorgeously photographed, and its portrait of the couple's world is a gentle, personal one, far from the over-wrought fictions of Hollywood's youth scramble.—E. C.

Salesman, a direct-cinema film about a group of Bible salesmen and their small-town, lower-middle-class Catholic customers, poses anew the basic problem of *cinéma-vérité* and similar nonfiction films: what is the "organizing principle"? Every film, dramatic or documentary, has some dialectic which governs implicitly why things happen or are shown in the manner and order we see them. Even mundane documentaries, if they are any good, prove to have some subterranean logic of this sort, and so do poetic non-narrative films. Direct cinema, with its reluctance to meddle with its subjects any more than is absolutely necessary to get them to let you film them, is at the mercy of the subjects to provide a logic for the picture. Thus, for instance, a film about a draft-eligible youth would have an inherent logic. Either he will escape to Canada, or go to jail, or go into the army, or perhaps get rejected. A film following his activities, even apparently trivial ones, would thus have a distinct shape and tension; above all, it would have an ending. But the Maysles in their choices of subject have consistently dared to go against this principle: in *Salesman,* as in their portraits of Nehru and Joe Levine, they have chosen to deal with people who are simply going on from day to day. The Bible salesmen are wearing their lives away on the treadmill, as they have done for years and will go on doing. After 15 minutes of *Salesman,* thus, we are well aware of the basic lines of force in their lives; and because of the lack of tension inherent in the material, we settle down to assimilate the film as information rather than drama—we take it as an educational experience. And the film *is* informative, if you have never watched salesmen operate, never attended sales meetings, etc. This means that the only organizing principle operative is curiosity. But an intellectual concern like curiosity is not a very strong one when confronted with a 90-minute film; we're not *that* curious about salesmen, even if we take them to be typical of the American condition, fellow-sufferers in the wasteland, or whatnot. No doubt sensing this, the Maysles and editor Charlotte Zwerin have attempted to provide some dramatic line by centering on Paul, the most cynical of the

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Shock Troop. Several years ago a young Greek named Costa-Gavras made his first film, a French mystery called *The Sleeping Car Murder*. Filming his own script, the director achieved a unique balance in his handling of well-known movie people. He did not coyly pretend they were nobodies, neither did he permit grotesque *maquillage* or gratuitous trademark bits; rather, their entrances and exits were struck like character keynotes in a most complex action score. Such combined force and efficiency would not have been possible without their slightly giddy identifiability, and in turn made possible the speed, density, and wealth of nuance that was achieved in the film. Now Costa-Gavras is back with some of the same players—Michel Piccoli, Jacques Perrin—and a countryside more: Jean-Claude Brialy, Gerard Blain, Bruno Cremer, Charles Vanel, Claude Brasseur, Pierre Clementi, Albert Remy—too many even to make the credit titles of *Shock Troop*. *Shock Troop* begins at a dead run and hardly ever lets down. At a glance it seems a minor film—as *Sleeping Car Murder* also seemed, at a glance. A band of resistance fighters play hell with the Nazis in a heavily occupied sector of postcard villages and pastoral landscapes. During a raid on a German stronghold they liberate thirteen prisoners where they expect to find an even dozen. Is the odd man, Piccoli, the apolitical innocent he claims to be, or a planted agent? While the company makes its lightning strikes and hairbreadth escapes down country lanes, the thirteenth man is carried along. The problem of what to do with him becomes the means of exposing a whole political spectrum: Brialy, a rabid Marxist, wants to kill him outright to protect the cause; Blain disagrees, certain of nothing except that he cannot kill a man who may be innocent; Cremer, the leader, finds it disconcertingly hard to make any decision in the matter. Throughout all, Piccoli preserves an increasingly desperate calm, threatened by Germans and partisans both. An ambiguous last shot suggests that, although he has got free, in time of war there can be no political man. Costa-Gavras's characterizations are entirely devoid of the fussiness sometimes found in his earlier film (Montand's games with a menthol inhaler, for example). And when, from an aerial vantage, we watch a truckful of guerrillas wind down a mountain road, while a German convoy approaches on a lower level, the camera plane turns with the truck into a handy cul-de-sac a split second before the convoy rounds the last bend. Few are the viewers who do not hold their breath during the long, lovely, intricate shot that makes us all involuntary partisans. It is a movie of virtually physical involvement. Its warfare is workmanlike —a sense reinforced by that undeviating forward motion. Its images of war as a dirty game are ferocious without being gory. While the camera looks down on a misty valley, a trapped guerrilla moves toward the enemy to surrender, suddenly leaping on one of his captors and destroying both of them with a grenade; the act as witnessed through a telescopic lens is oddly beautiful. Although he works in familiar B-film territory, Costa Gavras is derivative of nobody. All the sadder, then, that his films will be seen by few of the people who might remember them. United Artists is circulating only atrociously dubbed prints of *Shock Troop*, treating it strictly as second-feature, grind-house stuff. But even if subtitled copies were available, few art houses would be discerning enough to play them. What will happen to Costa-Gavras' new film, Z, remains to be seen. His Cannes award should protect it from mishandling. Probably the best hope for his earlier films is that this fine, unique director will not be overlooked by film-society and 16mm programmers, who should go out of their way to design a schedule with a place for Costa-Gavras's damn good cinema.—RICHARD T. JAMESON

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That Cold Day in the Park. Obscure dramas, laden with opaque relationships, carefully developed (yet still incomprehensible) motifs, latent themes, and inexplicable deeds, seem to be the newest cinematic fad, as the recent films of Losey, Clouzot, and Chabrol could indicate. The latest and by far the worst specimen is *That Cold Day in the Park,* directed by Robert Altman from Gillian Freeman's script out of a novel. The movie shows a lonely, thirtyish virgin (Sandy Dennis) setting up a sullen, rain-drenched youth (Michael Burns) in her luxurious apartment so that he can dry and warm himself. Since he says not a word to her, she takes him for a mute, gives him presents and lodging, and hopes, *Collector*-like, that he will love and make love to her. But, when she goes out—to shop, bowl, or be fitted with a diaphragm, he skips down to a houseboat to watch his sleek sister's lover bounce her in their bed. Then the trio eat cookies (or something). Sister later comes calling at brother's new home and insists on taking a bath right before his eyes. So he joins her amid the bubbles. When our spinster learns of her guest's daytime escapades, she boards up his window and locks him in. Then she picks up a whore for him and then . . . The movie is a stupefying clutter of irrelevancies. We get a lot of hard-breathing hints about the siblings—their link to her lover, their strange home life, their incestuous dalliances. All this is kinkily amusing for a while, until we realize that none of it will be either probed or related to the rest of the story. Altman's direction runs to fancy reflection shots, blurry transitions, and ponderous camera movement. He strains to be ornate but cannot relate his devices to his heroine's subjectivity. Whereas Losey gave us uneasy comedy, Clouzot compassionate dissection, and Chabrol cool elegance, Altman supplies logy murkraking. The sole provocative scene contains the repressed woman's description of her elderly suitor; she finds his isolation and suffering repulsive and ugly, even though her problems are exactly the same. Additional virtues are the interior lighting of Lazlo Kovacs and some of the acting. Surprisingly, Sandy Dennis largely abandons her tremulous tics and gives a firm, disciplined performance, for which Susanne Benton's lush sexiness and knowing look provide the perfect contrast. No doubt Altman deserves some credit for this, but to become a good director he must stop mistaking half-baked mannerisms for psychological profundity. It is one thing to stylize emotions or to seek metaphors, outlandish or otherwise, for their terrifying extremities; it is quite another to make freaks of your characters, as through loneliness were an exotic disease.

—MICHAEL DEMPSEY

The Touchables and **Three in the Attic.** The modishness of popular cinema is best illustrated by the influence of outrageous sartorial fantasies on just about every age-group seen on film (Carnaby Street is universal now), and the insinuating merging of Lelouchian film style and elements found in *The Graduate,* with pop-rock vocalizing behind every seductive image. One should be prepared for the emergence of new cinema myths, but the simultaneous appearance of the British comedy, *The Touchables* (directed by Robert Freeman) and our own *Three In The Attic* (directed by Richard Wilson) leads to the conclusion regarding the contemporary battle of the sexes that the swinging world of London is not too far from the lush fantasies of Beverly Hills' "beautiful people." Both films dramatize a discotheque-dream of sexual rape and feminine indomitability; the handsome young heroes in each film are kidnapped, held love-prisoner, and "forced" to submit to the vengeful physicalities of several beautiful girls. If memory serves, it seems that the French already had a go at this sort of escapade back in 1958, when Alain Delon was sexually ambushed by three heroines in Michel Boisrond's film, *Faibles Femmes.* If, in the future, we ever wonder what bizarre reveries have been touched off by *Playboy,* then these two films must be cited. Surprisingly, the films are quite entertaining and harmless, with *The Touchables* gaining a slight edge over its American counterpart, and this is chiefly due to Alan Pudney's superb photography and the director's unswerving success in making the entire thing a mocking comedy with satirical undertones. Freeman is a refugee from television commercials, and he is aware of the impact of carefully wrought tableaux, those which best illustrate the wish-fulfillments of middle-class fantasies. His four heroines represent different types of London "birds," and their personalities are vivid enough to keep any spectator from being bored. Besides, they live in a giant bubble-dome in the country, a place where a life of fairytale languor and sensual pleasure centers around a large carousel-bed where the abducted pop-singer, Christian (David Anthony) is kept prisoner. The film is amusingly satirical in the first part (a party in Tussaud's, with wax figures of Michael Caine, Kenedy, Queen Victoria and DeGaulle staring round at the swingers; a society wrestling match, with one of the fighters in red ballet shoes, etc.), and

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decidedly lyrical in the second half with its slow-motion gambols among piles of pink and gold pillows, and pastoral or psychedelic effects used quite startingly and colorfully. The last part of the film is unduly violent—but it is most compelling during a chase sequence, when the girls pursue Christian on horseback through overgrown marsh country. There is some odd business about a kinky underworld mob, led by a "gay" Negro wrestler, who *also* wants Christian. *The Touchables* is among the most successful of the recent light comedies from Britain, not at all pretentious, and very revealing about the many-sidedness of life among the Mods.

As for *Three In The Attic,* its intentions are slightly more prurient. It is an ode to the physical and histrionic attributes of actor Christopher Jones. Jones portrays a collegian named Paxton Quigley, a notoriously successful seducer of nubile coeds and possessor of some measure of intellectual guile. When three of his conquests discover his sexual chicanery, they lock him in a sorority house attic and systematically begin to screw him to death. Let it be said at this point that they *almost* succeed, but a wise house-mother and the triumph of true love prevent such a satisfactory denouement. Out of this balderdash emerges a good bad film which is of some sociological importance. It is an excellent example of Hollywood's continued efforts to create another James Dean, and, if Christopher Jones is given a proper script, he is definitely it. The resemblances in face and voice are often uncanny, and the subtle use of camera and dialogue, in his case, have given him the appurtenances of a male sex symbol that Dean never possessed until his cult made him a posthumous deity. The performance of Judy Pace, an attractive Negro actress, is a staggering example of the way in which black artists can betray themselves into being sterotypes or vulgarizations of human behavior. The Negro woman as sex symbol is a boring cliché by now, and when someone dares to adopt a honeychile accent when enticing a white man—only to speak normally when among blacks—then one might as well revive the lost artistry of Nina Mae McKinney in *Hallelujah* or *Pinky* as exemplars of cinematic progress. The march toward total nudity moves further in this film: not only are the three young ladies given ample perusal, but Jones's naked posterior is revealed as a matter of course, so that those volumes by Lo Duca on eroticism in the cinema will soon have a new edition on the male. Or will spectators become inured to seeing the varied anatomies of ecstasy "in toto"?—ALBERT JOHNSON

True Grit, directed by Henry Hathaway and produced by Hal Wallis, is the best forties picture of 1969, and perhaps an indication that there is still a certain life left in the old Hollywood corpse. It's a performance- and dialogue-centered picture, utterly without redeeming cinematic importance, but somehow its artistic shiftlessness is almost endearing, despite the agonizing slow pace of the shooting and editing. Like John Wayne, as a tough, one-eyed old marshal who falls off his horse and catches the truculent murderer (Jeff Corey) more through luck than true grit, the picture has a kind of besotted satisfaction about it. Besides, the supposedly 14-year-old heroine delivers her campy archaic lines with all the aplomb of an elephant playing hopscotch. It may be clean, but it's the best fun around.—E. C.

Winning and **Number One** are two attempts to humanize the sports movie, customarily one of the most mindless and debased of Hollywood genres. *Winning,* an auto-racing movie, is more commercial, and it is easy enough to mock for its plot clichés and corny lines of dialogue, but it is just as easy to like. The characters are not terribly complicated, but at least we believe in them and even care about them—largely because of the performances of Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, and Richard Thomas, who plays Miss Woodward's teenage son. In many ways the Newmans are not a very likely screen couple; we never quite understand why he is attracted to her. Woodward's image is usually a variation on the ordinary, small-town American woman—in this film an Avis girl and Indy driver's wife; but Newman can never help seeming *extraordinary,* a sensitive outsider. He doesn't fit easily into this rather simple role, or to put it another way, his face always hints of more interesting perceptions in the character than the writing is able to explore. Still, given the problems of the casting, both stars bring so much care and inventiveness to their performances—in roles that could easily have been walked through—that they always hold our interest. A couple of scenes in which young Thomas tries to understand the breakup of his mother's second marriage are, thanks to the three actors, more delicate, observant, and touching than we have any right to expect from this kind of movie. The rest is thin—a quick courtship across the country, adultery and reconciliation, rivalry on the track—but filmed with great flair by a young TV-trained director, James Goldstone, who seems to me the only promising director

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to have emerged from television in years. Nothing he does could be called brilliant or innovative, but most everything is enhanced by grace, style, modest but thoughtful imagination. This is a Universal picture, and every shot has a slightly unnatural pallor that is the studio's hallmark, so Goldstone's ability to keep us interested in *looking* at his movie is all the more impressive. He has an intuitive feeling for the language of film—whether he wants to convey the tawdry Americana of the Indianapolis 500, the violence of the race itself, the loneliness of the hero at a victory celebration—that makes his next movie worth looking forward to.

Number One, listlessly directed by Tom Gries, needs some of the same flair; an awkward, old-fashioned flashback dissolve technique is enough to make anyone head for the exit. But looking beneath the surface, one can admire the skeleton of a potentially serious and important film. *Winning* is constructed around the Indianapolis race itself—a sequence that lasts almost thirty minutes—but *Number One,* about an aging football player's last season, provides little of the action that the sports enthusiast wants to see. This is an austere, even somber film, and I can't think of another film that deals in quite this way with the crisis in a professional athlete's life when he begins to lose command of his body. Sports movies used to ignore this crisis and confine their canvasses to rousing moments of glory, while in recent years the movie athlete has become simply a caricatured symbol of the Establishment (see *The Graduate* or *Goodbye, Columbus*). So this bleak but sympathetic portrait is doubly unfashionable; it won't please the beer-bellied sports fans *or* the hip college students. The film's writing usually seems honest, as far as it goes—whether examining the callousness of the team manager, the anemic jobs that the hero has to look forward to on retirement, the young black quarterback who is all too eager to push him out, or his uneasy relationship with his wife, whose own career has been blooming while his has been waning. But nothing is taken quite far enough. Most of the scenes are a little too clearly labelled, and then cut off. Charlton Heston's performance is genuine, though; he seems the right age, and he looks slightly exhausted and humiliated too—a sensitive portrait of a man losing hold of the only skill that once supplied his life with passion. We know that some retiring football players have more glamorous options, but the great majority are still probably in the position of this character. Heston and the film as a whole give him surprising dignity.

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NEW PERIODICAL

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Books

GROVE PRESS SCRIPT BOOKS

General Editor: Robert Hughes. (New York: Grove Press, 1969. $1.95 per volume)

The four books listed below are the best recreations of films yet to be achieved in book form. They will probably be surpassed only when 8mm or EVR copies of films are available for home use and study. Each volume presents a script based on the film itself rather than drawn from the working papers of the film-makers, as is customary with script books. The advantage of this system, obviously, is that it provides an accurate record of what is really in the films—an aim often only fitfully accomplished otherwise. (Moreover, in the case of *Masculin Fem-*

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HOLLYWOOD IN THE . . .

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The first of this three-volume group of books, David Robinson's *Hollywood in the Twenties,* sets off with an attempt to place the production of its decade in a number of historical contexts: political, economic, cultural, moral, communications, theatrical, and finally, industrial. After thirty pages (of a 170-page book) one begins to wonder why the author spends so much time dwelling on ancillary considerations, when suddenly it becomes clear: to Robinson, these aren't ancillary considerations at all—this is the way he looks at old movies: "The fascination of these films today is to see the age's own image of itself, to see how the films dramatised and fostered the aspirations of the business age. . . . "

For some odd reason, all three of these books share what I am tempted to call Robinson's critical perversity. All three are essentially aimless, wandering lists of actors, directors, cameramen, art directors, studio bosses, and what have you. Keeping to the twenties book as an example, we notice that once Robinson abandons his sociocultural-etc. approach, all semblance of critical order goes out of it; it immediately loses its life's blood and gives way to a jumble of names and titles put together without much consideration or justification. Most of it amounts to tired old gossip and gleanings from contemporary trade journals, enlivened here and there by snatches of conversations or interviews or autobiography, for which the reader is terribly grateful. Throughout the three books, the monotony created by title after title followed by one or two sentences' worth of summary or value judgments eventually throws the reader into a state bordering on desperation. For an example from Robinson's book, take the entire entry on Chaplin's *The Kid:* "An odd mixture of rich comedy and victorian pathos (the unmarried mother is introduced with the title "Her only sin—motherhood"), it aroused tremendous enthusiasm in audiences all over the world, and grossed over two and a half million dollars for First National. Jackie Coogan became one of the most characteristic idols of the twenties."

That entry comes in the middle of an "extended" consideration of Chaplin, but it is virtually indistinguishable from every other item in the book. Stan Laurel, in cinematic terms the greatest and most innovative director and editor of silent comedy, is treated this way (again a complete entry): "Another important director of comedy who made his début about this time, though his real importance only becomes clear with advent of talkies, was Stan Laurel, a veteran of the Fred Karno variety company and of the Roach comedies before he accidentally teamed up with Oliver Hardy in 1927."

Robinson's task was obviously complicated by his inability to see many of the films he purports to discuss, but that problem doesn't form the real core of his trouble, which comes from his lack of a solid critical approach. That lack is shared to some extent by John Baxter, who wrote the second book in the series, *Hollywood in the Thirties.* On the positive side, both can serve the novice as a sort of Baedecker to who was where doing what during the thirties, and provide him with a neat pronouncement or two on just about everybody in and around

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Hollywood for that crucial moment at the cocktail party. Fortunately for the person who wants to go a little farther than that, Baxter's book proves to be somewhat more enlightening than Robinson's. In his introduction, Baxter announces one major working principle: he will devote lots of space to questions of technique in his study. Unfortunately, he abandoned that resolution almost as quickly as he set it down on paper. The book consists almost entirely of highly generalized descriptions and sketchy plot summaries. If one were to remove all the genuine technical discussion from it, the book wouldn't be lighter by more than a couple of pages.

Baxter's principal theses are (1) that the studio system, like any factory system, produced work that was more typical of the factory than of any individual craftsman in its employ, which (2) "argues against the applicability of the *auteur* theory or any variation of it." In order to demonstrate his points, he sets off on a rapid tour through the Metro, Paramount, and Warner lots, characterizing the typical product of each and commenting on how it got to be that way. Many readers will be tempted to do violence to the book while they're making their way through the first couple of chapters, which are extremely exasperating in their foreign-press-corps superficiality. But the persevering reader will find to his relief that the author picks up steam, enthusiasm, and knowledge when he hits the Warner lot, and pretty much maintains a reasonable level of information from there on through his examination of various individuals and genres important in the decade.

Despite his studio tours and generalizations, Baxter doesn't really have his heart in his rejection of *auteurisme*, since he constantly uses such terms as "characteristic" and "typical" to describe the work of the directors he considers throughout the book. Furthermore, he is decidedly at his most thoughtful when dealing straightforwardly with directors as *auteurs*, although even there the severe space limitations he observes make for unreasonable condensation and oversimplification, such as this chilling kiss-off of John Ford: 'Too often, he sacrifices a film with one hand and saves it with the other. It is only his skill as a technician and director of male actors that sustains his tangled career."

There's lots to argue about in such evaluations, especially when you get to pronouncements like this: "Inescapably one of the best directors ever to emerge in the cinema, Michael Curtiz lays a substantial claim to being the greatest director of the thirties." Now some people would doubtlessly agree with this coronation—as a matter of fact, my 1967 edition of the Almanac lists Curtiz among the "champion of champion" directors from 1936, the time of the list's inception, to 1961, the year before his death, with only three years in which he didn't place, and with the astounding record of being number one from 1942 to 1959 without a single lapse! If box-office success is the sole gauge of movie-making, then we would all have to agree with Baxter. But since that happily isn't the case we can instead judge Curtiz on the merits of his films as they meet the test of time, and I somehow doubt that a serious film study group in the United States will soon put on a retrospective program of Curtiz. As Andrew Sarris so succinctly put it, "If many of the early Curtiz films are hardly worth remembering, none of the later ones are even worth seeing."

The third book in the series, *Hollywood in the Forties*, shares the problems of the earlier books, even to the irony of using a production still from *Casablanca*, Curtiz's one flukey masterpiece, on its cover. Authors Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg reassert that Curtiz is "greatest of all," leaving virtually in the lurch such "minor" directors as Hitchcock, Welles, Hawks, Ford, and Huston (Walter Huston gets mentioned more than his son in this study). But instead of indulging in the pot-pourri approach of the first two volumes, here the writers have adopted a consistent critical approach at least in outline: organization by genre. Unfortunately for both the book and the entirely valid notion of genre studies, the writers fail to provide strong generic analyses of the works, which still end up treated in a few sentences that concentrate almost exclusively on plot or meaningless generalization. Here's a typical example of that sort of pointless adjective-mongering: "This was magnificent, passionate, full-throated film-making, aided immeasurably by the contributions of photographers Joseph Walker and Joseph Biroc, and by the editing of William Hornbeck." If you can learn anything from that sort of writing, don't bother to read the rest of this review. Get the books instead.

All in all, the forties book produces a set of extremely weird values. One page after putting down *Citizen Kane* for everything but Welles's acting ("Welles was not yet the technical equal of a Capra or Curtiz"), we learn that Irving Rapper's *Adventures of Mark Twain* is "perhaps the most impressive of all Forties large-scale biopics . . . " John Huston, in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, "had really little to say and was not especially involved with his characters or their predicaments." The second part of that pronouncement could lead to volumes of comment on its trivial view of art,

and the first part is easily refuted by anyone who has paid the slightest attention to the thematic integrity of Huston's *oeuvre* from his first screenplay on. George Marshall's *Murder, He Says* receives the same amount of space as *Kane*, but a great deal more enthusiasm, and Mitchell Leisen's *Since You Went Away* gets elevated to the rank of "one of the Forties' masterpieces." The longest section of the book centered on a single person deals with producer Val Lewton. Although it figures among the best commentaries I've seen on Lewton's work, it's very odd indeed that Lewton should receive this sustained attention when it is withheld from so many directors of obviously greater importance.

Indeed, probably the most intriguing thing about these books has to do with their value systems. I must confess that I am still somewhat in the dark over their concepts of film aesthetics. I know what they think is good and bad, but I really don't know why they think that. Surely anybody who takes film and criticism seriously must agree that a critic's values are more important and more enlightening to the reader than his value judgments on individual films. The values revealed in these books seem haphazardly and capriciously applied—Welles condemned because some of his process shots appear to be shaky after you've looked at the film long enough, Flynn praised because he "wore period clothes well, turned in some very acceptable swordsmanship, and exuded an air of devil-may-care *joie de vivre*." What does it all add up to? Some impressions, some partial plot summaries, lots of adjectives, and piles of value judgments. You can learn a little bit about individual films, a little more about studio traditions, practically nothing about directors or their creative trends, and absolutely nothing about film aesthetics. There's scarcely a provocative thought (as opposed to outrageous statements) in the whole works, and I have a strong feeling that the lack is due to the writers' inability to come up with a viable approach to the problem of dealing with films in terms of decades rather than as the artistic production of their creators. But, then, one wonders why did they even try?—R. C. DALE

LISTINGS

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Filmed Books and Plays. By A. G. S. Easer. (New York: British Book Center, 1969. $11.50) An unannotated list of books and plays from which films have been made, 1928-1967.

Exploring the Film. By William Kuhns and Robert Stanley. (Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum, 1968. No price given) A textbook aimed at the high-school film courses that are steadily spreading across the country, this is a largely concrete and down-to-earth treatment, avoiding the rigidity and codification that are the curse of so many texts; it will not stop students from liking movies. A teacher's booklet is also available.

Thalberg: Life and Legend. By Bob Thomas. (New York: Doubleday, 1969, $7.95) A blowsily anecdotal book: its first chapter begins, "Why should he have become the architect of the American film?" but if you think there should be no way to go after that but up, you're wrong. Even the irrelevant details have a way of seeming dubious. (Is that photo of the genius's birthplace really the "brownstone" the text calls it? Hasn't Thomas heard about Stroheim's "military career" being phoney?) After a few pages of Thomas's twaddle, the reader ceases to wonder whether Thalberg could really have been interesting—even if, as seems likely, his eminence was simply due to his being a sensible, intelligent, cool business head in an industry largely populated by erratic monomaniacs. What remains from Thalberg today, aside from the legend of MGM profitability in his day, is slight: he produced Vidor's *Big Parade* and *Hallelujah*, Clarence Brown's *Anna Christie* with Garbo; he let the Marx Brothers make *A Night at the Opera;* he flubbed the chance to do anything with Keaton, he probably hurt Stroheim's *Foolish Wives,* and when confronted with the decision on what to do about a really outstanding film, Stroheim's *Greed,* he capitulated to Mayer and set a studio cutter hacking away at it. But he built MGM into the biggest film factory ever: a process of some historical importance, upon which this thoroughly trivial book offers no perspective whatever.—E.C.

Jean-Luc Godard. Edited by Toby Mussman. (New York: Dutton, 1968. $2.45) A collection of articles and interviews; Godard's own talk and writing is amply represented, and especially intriguing.

The Movies, Mr. Griffith, and Me. By Lillian Gish, with Ann Pinchot. (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1969. $7.95) A charming and apparently quite accurate autobiography of one of Griffith's leading ladies; good at conveying the atmosphere of early movie production.

With Eisenstein in Hollywood. By Ivor Montagu. (New York: International Publishers, 1969. Paper, $1.95) A chatty account of a disheartening episode in which, nonetheless, a good deal of fun was had by all. About half the book is the scripts of *Sutter's Gold* and *An American Tragedy,* Eisenstein's unproduced Hollywood projects.

The Cinema of Fritz Lang. By Paul M. Jensen. (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1969.) A thorough, non-idolatrous, largely thematic study.

Bluff Your Way in the Cinema. By Ken Wlaschin. (London: Wolfe, 1969. 5s.) A "bluffer's guide" to social one-upmanship without effort; surprisingly informed, often funny, and chastening.

New Cinema in Britain. By Roger Manvell. (New York: Dutton, 1969. $1.95) Superquick survey with lots of pictures.

The Great Funnies: A History of Film Comedy. By David Robinson. (New York: Dutton, 1969. $1.95) Like the above, essentially a very heavily illustrated article, inflated to book format, and inevitably very cursory.

Feature Films on 8mm and 16mm. Compiled and edited by James L. Limbacher. (New York: Educational Film Library Assn., 250 W. 57th St., NY 10019. $7.50) Second edition of an essential title index.

Billy Wilder. By Axel Madsen. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969. Paper, $1.95) A rather quirkish study of a director whose stock is lower than it ought to be; Madsen underates the powerful *Ace in the Hole* and his estimate of recent Wilder follows the French line in which *The Apartment* is seen as better than *Some Like It Hot.*

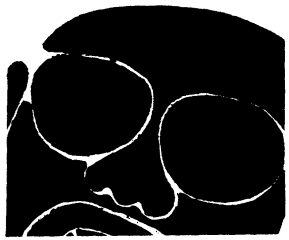
Censorship of the Movies. By Richard S. Randall. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968. $7.95) Traces the history, organization, and operation of state and local censorship, and discusses religious pressure-groups and the industry's Code. Despite the legal advances documented, the study may be a little sanguine.

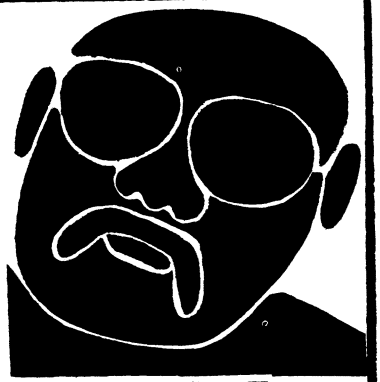
The Western: An Illustrated Guide. By Allen Eyles. (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1968. $2.95)

Federico Fellini. By Gilbert Salachas. (New York: Crown, 1969. $2.95) Contains some amusing anecdotal material, but the lead essay making up about a quarter of the book is rhapsodic and, to speak frankly, idiotic: "One must accept or reject Fellinism and all its works . . . The esthetic of the cineast bursts upon us, and conflagration leaves us stupefied." The rest of the book, collected reviews and remarks of Fellini himself, is readable but hardly essential.

Signs and Meaning in the Cinema. By Peter Wollen. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969. $1.95) A sometimes suggestive but still very sketchy attempt to apply structural analysis and semiology to films.

Keaton. By David Robinson. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969. $1.95) A detailed analysis, tracing Keaton's astonishing virtuosity of technique and construction through many of his best films, and stressing the sophistication and rigor of the film-style side of his work.





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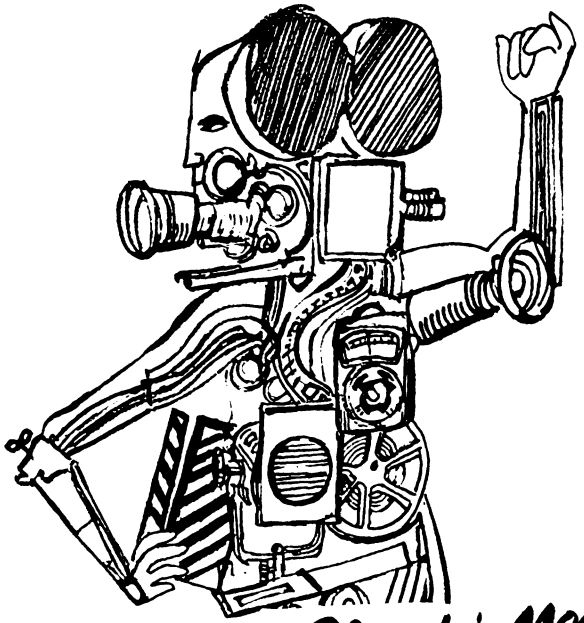

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