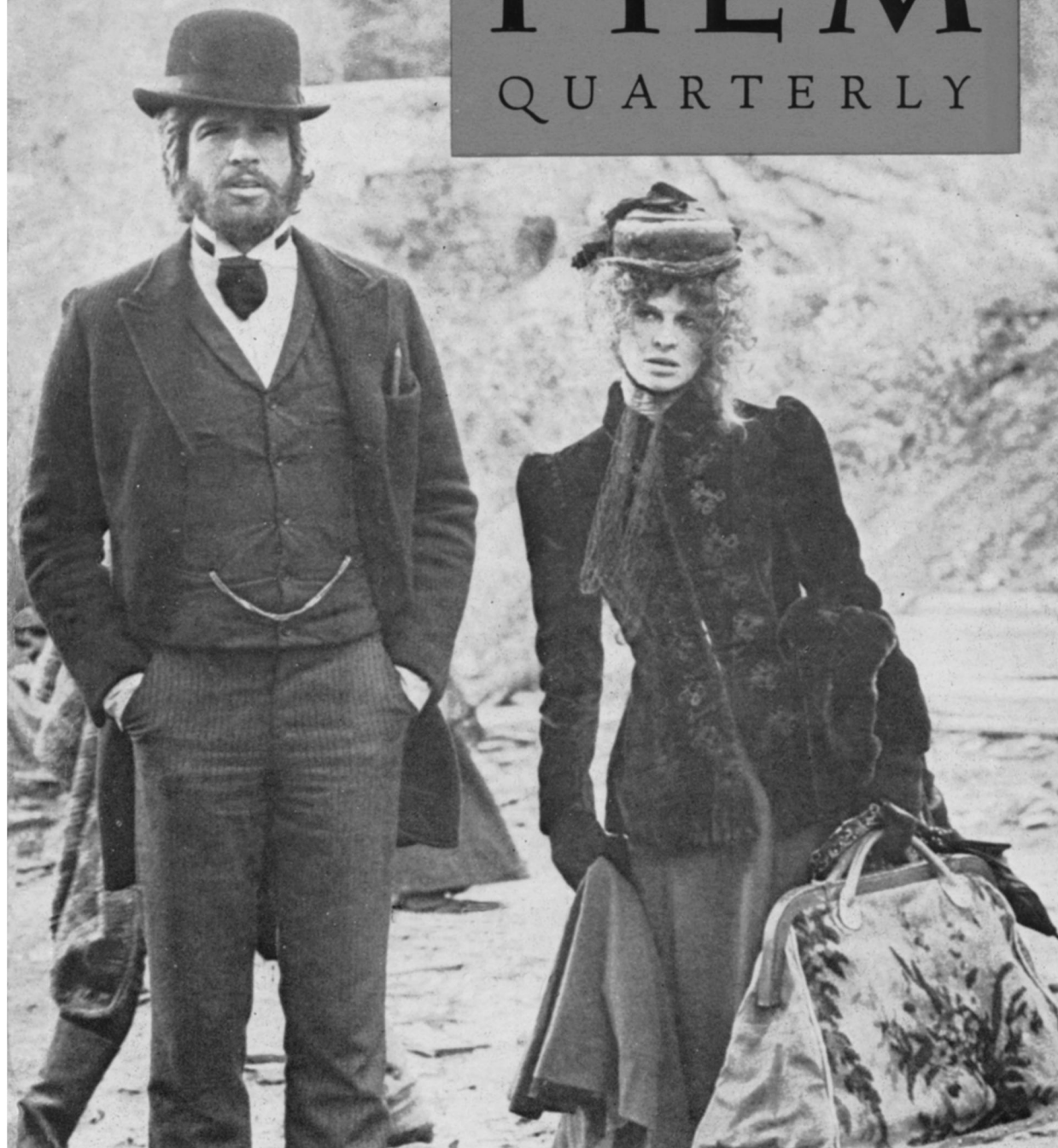


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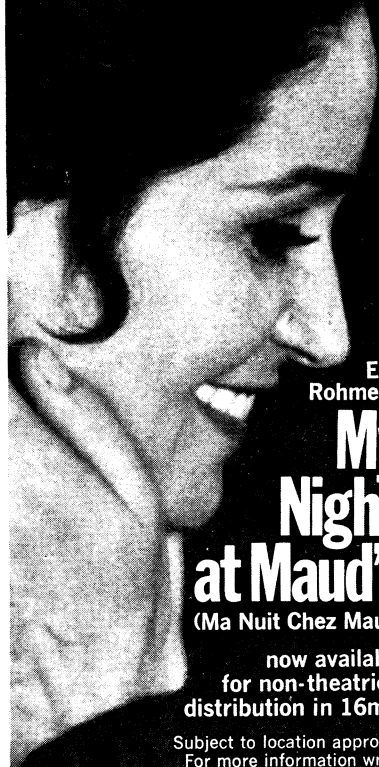
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SOME BLUNT TALK ABOUT MONEY

We all have plenty of high prices to complain about, and no one can be expected to enjoy hearing the sordid details of somebody else's money problems. Nonetheless, since *Film Quarterly* is in a position where we may soon be forced to raise our price, let me outline some of the brutal realities faced by any specialized periodical—in film or other fields.

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Film journals thus manage to survive precariously, when they survive at all. *Film Quarterly's* operating expenses are ridiculously small compared with those of commercial magazines. The staff consists of one editor who is paid a half-time salary, one 5-hour-per-week assistant, and a share of the time of three subscription staff members. Our printing is done, like most university-press printing, on the basis of highly competitive bidding, and we do not indulge in luxurious paper or expensive designers. (We do, however, pay our contributors a rate which approaches that of small general periodicals.) Nonetheless, in the general inflationary rush some of our costs have risen, and we are now under considerable pressure to raise prices.

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ers are young people, students, and beginning filmmakers—not the academically well-established readers of most scholarly journals. We also fear, of course, the familiar vicious circle which lies in wait behind price rises: smaller sales, higher costs, still higher prices. . . . So we have prepared a careful and detailed budget analysis which shows that if we can raise our subscription list by 500 and our newsstand and bookstores sales by 500, and if we carry out certain small printing economies, and if we streamline our subscription work by requiring payments to come in with subscription orders, we can just barely make it, and not have to raise our price.

We urge you, therefore: if you do not already subscribe, please do so! And if you have friends or colleagues who find the magazine useful but only buy it occasionally, remind them that we now need their help.

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The Film Journal, 121 Varick Street, New York, N. Y. 10013 (\$1.00 per issue, \$3.50 per year). Edited by Thomas R. Atkins at Hollins College in Virginia, this publication aims to present chiefly source material and documentation rather than criticism and comment. Large format, many stills.

RESEARCH NOTE

A feminist film critic, Laura X, has started a women's history library collecting film reviews by women for research and possible publication. For information send a stamped addressed envelope to Women's History Library, 2325 Oak St., Berkeley, Calif. 94708; for \$1 they will send a directory of recent women's films.

CONTRIBUTORS

LEE ATWELL has studied film at USC and UCLA, and worked for the American Film Institute in Washington. SIEW HWA BEH lives in Los Angeles and has studied at UCLA. JOHN BELTON has taught film at Harvard and at the Orson Welles Film School in Cambridge. LEO BRAUDY is in Paris, preparing a book on *Shoot the Piano Player* for the Prentice-Hall "Focus on Film" series. ESTELLE CHANGAS has worked for the AFI and been a dissident member of the MPAA ratings board. IRA S. JAFFE studied at Columbia and is now teaching film at USC. T. M. KAVANAGH teaches at the State University of New York at Buffalo. DALE LUCIANO is a stage director who works in the San Francisco Bay Area and in Los Angeles. JOE MCBRIDE is the author of a forthcoming book on Orson Welles in the "Cinema II" series, and has frequently written for *FQ*, *Sight & Sound*, and other publications. JOAN MELLE also writes for *Cineaste*, and teaches at Temple. BILL NICHOLS has studied film at UCLA and is now working on a study of Newsreel. BRENDA RICHARDSON is Curator of Exhibitions at the University Art Museum, Berkeley. BERNARD WEINER, former editor of *Northwest Passage* in the Pacific Northwest, is now doing freelance film criticism in the San Francisco Bay Area.

THE BIG PICTURE

Recent surveys (suspect as they may be) disclose the following division of leisure time among Americans, in hours per year:

	Hours
Television	1200
Radio	900
Newspapers	218
Magazines	170
Tapes and records	68
Books	10
Movies	9
Sporting events	3
Plays, opera, etc.	3

BERNARD WEINER

Radical Scavenging:

An Interview with Emile de Antonio

Emile de Antonio is a former longshoreman, art impresario, and college philosophy professor who, at the age of 40, began to produce and direct some remarkable American political films: Point of Order, about the Army-McCarthy hearings of the mid-fifties; Rush to Judgment, on the assassination of President Kennedy and the subsequent Warren Report; America Is Hard to See, about the Eugene McCarthy campaign; and In the Year of the Pig, on America's involvement in Vietnam. His new film, Millhouse: A White Comedy, is about a man named Nixon. In many ways, de Antonio has created a whole new genre of political documentary films—halfway between “objective history” (whatever that is) and propaganda—and a whole new style he describes as “radical scavenging”: searching through hundreds of hours of television out-takes, say, in order to locate the one short sequence necessary for the development of the didactic message. In the interview below, which was stitched together from several hectic days of conversations in Bellingham, Wash., and to which he has added a few later remarks, de Antonio discusses his work, his politics, the American documentary, the dilemma of the revolutionary artist, and some future projects.

Why don't you talk about your own political development over the past ten or twelve years and how this has been expressed in your films?

In the “Quiet Fifties”—which were only quiet on the part of the American people; the government was very active in promoting the images of the Cold War and in absolutely inundating the country with Cold War rhetoric, films, cases, investigations, etc.—in that period, not because I was a victim of the Cold War, persecuted, or even because I was afraid (because I wasn't then and I'm not now), but simply because I had tuned out of any kind of

artistic or political life, I was leading a life that any good upper bourgeois might have envied. I was screwing every girl I wanted to screw, and getting drunk whenever I wanted to, and not doing very much of anything.

Finding film was, in a sense, like a mystical experience. It *was* a mystical experience. It was like being reborn. Because I suddenly discovered the Protestant Ethic: I discovered that I liked to work—I still do. Work plus alienation.

But as I started to make these films in the early sixties, I discovered in myself a rapidly escalating political position. And as I've made

each film, it's become almost a balletic motion, in that I could feel the resistance of the Establishment against what I was doing. So every-time they raised the ante, I raised the ante. And with the Vietnam War, they really raised the ante. I mean the war showed us America for what it really is. Anyway, as the ante went up and up and up, then all these subjects that I happened to become involved in tore away another aspect of the veil of America that nobody was really penetrating, at least not in film.

What happened at Port Huron [where SDS was formed] was of real importance because the American left of the fifties had no place that a leftist could repair to. The American Communist Party was an imbecilic joke, full of broken fools and old hacks and unimaginative people who had a bourgeois life-style and Russian ideas and loyalties. It was the younger generation in America which saw the possibility of political life—which has since dissipated somewhat, but the beginning of SDS was the beginning of a beautiful thing. And what brought SDS about, of course, was the early business of the war, the sellout by the Kennedys (which they were bound to do), and then the assassination of President Kennedy. The way the government closed all the doors to that investigation enraged me again. Only this time the ante was higher, and I made a totally didactic film, *Rush to Judgment*.

By this time, I was a middle-aged radical without a party, as I had been before really. But the war stepped up my political escalation another notch. I think that *In the Year of the Pig* is as didactic as any of the films that Newsreel has made about Vietnam. I think the difference is that I have some idea of what I'm doing and I don't think they have any idea what they're doing in film-making.

The Nixon film which I've just finished is the hardest film I've made in the sense of being the most didactic. It's not at all a personal attack on Nixon. This film attacks the System, the credibility of the System, by focusing on the obvious and perfect symbol for that System.

Why don't we talk about the individual

films, starting with the Nixon film since it is your latest and also because it is likely to be seen by millions more people than have seen your other films.

The Nixon film is, I think, the first attempt at a real documentary comedy. It's done as comedy although parts of it I find very sad and touching. It begins with one of the funniest scenes I've ever seen: contrived and made-up and yet it really happened. There's a great blare of trumpets—Nixon loves pageantry, pomp, the military, more than any other president we've had in my lifetime (more than Eisenhower, more indeed than the military generals themselves)—and a voice says, "The President of the United States." The music underneath is "Hail to the Chief." Then there's a shot that pans up and it's Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum and they're putting Nixon together—out of wax, sticking his head on his torso, trimming his hair, arranging his tie.

The Nixon film is like the cave of the winds: its theme is rhetoric. It's also about the Protestant Ethic, it's about poor-boy-makes-good while walking on the necks of people, it has the Checkers speech in it, it has a good bit of juicy scandal like the Hughes Tool Company loan of \$205,000 to his brother Donald, it has Joe McGinnis in it who wrote *The Selling of the President*, and who describes Nixon using Mike Douglas's warm-up man to heat up the studio audiences; applause signs were used; TV's deodorant-selling tools. The point is that these shows were advertised as Richard Nixon "live" in a TV-arena format. Thus, the real history of the United States in the Cold War is out-takes. The networks shoot but don't televise the raw spots which reveal.

O.K., so the audience sees Nixon, sees the kind of system he's enmeshed in and represents, and so they vote for Humphrey or Muskie. And what's really changed?

I couldn't agree more. Obviously, I would not be very happy if Muskie or Humphrey—or McGovern or Birch Bayh or whoever—won the Presidential election; I'm not interested in electing Democrats. But again, this film is part of my personal thing; my personal anger at

DE ANTONIO

Nixon and what he represents is so great—at the falseness of his rhetoric, which has to do with all of our society. That's a very tough question you raise, but my film won't help elect or unelect anyone; that's the other thing. I don't know how many people will see it. It might be a more mass-film than my previous films, but other issues are going to beat Nixon—like the essential creepiness of the man himself, that and the economic issue.

How about In the Year of the Pig? What did you want to do with that film and what effects do you think it's had?

Nobody can be that confident about a film, about how or whether it changes people. If you're honest, you can't even be sure about precisely what kind of effect you *want* it to have; you really don't know. About *In the Year of the Pig*, I would hope that it would convince anybody, any rational person, that the war was totally immoral and evil from the very beginning, and that this film helps put it in some kind of historical framework.

In the Year of the Pig opened commercially in Boston where it ran eight weeks, and it's played New York commercially. It has yet to play commercially in the nation's capital, where the good "liberal" theater-owners have refused to show it. It's had trouble commercially in this country because so-called "patriotic" conservative groups have taken a strong stand against it. In Los Angeles, where it was booked into a very good Joe Levine theater, people broke in and wrote "Traitors!" on the screen with black paint. In other cities, the American Legion has picketed it, and so on. They regarded this film, with some justification, as an attack on the American war which they support. I've had this happen to other films of mine; with *Rush to Judgment*, people threatened to cut the seats of the theater with knives, so the theater just dropped the picture.

But I don't expect people who own theaters to applaud my work; people who own theaters, after all, represent that class in this country to which I am opposed. The people who run theaters—except for some like The New Yorker in New York and some in Berkeley and else-



MILLHOUSE: A WHITE COMEDY

where—and I share very little points of view in common, and I suspect that there aren't many films of a political nature that get into ordinary theaters owned by these people.

On the other hand, *In the Year of the Pig* was picked up by McGraw-Hill which saw it as a perfect college-market film, and they've done fantastically well with it. The first Moratorium, it played 50 universities at \$350 a screening.

Where did you get some of that extraordinary footage? And how much did you shoot yourself?

The footage came from the National Liberation Front, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, French Army, American Broadcasting Company, British Broadcasting Company, and my own shooting. Most of the sound is from my own shooting; probably 70% of the sound is my own, and maybe 35% of the image. I

asked the Defense Department if I could look at their footage and they said no, which was a quite proper answer because they knew I was making a film against them. So I “obtained” some of what they had anyway.

What do you like best about In the Year of the Pig?

Part of what works specifically for me in the film—and most critics have simply not commented on this—is the technique that I think I helped develop, which is the use of a collage of people, voices, images, ideas, to develop a story line or a didactic line, uninterrupted by external narration. For example, when I wanted to deal with the French history of Vietnam, I went to Paris and filmed the three outstanding French left-liberal scholars of the Vietnam area, as well as the outstanding conservative historian on Vietnam (who was a friend of Ho Chi Minh’s and, of course, was violently opposed to our war). So from these interviews on film emerges a kind of biography of Ho, a history of the French colonial experience, the reasons for its failure, and how and why the US took it over. Now not one of these people had ever covered all those subjects in his books but it did come out in the give-and-take of the interviews—which is an expensive process in film because of the vast amount of stuff I throw away. I will ask 50 questions I don’t care about getting answers to in order to get to the point of almost a preconceived idea. Preconceived in the sense that all the things I’m involved in take a lot of homework; I mean, I read all those people or I would be a fool to film them.

Now the only coup in that film was that I heard that Senator Morton was willing to talk, even though he was going to be Nixon’s campaign manager, about his secret meeting with John Foster Dulles back in 1954 when the US was planning to bomb Dien Bien Phu on behalf of the French. So I was able to arrange that interview, and the results are in the film.

I think—and this is something the Newsreel guys don’t see—that it’s always a coup to get the Establishment to undress for you, to have

one of the leading Republicans in the Senate say, “Ho Chi Minh is to Vietnam as George Washington was to America.” To have that guy say, “We have made Vietnam into a concentration camp”—that has much more dramatic force, more credibility, it’s a more political act, than if Rennie Davis says it. Because if Rennie Davis says it, all those people out there say “Fuck it, we know *he* says that,” but when Thruston B. Morton says it—millionaire, Yale man, destroyer commander, personal friend of the great of this country—when *he* says it, it has some force to it.

I understand that In the Year of the Pig did quite well in Europe, particularly on television. Will it ever be shown here on national television and if not, why not?

It ran for about 14 weeks in Paris in a very good theater, with French subtitles, and it’s played a great many countries in Europe on television, Sweden, Holland, Finland among others. It was shown in East Germany where it won the major prize at the Leipzig Festival; in West Germany, they didn’t want it for television, but it played for different groups, particularly in West Berlin.

It will never be shown on American television. American commercial television shows something controversial maybe every four or five years as a kind of gag. CBS, which I excoriate and attack wherever I go, did an Edward R. Murrow program on McCarthy in 1954, they did a show on hunger in 1964, and in 1971 they did a very inartistic but very interesting program, *The Selling of the Pentagon*. Every four or five years they come up with one. But they will not buy anything controversial from the outside. This applies to the major networks, and the same holds true with PBL, NET, or whatever you prefer to call it, which skirts the sides of controversy. They have very solid little programs in which give-and-take occurs but for the most part they avoid films which have picked up a “controversial” tag.

I would like to sell *In the Year of the Pig* to television in the United States on this basis: “OK, you say this film is biased, you say this

film is against the US position. I accept that because it was made that way, so what I propose is that you show the film and then you have people attack it. Take Bill Buckley and a couple of others and let them tear the film to shreds, if they can." But the networks won't do it; they say, "We generate our own news programs," and my answer is that that's the trouble. There is nothing as bad that's happened concerning the war as the networks' coverage of it, because it seems as if they're covering the war whereas in fact they're not. The networks have made the American people, in a final way, comfortable with the war—because it appears between commercials, every day; it's become part of our quotidian existence, like armpit commercials. There's never the question asked, "Why are we doing this? What is this war about?" It's never suggested by anything that occurs on television that we should even be interested in that type of question. Television is a way of avoiding coming to terms with the fact that we're in this war.

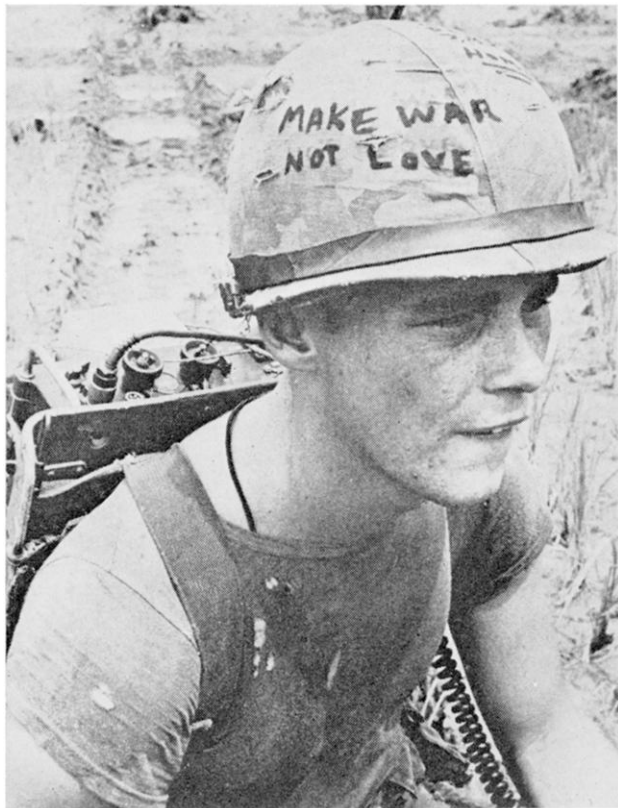
Getting back to your films, what can you say now about the Kennedy assassination film, Rush to Judgment?

It was a very hard film to make. It was my first contact with physical fear of a sustained order in the making of a film. I went down to Dallas alone and spent two weeks looking at their television footage, and by this time the FBI was after us—because any attack on the Warren Commission was an attack on the FBI, the Secret Service, etc.—and there were people following me around. You know, I'd make a phone call to arrange to see X and X would agree to see me, and then I'd show up and X would say, "I don't want to see you, go away." It was obvious someone had intercepted. This happened all the time we were filming.

In fact, the very first day we were in Dallas, I was briefing the film crew—I couldn't get my regular film crew to go to Dallas; they were afraid, so I could only get kids from San Francisco who were very young and inexperienced—and I was explaining what the problems were when there was a knock on the door and two detectives came in. It's a long story that I

won't go into, but the crew quit right there. I had to spend the whole evening cajoling, pleading, calling on their honor and everything else. I even used the most specious kind of reasoning, saying things like "We're safer here than we'd be by flying home, because if they kill us here it would be an obvious confession that there's something crazy going on." But anyway, we'd go to shoot and suddenly there'd be a sheriff's truck with two guys staring at us. There was continual harassment.

All my films are financed by, for lack of a better term, "rich liberals"; usually, they are people who have been friends of mine for a long time. But for this film, it was almost impossible to raise money for it; I had to go to England to raise the money, from people like Tony Richardson and Oscar Lewenstein of Woodfall Films. It was impossible to raise the money in the United States, because this subject really touched the psychic uneasiness of America about as deeply as anything we've



had to face, including the war.

Rush to Judgment is a film that most people find to be entirely boring—although its style has been imitated a lot, since it was the first film that went into really big interviewing. What I wanted to show, at great length, was that one guy could take on the FBI—or two of us really, Mark Lane and I—and the Warren Report, and prove that they had lied, by filming people at great length describing events that happened in Texas in November of 1963. I felt that the Warren Commission's investigations, or really lack of them, was outrageous, so I went down and filmed these witnesses. I liked the idea of their slow Texas speech while telling a story—just ordinary working people, not Marxists or anything, just guys who worked for the railroad or whatever—and I didn't give a damn if people were bored by it or not. I liked it.

How about Point of Order, the first film that established you as a major documentary producer-director? What can you say about it today?

I probably treated McCarthy in *Point of Order* more from a liberal point of view than radical—but I don't know how to scale these things really; after all, I was a Communist at Harvard. I might make the film a whole lot differently today; I wasn't as angry about what was going on in this country ten years ago as I am now.

Why don't you talk about how you obtained the footage for the film, and what you set out to do with it?

The networks never even knew what they had. As a result of quite a bit of research, I learned that CBS had this film, 188 hours of it, and where they had it stored. They denied they had it; they said, "We don't have it; it's all destroyed." So I said, "No, it's in your Fort Lee warehouse." Their attitude was, "The guy's dead, let's just leave it alone, forget it." But the president of CBS News at that time was replaced by the present president of CBS News, who was more interested in money, so we began bargaining over film they obviously weren't going to use. It was found money for

them. I ended up paying \$50,000 for it and half of all the money that would be made from it—which, frankly, has been a great deal. So they got 50¢ of every dollar off the top from material they didn't even know they had and were afraid to use.

Why did I make *Point of Order*? I wanted to make documentaries; the only documentaries I liked had been made before World War II. Television and the Cold War had taken the content out of documentary. In the beginning Dan Talbot and I worked very closely on *Point of Order*. In fact, it was his idea to see if we could get hold of the original TV material and he and I screened the whole 188 hours of it together. That started it. I felt strongly about McCarthy, I also had ideas about taking material that already existed (which used to be done in leftwing films and was no longer being done), I felt I wanted to make an anti-McCarthyism statement (not anti-McCarthy statement), I wanted to say something about what I thought was wrong with American life and which is still wrong, and that is our emphasis on Technique. That's what this film is really about, Technique.

McCarthy devised a technique that was wholly meretricious and wholly false and wholly insane, and yet he played it like a master over the American people. And then he was shot down, wiped out, again by Technique, particularly the technique of Welch. Welch gives one of the great acting performances in the history of American film. I'm not talking about his personal feelings (he was pro-McCarthy until 1954 when he was retained by the Army), or his truth; I'm talking about his "acting" in this film, because what Welch did was act and that, after all, is what a great trial lawyer does. As you know, Welch succeeded so brilliantly in these TV hearings that he went on indeed to become a professional actor: he was in Otto Preminger's *Anatomy of a Murder*, and then went on to have a television program of his own. I mean, this has something to say about American life, and it is contained in the film.

Did the film emerge from a full-blown orig-

inal conception or did the format develop as you were editing?

Point of Order was a lot of agony, since I had never made films before. Starting to make films at the age of 40, I did the traditional thing: I hired a writer to make the film. We had a narration—which Paul Newman volunteered to do for free—and the film was almost half finished. I looked at it one day and it had all the stuff in it: explanations, narration, a Vermont church cutaway, McCarthy's wedding with Nixon in attendance, and so on. And suddenly I knew this was all wrong. What I really wanted, I knew, was that one enclosed event, without anything intruding, and so I fired the guy, fired everybody, and started over. I took a scissors and started cutting and shaping, and suddenly I had an idea what the film was going to look like. It took a year to get all those little cutaways, to get a continuous flow without any interruption.

How do you handle the oft-expressed criticism that in putting down McCarthy—or rather, allowing McCarthy on film to put himself down—you make the Army look good, and make so-called “liberal” senators like Symington and Jackson look good?

The criticism that I make the Army look good is totally unjustified. Stevens comes out a lunk, a coward, a weakling, and the army generals and colonels come out as clods. As for the senators, it is plain in the film that not once do they ever attack McCarthy on substantive grounds, on real issues involving the Bill of Rights, for instance; they finally broke McCarthy because he had gone beyond the rules of the Senate “club.”

I don't usually like telling anecdotes, but this one is indicative. When the film came out, there was a screening of it in Washington, DC, and all the people came because it was safe to be against McCarthy then—he was dead, for one thing. Senator Henry Jackson came up to me after the screening and said, “Mr. De Antonio, I found your film terribly interesting, but I have one criticism.” I said, “Yes, Senator?” And he said, “There wasn't enough of me in it.” I felt kind of silly, like I was dealing

with some kind of 18-year-old starlet who wanted a bigger part. That was the great courage of the Senate.

I'm usually attacked for not jumping on McCarthy hard enough, or not explaining certain events with a voice-over narration. I've always thought that it's wrong to explain things to audiences. The material is there, and interpretations can be made. I mean, I could have stopped the film and inserted outside explanations, but I'm really not terribly interested in that. I disagree with that approach from every point of view aesthetically, and even politically. I think it's a mistake to show everything. And I think this is what is most wrong with so-called didactic or political films, that they become so utterly didactic that they forget that a film is also a film.

I mean, this was the first time that anybody had taken a huge closed political event and made theater out of it. It's something we now see in the theater rather than in the film (with *Inquest*, *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, *The Investigation*, etc.), but which happened first in this film.

The Army-McCarthy hearings were a peak moment in American political theater. And there were lessons derived from it. For example, no great hearing of this kind has ever been held again. You get something like the Army-McCarthy hearings on television—in all its body, all of it—and something is revealed about the nature of our governmental structure, our society, where the real power is. They don't want anybody to see that again. Because the whole thing about American politics is that it's a game, a game whereby you hide what's really happening from the American people while it's happening. And that's part of what this film is all about, to show that game.

I was disappointed by the inanity of the reviews, because what happened was that the whole liberal press sort of had a pipe-dream about how brave it had been back in '54 now that this was '63, nine years later. The reviews were fantastic, but nobody discussed the film—they just went back to how bad McCarthy was and how good they were. But then I can't be

SOME DISCRETE INTERRUPTIONS ON FILM, STRUCTURE AND RESONANCE

"The history of KinoEye has been a relentless struggle to modify the course of world cinema, to place in cinema production a new emphasis on the 'unplayed film' over the play film, to substitute the document for the *mise-en-scène*, to break out of the theater and to enter the arena of life itself." —DZIGA VERTOV

1) In 1963 Richard Roud excluded **Point of Order** from the New York Film Festival on the ground that it was television and not film. Eight years later the distinction seems reactionary and short-sighted; even then it was old-maidish, faddist and self-serving. It's not where it comes from that matters but what is projected. Anything that can go through a projector is film (see 4). Three months later Roud made the discovery that **Point of Order** was a film, after all, and invited it to the London Festival.

2) The audio-visual history of our time is the television out-take. Each hour cameras, as impersonal as astronauts, grind away film and tape which the content-free networks will never transmit. Our television is content-free not because it is regulated but because it is a commodity—not news or art or entertainment but a product. Its masters see it that way. The regulators don't regulate television anyway—they regulate us. The masters most ardently want public regulation to continue in order to perpetuate private monopoly structure. Don't all public regulatory agencies behave in the same way: phone, light, gas, etc.?

McLuhan's dictum is a show business half-truth. The medium **has** changed the mode of perception without changing the quality of what is perceived; television time is time for sale. Marx on the ownership of the means of production is still a better insight as well as a more informative one.

3) The Bill of Rights was written with a quill pen and beautifully, so that every word of it needs to be made operational today. More views, more access, more community control, less corporate profit. One specific need: a national electronic archive where nothing is thrown away because it costs money to store it (our history), whose retrieval and indexing systems are electronic and instant, where everything is made available for us for use, free. Cost of operation? Rental of our air to the networks.

4) "A film" may be defined operationally as 'whatever will pass through a projector.' The least thing that will do that is nothing at all. Such a film has been

made. It is the only **unique** film in existence."—Hollis Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film," **Artforum**, Sept. 1971

The key word is not film but **Artforum**. The entire issue on film. An invasion of body-snatchers? Annette Michelson, guest editor, on shiny, expensive page 8, makes it clear that a "new criticism" has arrived, and for film—using a vocabulary formerly preempted by painting and for bourgeoisie mystification.

Why? The exhaustion of American painting and sculpture has driven many to gouge the earth, make mile-long walls, and robe the seaside in plastic, to make **arrangements** with haystacks, to create a conceptual art in which the painting is described on a typewriter sheet, framed and sold. That's real exhaustion. In a more literary effort, one artist was photographed riding a horse round a ring in a pasture. And now, having done all that, they're moving into film. Jonas Mekas and his troupe of mercenary, trend-sniffing cavalry have pointed the way; a great army swells, together with its sutlers and camp-followers.

The filmic ideas collected by **Artforum** are damp hand-me-downs from John Cage and Jasper Johns. The **salons des refusés** are going to the movies. Also dealers, critics, corporations, collectors, scene-people, film schools, museums. Can Andrew Sarris be far behind?

5) Structure and resonance are coefficients of the film of content. Film is not shot but built up from various strips of celluloid (Pudovkin). And when it works, there is resonance — not only between one shot and another but between one strip and another, between one scene and another; and like the idea of correspondence in the poetry of Donne, there is resonance between the film and that which exists outside the film. Like ambiguity in poetry, resonance is a literal fact as well as a metaphor. Renoir's **Rules of the Game** or Rossellini's **Rise of Louis XIV** are what I mean.

Films which are "products" customarily lack resonance, are supermarket cake and icing. When it is mechanical (**Easy Rider**) structure is artificial, the resonance rings but once and content is an additive.

Dependence on the technical is also an aspect of no content. **Cinéma-vérité**. Whose **vérité**? No one can fault the development of fast, light, mobile equipment. What is wrong is the space the best known practitioners of c-v occupy today: publicity films for rock groups. (Stones, Beatles, Monterey, Woodstock, Altamont.)

6) Having laid about, both in the interview and these interruptions, it may seem graceless to discuss my own

work. Here are some specifics which are not necessarily illustrative, I simply want to raise them.

No film-maker expects any critic to discover all that is in a film. In spite of its critical success, in spite of its going on to be treated as a classic, I have always been uncomfortable with the critics for failing to see that in **Point of Order** each segment was analogous to a specific technique of Sen. McCarthy's prior to the 1954 Army-McCarthy hearings. Example: in the film Joseph Welch accuses McCarthy and his aides (Roy Cohn and Juliana) of having doctored a photograph to prove that Secretary of the Army Stevens and G. David Schine had met **alone**. The aloneness was accomplished by snipping off a Colonel Bradley who had been in the original picture.

Four years earlier, McCarthy had caused the defeat of conservative, wealthy Sen. Millard Tydings of Maryland in his bid for reelection. He accused Tydings of being a Communist. The master stroke was the "proof": flooding the state with a doctored composite photograph showing Tydings together with Earl Browder, then chairman of the American Communist Party. They never had been together, of course. Tydings lost the election. There are six other such correspondences in the film, never pointed out.

A minute example from **Millhouse**: beginning of the film. Mme. Tussaud's wax museum. Shot tilts up from feet to head, disclosing Nixon in wax, surrounded by wax images of Kennedy, Washington, etc. Seven reels later, camera angle and motion are almost exactly similar. This time, however, it is Premier Ky (1967) running for election in Vietnam.

A problem. In the 1954 Army-McCarthy hearings, obscure, back-hall politicians were shot into momentary prominence because of 36 days of TV exposure. Eight years later, when I was working on **Point of Order**, they were once more obscure paper-shufflers. For example, John Adams, counsel to the Army. How could one "fix" him in seconds? I tried doing a cast of characters in synch sound. It didn't work. We're so accustomed to synch sound that it was too normal, too continuous. However, by running stills and frozen frames with voice-over (same sound, no more than would have been used in synch) the five seconds became jarring and discontinuous, and memorable enough to fix the character. Thus, when Adams said, "I've never filed a brief. I've never drawn a complaint. I'm strictly a Washington-type lawyer," his image was substantial enough to read him in context throughout the film.

responsible for those idiots.

Would you say something about how the various sequences were edited and how this relates to "objective" reporting and artistic truth?

Of course the stuff was not always in its original time-place context. But nothing was put in or moved around in such a way that it was untrue to what actually happened. And bad editing is the only place where a film-maker can get shot down; the right wing has tried to shoot this film down, but they've never been able to do it with facts.

Of course the film is edited—that's what the process of dealing with historical material is all about. I wasn't interested in reporting in that film; the whole hearings, in a sense, are less true than this edited version of those whole hearings. I've looked at those hearings twice—and it takes about a month to look at each one, 188 hours long—but mirrors really don't interest me that much.

I've been criticized for changing the ending. The hearings didn't really end that way; what really happened was that they banged the gavel and they all ran away and tried to sweep it under the rug. But I make films from a point of view, and I wanted to make the point that McCarthy was wiped out by these hearings, so I changed the material around and the film ends on the empty caucus room with Symington walking out on McCarthy, which occurred long before the actual end of the film.



Let's talk about didactic films in general, since more film-makers are moving into this area.

The real problem is that nobody in the world, at least nobody in the Western world, is ready for the pure didactic film. This is one of the problems I've had in talking, say, with the North Vietnamese and looking at their films. I'm not in a position to criticize them, and yet I felt like saying to them: "If you're making these films for the Vietnamese people, and this is what you feel you should have, that's fine. But if you're making these films to change minds and turn heads in the West, you're crazy—because these films will only convince people who already share your point of view."

Now the American didactic films that I've seen—and I suppose the outstanding examples of that are by Newsreel—are not films. I mean, these are films that are seen by nobody. They are like grey left-wing tracts of old: column after column of heavy type with no headlines and no pictures and no graphic design. As films, in addition to the fact that they're badly shot, they're technically inept. The politics is good and the film is lousy. When you're in that particular situation, you obviously don't reach anybody except those who not only are already converted but who share a rather narrow, constricted view of what's happening.

I'm intrigued by the difference between your film-making and the work of anybody else who has anything to do with documentary. Godard sometimes uses historical footage or quotations (which stick out like ribs); other directors use narration. I don't see many film-makers doing what you do in the way of collage. Is there somebody I've missed?

I think even the television networks are doing more and more collage work, but of course are not doing it totally. I can see the difference even between a CBS documentary done around the *Point of Order* days and the recent *Selling of the Pentagon*, which is badly done but which attempted that collage effect. But the difference between CBS and me, is that they have a fundamental distrust of the

audience; they never believe the audience can make that jump from one place to another, so there's always that disembodied voice—Roger Mudd or Walter Cronkite or somebody—to "help" the viewer along. I may be wrong about this, but my assumption is that people who have lived in the electronic world can make those leaps from one time and place to another, which after all are not that dazzling, can understand the shifts of sound while the image changes, can understand the image changes while the sound remains constant, and so on. I mean, after all, it's exactly what goes on in a Beatles song; it's what we've been prepared for by our painting; in a sense, we've been prepared for it by things that go on in television—and nothing gives away what American life is about, I suppose, like the fact that CBS does professional football better than anything else they do. Which is why I watch a lot of it.

But, yes, I do believe that many of the television documentaries are beginning to move in directions that my films have used. I think it's beginning to sink in that this is a more effective way of reaching people. I think most people know that the commentators are assholes who don't know a thing. What I'm doing is presenting the real authorities rather than a hollow voice like Cronkite. Cronkite, like most narrators, reads what writers write. That's a little disembodied for me and removed from fact, news, documentary. I'm looking for the integral fact in which the man who says it is the man who wrote it, thought it, believed it, experienced it.

*You've talked about political film-makers like the Newsreel people. What about directors like Pontecorvo with *Battle of Algiers* and *Burn*? Or Robert Kramer's *Ice*? Or Godard? Or Antonioni? Or Costa-Garras?*

Godard is the most interesting living film-maker. And Godard is even more hung-up in the paradox of making films for the masses and having no audience than I am. His big films, which are rightwing films, have great audiences—like *Breathless*—but when you get to *Vladimir & Rosa*, well, the audience for that could be fitted into a tiny hall. I think his cinematic

genius gets in the way sometimes; some of the things he does in films are done for no apparent reason, not even dada. If anything, they're disruptive of the ideology. I don't think Godard is at home with ideology—it's encumbering to him. Do you know what the response to *La Chinoise* was during the May Revolution in France? There were lots of young Frenchmen who said, "We're going to make this fucking revolution because Godard laughed at us!"

The guy I thought would become the greatest film-maker of our time was Antonioni. But his last two films were such disasters. I think the negative is as important as the positive, and I think *L'Avventura* expressed the hopelessness of upper-middle-class life in the Western world as well as any film that I've ever seen. It remains even today a film of extraordinary brilliance. But when he came into color—color is unnatural; I have doubts about color, even though my next film is in color—with *Red Desert*, he got into trouble. I think *Blow-Up* is a disaster, although he made a good deal of money with it—which was the other disaster, because that led him to that stinking movie he made out in the desert (*Zabriskie Point*). It was really a bad movie: dishonest, badly made, badly directed. Costa-Gavras is political like Mike Nichols is political. *Sleeping Car Murders* is his best film; the others use pseudo-political trappings for commercial ends. Z makes liberals feel warm and good, also theater owners.

Do you accept the label "documentary" on the films you make? Is that what you consider yourself making?

Eisenstein thought he was making documentary films, when actually most of his footage is re-creation shot with actors. But I agree with him. It's only because of television that we've picked up this idea that a documentary film is about teenagers in Joplin, Missouri, or something.

The Nixon film I've made isn't a documentary—and neither is *Point of Order*—but there's no other way to classify it. It will be classified as a "documentary" because it's made

largely out of documents, out of material which exists and material that I shot. But there's a lot of material in the Nixon film that it would be very hard to call "documentary."

I think documentary is a much more sophisticated medium than fiction films. It's harder to do well, and you expect more from your audience. It's a more sophisticated process of communication, therefore you automatically don't reach the off-the-street traffic, the guy who simply wants to go to a movie. The only people who go to documentaries are, first of all, those people who have a feeling about film and about history. But film first—they care about how it works, curiously enough, whereas the average person who goes to a movie goes there to have that experience wash over him. My films are different: they're hard, they make demands on the audience.

Do you consider this a strength or a weakness? I mean, you're not drawing in the masses, and yet you say you want to educate and change people.

Yes, that's probably the main weakness of my films, that they will never reach the real mass audience—which is something I'm going to try to break into about a film from now. The Nixon film, I think, if it's allowed to gain a wide distribution, will reach the widest audience of any film I've done. But, in general, it's true to say that at least in America I've never reached a very wide-based audience. My best audiences are cultivated Europeans, American universities, New York, Boston, Washington, Los Angeles, San Francisco—not Philadelphia, not Baltimore, not the South, not St. Louis, not unsophisticated areas. You're absolutely right that the films do require a certain intellectual effort, or even a certain degree of knowledge on the part of the audience, and I look back on all my work as being partially a mistake in that my own intellectual hang-ups are obviously reflected in my work. Complicated, difficult work is always more interesting to me than work of extreme obviousness. My weakness as a film-maker is perhaps also my strength: I'm motivated in all my films I've made by the fact that I feel strongly about

something or that I'm outraged and angry about something, or that I'd like to see something changed.

Let's talk about how you finance and distribute your films, whether young film-makers who want to do something similar to what you're doing in the way of political films can still finance their projects and distribute them as widely as you do.

If you're making films outside the Establishment, you can't expect the Establishment to finance them. You can't really expect the normal sources of money for film to come to you. So what you really have to find is the only person who has ever given money beyond his own expectations—and that's the rich liberal.

But you already have these contacts on the basis of your life and your friends. What about people who are just starting out?

I think it's very hard indeed. You have to spend time making contacts and reducing production costs—as Kramer did for *Ice* and as Newsreel is trying to do. You can reduce production costs to very little; film can be very cheap if you don't pay anybody. Films can be made as true cooperatives, in which nobody gets paid. With my small documentaries, which run in the area of \$150,000 to \$160,000, everybody gets paid about a union wage. That means the payroll is a \$1,000 per week, a third of the budget.

There's a depression in the film world, just as everywhere else. You can get unlimited credit for processing, but you have to find someone who will bankroll you to the tune of a modest sum of money—as Newsreel did; someone has to pick up the bill somewhere along the line. But if you want to do it badly enough, you'll do it, it'll happen. And there *is* money; there are rich people with money who will back radical causes. There are many rich young people.

I have a young friend who worked for me who has made a very important 20-minute film on *Tommy the Traveler*, the agent provocateur, for \$1,500, which is about as low as you can get it. I gave him my equipment (I'll give any-

body my equipment—at night, when I'm not using it), he was able to con a lab into processing his footage for a penny a foot, he got some young guys to help with the camera crew, and the \$1,500 went for transportation. So it can be done.

What are your next projects? How do these fit into institutions that you're examining?

After the Nixon film, I'm working on a film which I've already shot—in 35mm color, which is a technical trick for me—called *Painters, Painting, New York*. The cinematographer is Ed Emschwiler. I'm interested in applying this collage technique, perhaps for the last time, to the guys who made collage themselves as painters. This is a film about the System of the art world, in the words of the people in that world: De Kooning, Motherwell, Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Frank Stella, Barney Newman (now dead), and so on. Most of these are people I've known and who are friends of mine, but the film also includes the collectors, the manipulators, and the museum people and how an art market is created. There's never been anything quite like this around, which is one reason I'm interested in doing it.

However, it's presented me with several problems personally, which anyone who has seen my work would guess, since I regard myself as a Marxist social critic of the existing social system in this country and yet the painters and the way in which they work are essentially manifestations of a very conservative aspect of America. The painting itself is not conservative (though it is apolitical), but it's part of a machine which runs this country. And so, if I have to make a choice between American painting and the attempt to turn men's minds and the search for a collective soul, then I'm more interested in what Mao is doing than in the art of my friends. And yet I'm making the film: perhaps it's something I have to get out of my system.

The film which I'm really interested in doing is one for which the negotiations are protracted and difficult, which is a film on China. I've been negotiating with the Chinese Embassy in

Ottawa and it's difficult to negotiate about because I don't seem to want to do what most people want to do there. I want to go with two camera crews all over China for a long period of time and do what I would hope would be the definitive film of the Chinese Revolution from an American point of view. One of the things I would want is absolute access to their own film archives, because the stuff that's in Edgar Snow's film about the early days of the Revolution is not very interesting, and I know they have the footage I want because they told me they have it: there's 8th Route Army material, caves of Yen-an material, material of the war with Chiang Kai-shek right after World War II. I would like to tie all that up through the Cultural Revolution.

Have you ever considered doing a fiction film?

Yes. I've had a script that I've done but every time I dip my hand into it—which I'm about ready to do again—something else comes up. If the China film comes through, I'm going to drop this idea obviously, because China is really the most exciting and interesting thing in the world. But I've been interested in millenarian experiences for a long time, which I

think most people can understand. There are cults all over the United States that are hooked into Jesus—as a flying saucer pilot, or as signaling the end of the world, or whatever—because life has become intolerable not just for intellectuals and sensitives who can't bear the hypocrisy and rhetoric of nars and Nixon and everything else. I think the emptiness of the promise of American life has become apparent to a great many people, including some of the craziest blood-lust people who sing Lt. Calley songs. There's a malaise that cuts through the John Birch Society as well as the White Panthers. I have a script about a millenarian cult which really exists (I can never leave the documentary fold!); it's in the desert, near Alamogordo. I'd like to do a fictional film about their experience, with other stuff I'd add to it.

The real trick for me, the real challenge for me, would be to make a film that blacks would like to go to see or that steelworkers would like as a film, and yet one which would have a strong message. I'm pretty much convinced that the only way to do this is with a fiction film—which, of course, is a denial of the last ten years of my life.

JOHN BELTON

The Crucified Lovers of Mizoguchi

In a long, fascinating, anecdotal but perceptive letter to *Cahiers du Cinéma*,¹ Yoshikata Yoda, a screenwriter who knew Mizoguchi for over twenty years, describes the demanding experience of working with the great Japanese director. "I remember," writes Yoda, "as if it were yesterday, that to finish my scenarios, I would help my weak body by thinking, almost desperately, of all the obstacles I had to overcome, and which were set in front of me by Mizo-san (Mizoguchi). 'Be stronger, dig more

deeply. You have to seize man, not in some of his superficial aspects, but in his totality. We have to know that we lack, we Japanese, all ideological visions: the vision of life, the vision of the universe . . . ' Completely discouraged by these words from Mizo-san, and making myself sorer by thinking of the weakness of my brain, I tried to write, without ever being sure of myself. . . ."

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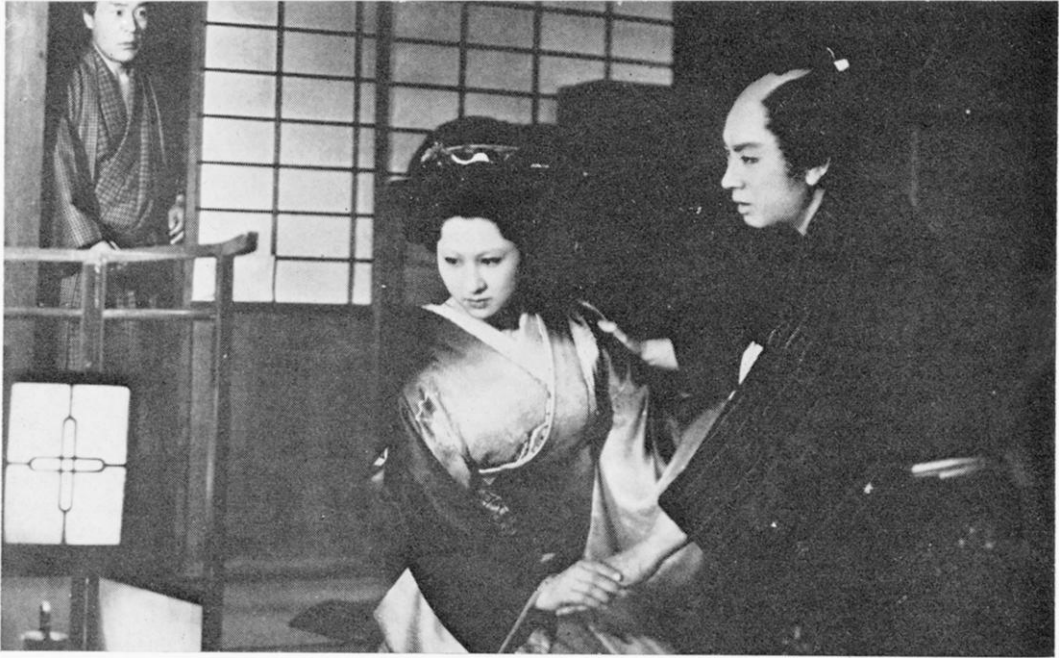
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guchi establishes obstacles for himself, his assistants and his characters only to transcend them. If, as Mizoguchi claims, the Japanese lack a vision of life, a vision of the universe, what he and his cinema do is to create that vision, to push not only his cameraman, his scriptwriter, and his actors but also his visual style, his story, and his characters beyond their superficial limitations to a deeper, more coherent, more total, more transcendent vision of the universe.

The story of *Chikamatsu* observes a traditional melodramatic formula of lovers separated by class distinctions: it concerns a fatal love affair between the aristocratic wife (Osan) of an upper-middle-class scrollmaker (Ishun) and one of his lower-class employees (Mohei). The lovers run away together, hide, are caught and returned to be crucified—the legal punishment for adultery in seventeenth-century Japan. Concentrating on the redemptive nature of this love affair, Mizoguchi treats their flight and ultimate crucifixion as an escape from the rigid society which surrounds them.

What's so great about Mizoguchi's *Chikamatsu Monogatari* is its ability to create a vision of the world which allows his characters to transcend the original limitations of that

world and to find redemption from their own weaknesses through love and one another. The narrative of *Chikamatsu* (the film is known as *The Crucified Lovers* in England and France) is, then, primarily a redemption-through-love story. Even though it presents a broad spectrum of seventeenth-century Japanese society, what defines its characters is their degree of detachment from the formal aspects of that society: their ability to overcome its obstacles to love. There is no possibility of redemption for Doki (Osan's dissolute brother), for example, because he has no love for anyone but himself. Like Osan's husband, Ishun, Doki remains within his limitations and those of the world around him. In a sense, it is the failure of the film's minor characters to escape their

Chikamatsu Monogatari. Directed by Kenji Mizoguchi. Screenplay by Yoshikata Yoda and Matsutaro Kwaguchi, based on stories of Chikamatsu Monzaemon. Photography by Kazuo Miyagawa. Music by Fumio Hayasaka, Tamezo Mochizuki, and Eijiro Toyosawa. Original release, 1954. Running time, 100 min. The film won the Silver Lion award at the Venice Film Festival and the *Kinema Jumpo* prize. Distribution: New Line Cinema.

isolation that makes Mohei and Osan's (the lovers) final transcendence so powerful. Otama, whose attempted sacrifice fails to get her Mohei, becomes a tragic figure through her failure and magnifies the triumphant achievement of the film's central characters. The limitations within Mizoguchi's universe are real (the tragic pathos of Otama) and overwhelming but ultimately surmountable (Mohei and Osan).

An intensely confining and confined film, *Chikamatsu* has, like several of the director's other late films, both a circular and a linear structure. Although it lacks the flashbacks which give a cyclical framework to *Life of Oharu* and *Yang Kwei Fei*, *Chikamatsu* does have a circular narrative—the first crucifixion procession works, in the context of the film, as a sort of fatalistic flash-forward to the second. Though the repetition is artificial, it is only through artifice that there is ever any real feeling or emotion in Mizoguchi. Mizoguchi's decision to end the film tragically, in contrast to the happy ending of *Chikamatsu Monzaemon's* (1653–1724) original Bunraku² play on which the film is based, not only remains consistent with the film's overall, claustrophobic thematic tone but also reaffirms its basic circularity with a sense of frustrated confinement. As a result, although the film's first crucifixion has no more than symbolic force, the second, towards which the whole film slowly builds, invests symbolic ritual with a deeply personalized emotional intensity. Mizoguchi vitalizes this final procession; he gives the lovers a sense of purpose, of mission, which the first, anonymous set of lovers seemed to lack. He creates, through his art, a way of seeing an action that transforms that action. Though this final crucifixion questions our perception of the first and changes our perception of other events in the film, at the same time it enriches these events by making our involvement with them more personal.

Mizoguchi's treatment of the final procession complements the linear quality of the lovers' relationship. Throughout the film, the nature of their relationship changes, becoming more

open, free, and honest from scene to scene, until it culminates in their final transcendence, as a pair, of their original restrictions. In the last scene, they attain a freedom in confinement that is both circular and linear: though bound, they are bound together. Though about to die, through death they will escape the social *mores* which confine them. Mizoguchi transforms the event—his characters transcend their imprisonment and, for the first time in the film, are really free.

In a sense, this paradox defines the nature of Mizoguchi's unique, personal vision and distinguishes it from that of other Japanese directors such as Toyoda, Ichikawa, and Kurosawa. Even though the subjects of Mizoguchi's best films, *Shin Heike Monogatari*, *Street of Shame*, *Sansho the Bailiff*, etc., concern the question of social and political freedom, as does the central narrative thread in *Chikamatsu*, the freedom that his characters find comes from within themselves, from the way that they look at the world rather than from their actual ability to change that world.³ For this reason, memory and the use of flashbacks are essential to the realization of Mizoguchi's characters' inner freedom. It is his characters' ability to personalize their environment—e.g., the use of form cuts and dissolves on gestures or objects in *Sansho* and *Oharu* to introduce flashbacks—and to shape their perception of it (e.g., Mizoguchi uses the subjective flashback as the central narrative device) that liberates them from the objective reality of their situation. The freedom which Mizoguchi's characters enjoy, then, is very much like the freedom of the artist, of Mizoguchi himself perhaps, who creates his own universe within himself and his art.

Mizoguchi achieves a sense of oppressive confinement early in *Chikamatsu*. Unlike the long introductory takes which set up a sort of initial spatial geography in *Sisters of Gion*, *Shin Heike* and *Yang Kwei Fei*, *Chikamatsu* begins abruptly with a brief, high-angle, exterior, establishing shot, then cuts quickly indoors, and thereby disrupts any continuity of time and space. Mizoguchi then introduces

each central character in a different part or level of the same house, but he never ties the various parts of the house together spatially. This initial fragmentation of setting separates the characters from one another—it's as if the confining interiors of the scrollmaker's establishment hold them apart. The first shot of the apprentice Mohei—a long shot through the internal frame of a stairway—seems to trap him alone, to isolate him in a dark, intricately detailed background. The confinement of Mizoguchi's set becomes, then, a metaphor for the confinement of seventeenth-century Japan's rigid social *mores*.

Yet Mizoguchi's use of set and detail—his rigid but subjective ordering of objects in the frame—is more than just a social or political metaphor. Mizoguchi's use of the internal frame, like Ford's, is a consistent compositional device which isolates characters, objects and textures *artificially*: one is always aware that the frame is *created*, like a painting. In other words, his set is not a social or a political but an artistic metaphor.

In order to intensify the film's sense of oppressive confinement, Mizoguchi's camera remains glued to his characters and their movements. It never strays from them to consider inanimate objects, as it does with the ancestral heads in the temple scene of *Oharu*, or the natural environment, as it does during the song sequence of *Sansho*. The camera's claustrophobia is very much a part of everything else in the film: because the characters and their *mores* are rigid, so is the camera and their environment (just as the lyrical, relaxed camera movements in *Yang Kwei Fei* reflect the world of its characters). In *Chikamatsu* when Osan's brother asks her for money, the camera holds both characters together in the frame and follows them with short camera movements as they move about. At the same time, Mizoguchi rarely cuts away from his action to long shot (with the notable exception of the film's last shot); his tight framing excludes any sense of space around his characters and holds them in medium shot and medium close-up

throughout most of the film. Mizoguchi gives no sense of a world outside of his characters, except for that of their immediate setting and background. Even when the lovers run away from the confinement of the scrollmaker's shop, Mizoguchi alternates backgrounds of open countryside with backgrounds of tight, prison-like urban surroundings. In Osaka, for example, the lovers are chased through a tight maze of thick, barrel-shaped, wooden pillars and when they spend the night with Mohei's father, they sleep in a small hut with bars on the door. Even the forest which surrounds them when they're separated in the morning is constricting.

While Mizoguchi's tight, unimpassioned camera movements increase the claustrophobic nature of *Chikamatsu*, his unusually jolting editing serves to further fragment his characters and their actions by destroying the continuity of their environment (i.e., by changing the backgrounds). Although Mizoguchi's traditional one-scene-one-take method tends to preserve the integrity of his characters' actions and movements (he cuts, like Ford, before an action is begun or after it is completed), his cuts violently change the emotional intensity of each complete action in juxtaposition to each other complete action. When Ishun tries to seduce Otama and Otama tells him that Mohei is her fiancé, Mizoguchi suddenly cuts to a different camera set-up for a reaction shot, altering the background and, as a result, the tone of the scene. Again, when Otama tells Osan of Ishun's proposition, an abrupt reverse-angle cut jars the stability implicit in a constant, unchanging background and immediately heightens the emotional level of Osan's reaction.

The linear aspects of *Chikamatsu's* narrative tend to work against this sort of fragmentation. The linear quality of Mohei and Osan's love arises from its redemptive nature and its sense of purpose—in short, our emotional involvement with the lovers at the end. The film's initial fragmentation and compartmentalization of its central characters gives way to more open settings and fluid shots—e.g., the slow crane shot as Osan chases Mohei down a steep

hill: both characters are contained within the same frame; the background and the edges of the frame no longer impinge upon them. The characters seem to have moved linearly from one point to another, to have escaped the confining interiors of the first half of the film.

On a more simple, narrative level: Mohei's earlier sickness (he is introduced lying down and sick in the internal frame shot discussed above) seems to vanish almost at the moment of his commitment to his mistress, Osan. His miraculous restoration to health represents on the physical level the curative power of his relationship with Osan. The spiritually redemptive nature of this relationship is best expressed visually with a remarkably beautiful four-minute take during Mohei and Osan's mutual confession of love in the boat sequence. Partly because of the length of the take, the slightest movement of characters or camera acquires tremendous emotional weight. Their mutual declaration of love redeems them and gives meaning to their lives. Osan's decision not take her life, for instance, immediately follows Mohei's confession of love in the boat. The water and grey fog which surround the lovers' boat, unlike the intricately lit interiors with their tense, detailed, constricting backgrounds, contribute not only to the pure, lyrical beauty of the scene but also to the thematically important sense of liberation which that lyricism creates. At the end of this long take, when Osan throws herself on Mohei, her action causes the boat to move; her action changes the position of the boat in the frame from parallel to perpendicular to the surface of the frame and the slow, clockwise movement of the boat—the direct, physical result of her emotion, of her love for Mohei—becomes a metaphysical statement of sorts, defining wordlessly the transcendent quality of the lovers' relationship.

Though *Chikamatsu* is a hard film to enjoy, because of its concern with confinement and obstacles, it is nonetheless great because it treats this concern so beautifully. Its characters' attempts, both successful and unsuccessful, to break out of their isolation, to break

away from the forces which separate them is nothing more than the artist's attempt to create a universe for himself. What makes the film so essential to Mizoguchi is its explicitness: it transforms reality. What was originally a real object or character becomes a form, an abstract figure, a subjective creation through which we can escape reality.

Ultimately *Chikamatsu* works, for me at least, because of its careful control then powerful release of tensions. By working with and against its own expectations, through the circular determinism of the plot, the film's final moment of liberation is triumphantly cathartic.

NOTES

¹ Yoda's letter is presently being translated from French by Mike Prokosch. The translation I use is his. Yoda's letter, titled "Remembrances of Mizoguchi," appears in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, 1965-6. Nos. 166-7, 169, 172, and 174.

² The Bunraku is a popular form of drama, similar to Kabuki, which grew out of street theater.

³ Andrew Sarris makes a similar point which I discovered only after I had written the body of my article. Sarris writes, "From the first frame of *Oharu* to the last, one is aware of sublime directional purpose. To understand the full meaning of a Mizoguchi film is to understand the art of direction as a manner of looking at the world rather than as a means of changing it. There is not much that even the greatest director can do with a face or a tree or a river or a sunset beyond determining his personal angle and distance, rhythm and duration. With Mizoguchi's first tracking of *Oharu* weaving and bobbing across a licentious world to a religious temple, we are in the presence of an awesome parable of womankind." I trust that my argument is dissimilar enough to be unique. The Sarris quote comes from his review of *Oharu* in *Confessions of a Cultist*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1970, p. 138.

Long Day's Journey Into Night: An Interview with Sidney Lumet

Along with Les Parents terribles, Lumet's film of the O'Neill play has gained a reputation as one of the rare truly successful examples of filmed theater: works that devote themselves fiercely to the theatrical substance of their sources, they surpass films aiming to "open up" or "adapt" plays, and somehow transcend their origins.

How would you describe your approach and technique in making Long Day's Journey Into Night?

I'd had some dissatisfaction when I'd seen *Long Day's Journey* on the stage. I had felt O'Neill's intent had not been realized. Also, the experience with *The Iceman Cometh* had illustrated for me that there was a superb method of focusing the play through the use of the camera. This is not in any way to reduce its dimension. For me, it intensifies it by getting it specific. By pushing it very hard along one interpretive level, along one *directed* level, it assumed even greater size. *Iceman* had shown me there was an ability to take tragedy and do it on a screen that was, in that instance, a small screen. It seemed to me the chances for an artistically complete thing were even increased by doing the screen version of *Long Day's Journey Into Night*.

Can you be more specific about your dissatisfaction with the Jose Quintero production?

Primarily, it had always seemed to me, if the play was about any of the four, it was about the mother. In the Broadway production, largely because of the dominance in performance of Jason Robards and Freddy March, the play focused on the men, the father and the son . . . and the eldest son's relationship. I'm not just

talking in a Freudian sense. It seemed to me the fullest, and the most moving, tragic elements lie in the relationship of Mama and Edmund. I felt the screen would really allow me a way, if I channeled *every* technical device at my command, to make a movie of what I felt the play was about.

So Long Day's Journey is a movie about a play?

Well, it is not, in any sense, a photographed stage play. It is a movie; the amount of technique was so prodigious, it was a technical *tour de force* in many ways. And all directed toward the one thing which I feel does make it "cinematic." It is a "movie" if those people or that situation is defined in a way it *cannot* be defined by using any other form. That more than completed itself for me in *Long Day's Journey*.

How did the O'Neill script make certain demands that required extraordinary technical means to transfer the play to the screen?

The obvious demands in terms of making a movie of it: four people, essentially one room, even though I did move the very beginning of the script outside. The technical demands were enormous. The reason, by the way, for the moving of the first part outside was not the usual movie thing of "breaking it out." Obviously, that would be silly. Finally, we were "stuck"

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with four people. I had decided in my early conferences with Boris that I wanted the greatest shift of light possible. I wanted *literally* to take a “long day’s journey into night.” I wanted to start with the brightest sunlight (in fact, the opening title shot is against just the sun) and wind up with the last shot of total blackness, just the lighthouse light sweeping the four people at the table. That is the reason for moving the very opening of it outside.

I also don’t like tragic omens. I wanted to start it off as lightly and brightly as an Andy Hardy movie. The exterior, with its leaves, with its sunlight, provided the best opening.

There was no screenplay. As you know, I used the text of the play. Of the hundred and seventy-seven pages, we cut seventeen. The cuts were made during rehearsal when we found out what we no longer needed. Knowing by then what I’d be doing with camera, certain elements of the drama would become clearer sooner, and we could make certain cuts. I’ve got a good technical memory, and the complete technical breakdown, developed from the rehearsal period, I carried in my head.

How much time was spent in actual preparation prior to rehearsals and actual shooting? What was the nature of such preparation?

The preparation time was enormous to me. Usually, on work that’s turned out well for me, I go through a rather simple process. I know a long time in advance I’m going to do it, and then it just gestates. I read it slowly and think about it, and read and think, and read and think, and really, in a strange way, make no decisions. The actual gestation period—well, on *Long Day’s Journey*, I think it was close to a year; on *Seagull*, almost two years. Then when the working time comes, that is, going into active preproduction, at work with the set designer, the cameraman, choosing locations, rehearsals, shooting—that all proceeds at white-hot heat. The actual preproduction time, not counting “thinking time,” was only about six weeks.

How closely did you work with the actors during the rehearsal period prior to shooting?



Sunny beginnings . . .

The closeness in the work with the actors is the heart of the picture. Like all good working experience, I think we emerged from it totally close personally, a complete connection for all of us. That was accomplished, really, in the pre-rehearsal period in quiet conferences between ourselves. Then in rehearsal itself.

What was fascinating was that each of the actors worked very, very differently. Ralph Richardson works on what amounts to a musical basis. I finally found a shorthand with him of “Ralph, a little more bassoon, a little less violin, a little more cello, a little tympani here,” literally in those terms. It was immediately picked up and translated into acting.

Dean worked very internally, needed total discussion . . . Strasbergian analysis of each moment in him, in the character.

Jason likes to think of himself as an out-and-out technician. Of course, he’s not. He’s a totally inspired artist. With Jason, as always when we’ve worked together, one doesn’t talk about the most profound elements of it or the most moving. They are somehow understood between you. One deals largely on a technical level with him.

Katie was a fascinating factor. Because I’d never worked with her before, I let her go. In the first three days, she took off with that extraordinary instinct, that incredible energy of hers. On the third day of rehearsal, she panicked because, as so often happens on a great role, instinct isn’t enough. It only lasts for a



*Four
people,
one
room . . .*

short while and then starts collapsing under the weight of the emotional demand. It became necessary to search for it elsewhere. Searching for it someplace else meant, at certain times, sheerly technical adjustments, on a level of "Let's get on with it. You're taking too long with this speech. Don't try to stretch the emotion. Let the words carry it," that kind of thing. Too, really profound, close, personal discussions between the two of us, *as* the two of us, of that character, of O'Neill.

What kind of moments would come out of these discussions?

For example, the moment when Edmund tells Mama that he's dying. We were, I guess, in about the eighth or ninth day of rehearsal, and I said, "Katie, I'm going to ask you to do something that's going to shock you at first. It may terrify you, you may refuse, I don't know what's going to happen. But when he says, 'Mama, I am dying,' I want you to haul off and hit him as hard as you can." The first look on her face was one of such shock. She is not a physical actress, she doesn't clutch people, she doesn't use props, she doesn't need physical sources of

security. Certainly physical violence is not anything that comes easily to her.

I think we stared at each other for about two minutes, just gathering on a kind of osmosis level an understanding of why that moment called for that. We didn't say a word, but we just stood there for almost two minutes, I think, staring at each other. Then she dropped her eyes and said, "Okay, I'll try it." The first time she did it, it was so brilliant and pulled so much out of her, involved her to such a degree, we never tried it again until we did it on camera. I didn't want it to become too familiar an emotion for her.

Did the actual shooting of the film differ from customary procedures of shooting?

The actual shooting wasn't really far different from the shooting on any other film, except I did try to give them more continuity than one usually gets. This wasn't too difficult. We were on one set, and a confined one. Also, this was necessary, because when they are acting on that kind of level, they're exposing areas of themselves, conscious and unconscious. Every source of security they can have—knowing

where they're at, in the character, knowing where they're going—all of these things are important if they're going to be free. Continuity, and sticking as close to continuity as possible, was the only difference from normal shooting.

What advantages and/or disadvantages were there to working on such a tightly-knit shooting schedule?

There were no disadvantages for me in the six-week shooting schedule. You always shoot very quickly anyhow. This comes, I guess, out of the television training, of, in a sense, "pre-editing" my films, and knowing what I want in advance, making the dramatic selection in advance. As a matter of fact, my guess would be that on anything like *Long Day's Journey*, a short shooting schedule is almost a necessity. The same thing happened on *The Seagull*. We did *Seagull* in twenty-nine days. I've found for myself, and I'm quite sure the same was true for the actors, there is an emotional exhaustion. You'd get home at the end of a day of shooting on *Long Day's Journey* . . . at the end of the six weeks I felt as though I'd been weeping for six weeks, and was just so tired, really spent inside. I don't think I could have shot for much longer than that. So, my guess would be on something of that level, there is an advantage to the shortest working time possible.

By what standard might one measure the manner in which you and Boris Kaufman work in creative collaboration? For example, who would evolve or devise certain shots, such as the 360-degree pan of Katharine Hepburn?

A question of collaboration between a director and a cameraman is always such a highly individual one. Boris and I have done, as you know, eight pictures together, and it's always a very close relationship. The choice, the selection of a shot, I guard jealously. And that is my prerogative. The 360-degreeer was mine, the final pullback was mine, the shooting plot of the picture was mine. But I don't in any way mean to denigrate Boris's contribution. Where he begins, and this becomes an enormously vital element, is in the lighting. In black and white, particularly, the light is one of the key

ways in which one extracts the meaning of the drama. Boris's triumph, from a lighting point of view in *Long Day's Journey*, lies in the fact that if you take the same close-up of Ralph Richardson from Act One, and a close-up of Ralph Richardson from Act Four, the exact same size, and put those two faces next to each other on the screen, they will look like a different man. It'll almost be hard to think the same actor is in both shots. That is Boris's triumph, and it's a tremendous one, through the use of light.

But, still, the collaborative aspect must become an intensely fluid kind of creative relationship?

He carries out a dramatic intention so that, in a way, it's hard to say where one begins and one leaves off. I'll say, "This is the shot." In advance, we've discussed the feel of it. The gradual shift of light, for example, was predetermined before shooting even began. Boris executes that in terms of light, and this can be a great accomplishment of the camera.

There are many fine, fine cameramen in the world. Very few films come out, you know, out of focus or badly exposed. Almost everyone's competent on the technical level. Boris's mastery lies in his ability to translate a dramatic situation into the gray scale from white to black. We used no special film stock or any special process.

What other guiding factors, if any, unite the two of you in terms of a central aim or approach?

One of the things that was terribly important was that there be no sense of technique . . . that no technique ever show. The greatest art of it, it seems to me, is how Boris's art and my art is *hidden* in that movie. You don't see that it's well directed, you don't see that it's brilliantly photographed. It's just there, it arrives full-blown. We didn't want to do anything that was "spottable" by an audience.

What other individuals—for example, Art Director Richard Sylbert—were most important contributors to the success of the film? How did you work with them?

The same sort of relationship exists. We would sit and talk in advance, and I would say, "Dick, the parlor which is never used, I want it to have a really funereal feeling, just in the back of the dayroom, in the back of this summer room where they *do* live, in the back is this past thing. The past is always present with them, and the past is always death, as the future is death for them." Dick takes this and converts it into black horse-hair furniture which is right for the period and, visually, kept the parlor looking like the inside of a funeral home. The upright that he chose, the upright piano which we finally do touch in the last act, close to the ending. These levels of interplay between the director and the art director and the cameraman, the closer the better. The ideas come from every place, and like all good things, sometimes you don't know who contributed what. Also, like all good things, they are all pushing toward the same thing. One of Dick's favorite expressions is, "We're all making the same picture."

How was such an appropriate visual equivalent of the O'Neill play achieved? For example, what processes were involved in the selection of film stock, processing, and lighting?

Before, when I said it was a prodigious piece of technical work, this is no exaggeration. We used everything film would command. The camera is really a fifth actor in something like *Long Day's Journey*. As such, it has to be integrated into the domain of the other four as much as if it were a live person. A lot of these selections were made in advance of shooting—a specific lens for each character, a specific lens change for each character—for both Ralph Richardson and Jason Robards, the lenses kept growing wider as we went act by act. For both those actors, the eye level (where the camera was in relation to eye level) kept dropping. By the end of the piece, in Jason's case, literally shooting from the floor, from almost below the floor level.

The takes were even shot in the kind of eventual rhythm in which they were edited. For example, Jason and Ralph were almost al-

ways handled in short takes. (By the way, this is up to the fourth act, at which point a great many things changed.) As opposed to Hepburn, who is almost always handled in very long takes. And handled that way in the editing, too. Nothing interrupted the takes. If I remember correctly, because it's many years now, there were some seven- and eight-hundred-foot takes on Kate. This was not only marvelous for performance it was right for the character. The whole editing sense of her character was to be *legato*.

With Kate, the opposite happened with eye level as the character progressed. I kept getting higher and higher on her, shooting down on her more and more. Edmund stayed as long as possible the most "objective," the fewest lens changes on him. On Katie, the lenses kept getting longer and longer, so the outside world kept disappearing more and more—the focal depth was, of course, smaller on a longer lens. Lens opening and key light were all chosen with that in mind. For Jason and Ralph, we could finally be stopped way down but using quite a lot of light so the backgrounds would be in focus . . . and, therefore, have more life to them. That mattered in terms of character.

As I said before, there were no special film stocks or processes. But, shot by shot, there was the most intense delineation on a visual level that both Boris's and my experience could make. You'll find an extraordinary thing when you study the film. It wasn't a conscious decision other than the fact that a set-up has to say something: no two set-ups with four people inside one or two rooms for over three hours . . . there was never a duplicated set-up! Yes, of course, there are instances of shooting two over-the-shoulders and, in the editing of it, as you cut back to each over-the-shoulder shot, you're cutting back to essentially the same shot. But in camera placement, in camera positioning, in lens opening, in key light, in lens used, once "Cut" was called, there was a brand new set-up for each shot in the picture.

What problems were confronted in the editing? How much of the film's success depended

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on the editing? Was the editing ever taken out of your hands?

The editing has to be an integral part of what's been going on. To have shot eight-minute takes on Hepburn, and then interrupt them with reaction shots, would have been a wasteful expenditure of technical energy and Hepburn's energy. If that's the way it was shot, it was shot with that intent and was to be used that way. Essentially, the rhythm of the editing followed the rhythm of the shooting which was following the rhythm of the performances which were evolved in rehearsals.

The editing, as I say, I was there, physically present every second, my own hand on the Moviola brake. It's again a very close thing. The only eventual problem that ever came up—not the editing—was after the initial release of the picture. I don't remember the final length when we opened. I'm not sure whether it was two-fifty or three hours and ten minutes. I'm not quite sure. [The original length of the film was 174 minutes. A shorter, 136-minute version was circulated for the film's general release, though the unedited version is available for rental from Audio Film Center's New York office.] Contractually, I did not have final cut. Ely Landau, who put up the money for it—his own personal money, I might add, it was not studio money in any way—Ely had final cut. When we sold the picture to Joe Levine for his release, Joe happily went along with the picture as it was and opened it. It opened under the most unfortunate circumstances, with the longest newspaper strike in New York's history. Papers were out at least fourteen weeks, so whatever good notices we had were lost. There was no chance to spread the word. The picture still ran for a long time—fourteen weeks at the Loew's Lower East. There were no Critics' Awards that year because of the strike, which ran into December.

But an unedited version of the film was eventually released?

When the picture went into general release, they found they could not release the picture at its full length. Theater owners simply would



Shooting down on Hepburn . . .

not accept it. It was then cut.

Did you have a hand in the cutting?

I don't know who physically cut it, took out the . . . I don't know whether it was twenty or forty minutes. I've never seen the cut version, I couldn't bear to. But it could not have been legally done without Ely Landau allowing it. Joe gave it its fair shake. He released it, as it was, and fought for it, advertised it well, tried to get Katie the Academy Award. She was nominated. He opened it in New York and Los Angeles and, I believe, London—I'm not sure—in its original length. And he was the one who suffered the financial loss. He paid Landau the full cost of the picture for the right to release it.

How would you explain your use of the camera as enabling you to compress the actual "playing time" of the drama? What is the end result of this approach to the use of the camera?

The camera makes things clearer sooner and also makes other reactions clearer sooner. Knowing the impact, the meaning you want it to have on this character, even though the other character is saying it, you are able to compress in that way. As I say, I only cut seventeen pages. I find O'Neill a great writer. "Great" in the classic, total, historic sense of the word. I find every word useful and needed. People are so used to finger-tip experience, and a lack of a really profound revelation. They're impatient, they think it can come quickly. Well, in many

instances, it can't. It's so often like life, and O'Neill is like life. It has to go around the same circle four times, but all the time it's like an awl which is biting deeper and deeper into the wood each time it goes around. It's not going around on the same level, it's going around on one level deeper until, finally, something bursts within you as it bursts within the play. For that, all those repetitions are needed. You need them in *Iceman*, you need them in this. I think it's true of really all great drama. The camera, by allowing me to take out, as I say, seventeen pages of a hundred and seventy-seven mimeographed pages, that is already an extraordinary contribution the camera can make. Certainly, without camera, those seventeen pages would have been vital. But as I say, they were all in the area of "You got it. You got the point," just that much sooner, so half a page would go here, half a page would go there . . .

You have spoken of the interaction of camera and subject, the idea that the camera becomes one of the actors. How do you employ this principle in a technical, physical sense?

It has to relate to each performance in such a specific way that it is defining, revealing, and, if anything, increasing what the performance is doing. One simply cannot record. I remember very early in my television experience, I had a marvelous performance on a television show, then we got off the air and turned around to everybody in the control room, beaming and saying, "How about that performance? Wasn't that magnificent?" Nobody knew what I was talking about. In essence, what I done with the camera was undermine what the actor was doing. I had weakened the actor. When I saw the kine four weeks later, I realized that and I've been very careful that that never happen again.

. . . An actor saying a line, the same feeling, with the same size, if it's a close-up, the top of the frame cutting just below the chin, you can get the same size with a 25mm lens or a 15mm lens. It's a question of whether the camera is physically close or farther away from the actor. But there is an emotional difference in what that lens records. A 50mm lens gives me a dif-

ferent feeling about a face than a 25mm lens. A graduated scale of use of lenses is, to me, one of the contributing factors to a movie. I always make a lens plot. It seemed extremely important the right lens selection be made in relation to performance. As I say, in the most general sense, in the case of Katie, I kept going onto longer and longer lenses. In the fight between Dean and Ralph in the last act, as the fight went on, the lenses became shorter and shorter until, finally the end of the fight was shot on 18mm lenses. Yet the introduction of them had been so gradual, the normal distortions you see with an 18, and which are there in the shots—they are distorted—but your eye isn't aware of them. I'd led you to them gradually, not wanting to make a point of it. But there was an increased hostility, an increased violence, an increase in the change of emotions the two characters were going through. And the lenses were changing with the emotion. It's in that sense that I talk of camera as another actor, and in something like *Long Day's Journey* where you have no relief to the eye, where you are caught in the same physical set-up shot after shot after shot, lens selection, lens opening, key versus filter, all those camera considerations become terribly important.

One of the nice things I like is that a lot of people never even realized, until they'd seen the picture a second or third time, that at the end of the first act, when Hepburn takes off on walking around the room, we went around the room four times on a three-hundred and sixty degree pan. It was so integrated into her emotion, the technical *tour de force* never occurred to the people. In the scene I was just talking about with Dean and Ralph in the fourth act, whereas I'm sure a great many people who are aware of film would spot an 18 immediately, I doubt if they know it was used there.

What about the changes in the visual make-up of the Act Four scenes?

The way Jason was shot in the fourth act, the way Hepburn was shot, the lenses used in the last four close-ups of the four people just before the final wide shot, those lenses help

make a tremendous difference in the character delineation of those faces—the eye level at which they were shot made a tremendous difference—for your information, Ralph's close-up was an 18mm lens, Jason was an 18mm lens, Dean was a 25mm lens, Katie was a 100mm lens—a total reversal in the field, again for a deliberate and dramatic purpose.

What problems have you faced in the direction of other films adapted from plays, i.e., The Fugitive Kind, A View From the Bridge, The Seagull, that seem to arise repeatedly in such adaptational work?

The problems on, let's say, *The Fugitive Kind* or *View From the Bridge*, are not at all similar in the sense that they're not great plays, they're not masterpieces. In each instance I felt the movie would really get a tremendous chance to correct some of the dramatic errors in the plays. They presented no problem from a confinement point of view—you have a much greater liberty in that regard. The obligation is to keep true to the play's theme, the meaning and intent, assuming that they are what attracted you to begin with. I don't see the point of taking a masterpiece like *The Seagull*, or *Long Day's Journey*, and changing it. Number one, I'm not going to improve upon the original! Second, there is more value to extract from what is there. The most brilliant film sequence of Jason in the whorehouse would not have been nearly as meaningful as the way he was using it in telling it to Edmund. That's what was important, not the information of it but the emotional point he was going to get to by starting to talk to Edmund on this kind of level.

Similarly, that's why "breaking out" would be useless for *Long Day's Journey*. The same is true of *Seagull*. You are dealing with a complete piece of work. The problem is to reveal it. We could have gone to Moscow to show Trigorin and Nina's affair. Again, that's not what is important in it. When David Warner (Konstantin) tells what happens to Nina, he is being attacked and beset by the people around him. The questioning of him at that point, by mak-

ing him relate that story (which is obviously of a most painful nature) is one of the steps to his suicide. It is in that way Chekhov uses the exposition of what happened to Nina and Trigorin. You can't show Nina and Trigorin and cut that speech simply because it is descriptive.

It depends on the material you're doing. When it is a masterpiece, it is a masterpiece for a reason. I don't think its structure can be tampered with. I think you can take off and do your own version of an Orestes theme or one can pick up *Romeo and Juliet* and do a completely personalized version of it. That's not what interests me.

The use of the word "adaptation" is true, but plays, of course, aren't the only source of it. Other than, I guess, a documentary, any movie is really an adaptation. It is an adaptation because it is artificially created. Again, getting back almost to the first question, it's a movie, and a creative one, if it has defined those people and that situation in a way that could not have been defined without the form you were using.

In what manner did you achieve the very specific rhythmic shifts and tones, apparent both in the delivery of the actors and the editing of the film?

The following through of what began in text and what happened in performance was to determine what would happen on camera, and from on camera into the editing. In terms of each character, it is that following through that gives the picture the very specific rhythmic feeling that it has. Knowing that, as a character, Jamie interrupts, and is interrupted, and in a way *wants* to be interrupted, wants conflict—he lives *stacatto*—that basic character element in him determines a great deal right away. Knowing that Edmund tries to play the observer but is, in actuality, the victim in many instances, determines that rhythm.

How much attention do you direct toward the over-all rhythmic structure of the work?

The word "rhythm" is fascinating. I've only worked on three great texts—*Seagull*, *Iceman*,

and *Long Day's Journey*. No, no, no, wait: I once did a production of *Bourgeois Gentleman*, that's a great text. A similar experience on all four of them, you feel much more like a conductor than a director. This wasn't only in the specific instance of using musical terms with Ralph Richardson. You very often make a selection, whether it's in staging or in the tempo of the scene, very much in relation to what went before and what's about to come after. In a very rhythmic sense, if the scene in the playing developed into a scene of slow tension and pauses and so on and so forth, you will therefore try to justify and try to find reasons for a complete reversal in tempo, much as that pattern develops from scene to scene to act to act, so that each act takes on its own tempo.

I've mentioned before the last act of *Long Day's Journey* being so different from the other three. It not only was from a lighting point of view, but also from the total rhythm of it. That is due partially, of course, to the fact that Mama's not there, she doesn't appear in the fourth act. It's left to the men, and that changed the rhythm, the tempo, the feel of it. And I felt that feeling of conducting very strongly in *Seagull*.

What do you feel is the most significant technical achievement of the film?

The fact that it took so long for people to discover that it was a marvelous technical achievement. I'm very proud of the fact that it's only really been in the past five years or so as people have seen the picture. There's been this very slow discovery that, technically, it was really brilliant. At the time of release, it was terribly irritating, because you're always tempted to show off and show people how brilliant you are. When it opened, it was referred to very heavily by many of the reviewers as a photographed stage play. You wanted to kill, because you knew any critic who would say that had no eye, did not belong in movies, should not be criticizing movies. He can't see what a lens does, he can't see what light is doing—sheer technical ignorance. Katie knew,

she knows all there is to know about movie-making, Boris knew, I knew, Dick Sylbert knew. We knew that we were doing something magnificent, technically, and yet the source of pride in it was the subtlety of the achievement—the fact that when transitions were made, they were made so slowly, so gradually, you didn't see them taking place.

The technique is hidden. As soon as you can spot technique, as soon as the shot looks magnificent; as soon as you're aware of that in the first scene of a movie, I think the director has blown it.

Are there moments in the film which you would direct in a different fashion today?

I haven't seen it now in four years. I'm going to take a look at it this summer again because I miss it. Four years ago, when I guess I'd seen it six times since I'd finished it, there's not a shot I would have changed. I don't know if I'll feel that way today. But . . . very possibly I might feel the same way.

Is there anything you might care to add that would clarify an understanding of either your working methods or techniques in regard to Long Day's Journey?

The basic thing, it seems to me, is to guide the work, and somehow keep yourself "out." To put yourself in totally, to exhaust yourself, to expend yourself, to make it what you feel about it—and yet not let any of that be apparent. It seems to me, and there's obvious room for argument in this, doing *Long Day's Journey*, doing *Seagull*, to try to define those plays in terms of what they mean to you, and yet not to be the "hero" of them, not to be the savior of them, not to be anything but the instrument through which they pass.

I know there are other methods of work, I know one can argue. But I wanted the best *Long Day's Journey* I could achieve, or the best *Seagull* that I could achieve. Both pieces satisfy me profoundly. *Seagull*, I think, is my best piece of work. And *Long Day's Journey*, certainly, close to my best piece of work. In both of them, I feel, you know O'Neill better for having seen that film, you know Chekhov bet-

ter for having seen *The Seagull*. And you know every one of those characters better.

But something of your own personality inevitably emerges, too?

Like the technical side of *Long Day's Journey*, and the slow revelation that that really was rather super, if you look very closely under the edges and so on, you'll know me a lot more. It is not the "personalized movie" in the European sense of the word. (I don't want to get into the argument because it's a spurious one.) I think as much of myself is revealed in the way Denholm Elliott and I worked on the character of Dorn in *The Seagull*. As you know, Dorn in *The Seagull* is always played as your kindly old winemaker/doctor, sweet, cuddly, and the observer, sighing gently at life's follies, just looking at it all objectively. I think the "objective man" is a lot of crap. I don't think any such thing exists, and I think people who lead that kind of life—the nonparticipants—are hiding and are bitter. We made Dorn a rather vicious, dangerous man. That's the way we chose to do the man, and that's just as revelatory of me as if I had included a piece of autobiographical material done *à l'auteur*.

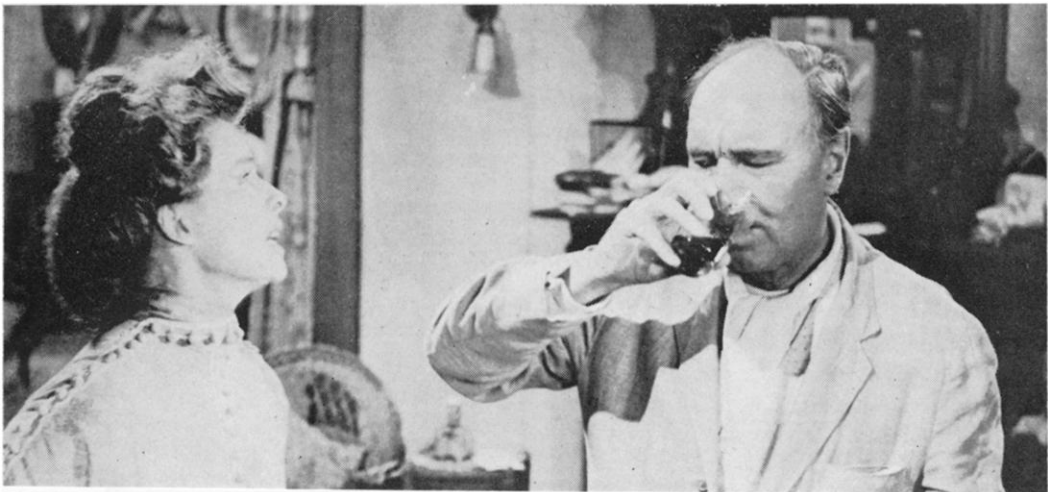
Did your direction of Long Day's Journey influence your direction of other films?

One of the great pleasures of *Long Day's Journey* was that it showed me how far one could reach in terms of subtle, technical mastery of your craft. Since then, I've never done without the shooting plot . . . the lens plot.

That is much more important to me than the conventional shooting plot. For example, on *The Hill*, I did that entire picture on four lenses. The first third of that picture is in 25mm lens, the second is on an 18mm lens, then for one quick scene between Sean Connery and Harry Andrews—a marvelous scene in the courtyard where they're battering at each other—I went to 6-inch lenses, did it with two cameras so that it was just one take. From there on in, the rest of the picture is shot on a 14mm lens. I don't know if you've ever seen that much film on a 14mm lens. It's an extraordinary lens, it's a very *dangerous* lens to use. Yet nobody is aware of it, because the arrival at it was so built, stylistically, through the body of the picture. But it is a unique lens and finally to be used simply within the confines of the cell itself, with close-ups and everything shot on the same lens—close-ups, long shots, it didn't matter. And yet it gave that piece a kind of emotional directness and drive that I found very impressive.

Did you later apply certain of the same techniques that were successful in the film?

It's interesting that, having chosen a picture like *Long Day's Journey*, so often called a "photographed stage play," I found because of its "uncinematic quality" this tremendous technical expansion. I've found the most extraordinary cinematic contribution to my work since then because these tools are so ripe, ready, available, alive for me that it's become second nature to me now.



The Difficulties of *Little Big Man*

In many of the films of Arthur Penn there appears a minor character who is a kind of chronicler, tagging after the main story, trying to get his hand for a moment on some of the truth and some of the glory that the heroes have absorbed from their own contact with fame and history. In *The Left-Handed Gun* this character is the dime-novel writer Moultrie, who is outraged that Billy the Kid's real life doesn't live up to his own heroic fantasies. He even thinks that this disappointment is reason enough for his willingness to betray Billy himself in search of a better story. Shelley Plimpton in *Alice's Restaurant* wants to sleep with Arlo Guthrie because he "may be an album someday." Such characters are trying to suck a little permanence, a little glory, into their own lives by linking with what they believe to be true permanence and fame outside themselves. In their turn, the heroes themselves often believe that only such a chronicle can truly validate their identities: Bonnie and Clyde want to see their names in print as much as the reporters who follow them want to write their story. When Bonnie's poetry is printed in a newspaper, she says that for the first time she feels like she exists (a detail stolen by *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*). Print makes eternal the human experience that otherwise quickly vanishes.

Penn pursues this theme in *Little Big Man* by emphasizing the framing character of the history graduate student with his tape recorder all set up to interview Jack Crabb about the "primitive lifestyles of the Plains Indians." Like the photographer who takes the picture of Jack and his new wife Olga in front of their general store, he wants to "preserve the moment."

Preserve the Moment is in fact the title of a book of photographs by Penn's elder brother

Irving, and the efforts of both still photography and the chronicling common to newspapers and Ph.D. dissertations in history seem bent on restoring the actual erosion worked by time, so that corruption and decay can be turned back into vitality and innocence, the old Jack Crabb in his hospital ward become young Jack Crabb once again.

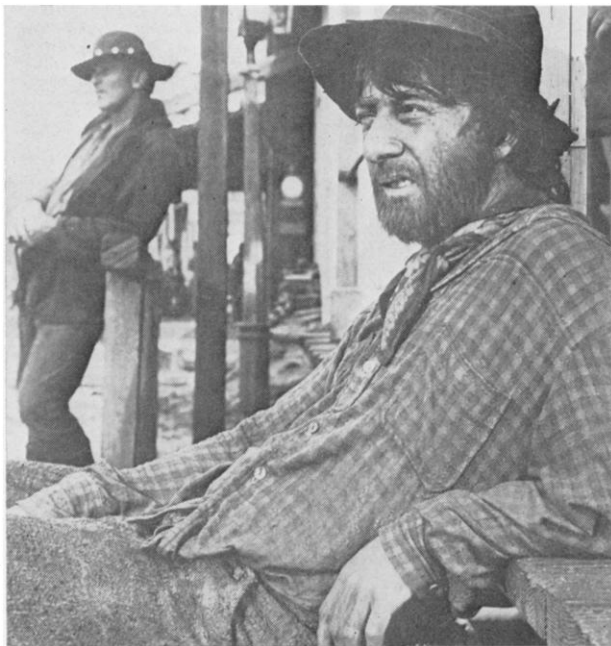
But Penn in fact seems torn between preserving the past through the clarity of photographic detail and preserving the past through the romantic revisions of reality that are allowable in myth. So many of Penn's films deal with an American past in the hopes of transforming its fleeting realities into the permanence of heroic myth. *Bonnie and Clyde* seems to affirm the ability of art to accomplish such a transformation. All the critical complaints that two killers were romanticized and heroized were in this sense not complaints at all, but clear visions of what Penn was doing. The implied question for Penn was whether or not one film could contain both the realism and romance of their lives. But Bonnie and Clyde were not separate enough from the corrupt society that surrounded them and on which they fed. Their rebel roles, the fame and heroism they sought and projected for themselves, were sham. They were compromised because in fact they were guilty, and their slow-motion deaths are less a beatification than another effort to preserve the moment, to preserve the possibility of heroism that once existed, to stop time in its inevitably reducing and debunking rush forward.

With *Alice's Restaurant* and *Little Big Man*, Penn's uneasiness with the heroic vision of the past has become more and more acute. Both films have a kind of compelling openness and inconclusiveness after the tighter and more closed worlds of the earlier films. The hermetic

LITTLE BIG MAN

posturings of *Mickey One* give way in some sense to the violence and directness of *The Miracle Worker*. To counter the romanticized heroes of *Bonnie and Clyde*, in *Little Big Man* we are faced with George Armstrong Custer, the demythologized hero. And such a figure is no longer the central character. That role belongs to Jack Crabb, who, if he resembles anyone in *Bonnie and Clyde*, resembles C. W. Moss (Michael J. Pollard), watching with telephoto distance as his two heroes ride out to their deaths. Combining the distancing dime novelist, the detached spectator, with the blandness of Arlo Guthrie in *Alice's Restaurant*, one comes up with Jack Crabb, the central character of *Little Big Man*. And it seems no coincidence that the chronicler at one remove, the history student who comes to interview Jack, bears an extraordinary resemblance to Arthur Penn.

Penn's variations on the problem of romantic versus realistic heroism seems closely related to the way he presents the relations of youth and age in his films. In somewhat traditional terms, youth frequently has the energy of naturalness and innocence, while age brings corruption and cynicism. But anyone who remembers *The Left-Handed Gun* or *The Chase* could not call *Alice's Restaurant* an unambiguous paean to youth culture or *Little Big Man* youth's clear-eyed condemnation of the lies and venality of America's barbarous treatment of the Indians. In one brilliant scene in *The Left-Handed Gun* Billy and his gang have a mock fight, throwing flour sacks until they are coated like masquerading children; later, in a fiesta scene, Billy chooses to dance only with a little Mexican girl. Through such scenes Penn clearly implies that Billy's kind of rebellion is a fight against growing up, a pastorally based innocence that refuses to come into adult society. In *The Chase* the relation between Jane Fonda, Robert Redford, and James Fox constitutes the same kind of childhood world, a relation that no adult in the film, even the sympathetic sheriff, can really understand. The two worlds are separate, like the adjacent houses in *The*



Down and out: Dustin Hoffman

Chase, one holding an adult party, the other a teenagers' party. For a while they remain separate, but ultimately the adult world crushes the world of the children, as Redford is shot on the courthouse steps, as Pat Garrett kills Billy, who has considered him his father, as Anne Sullivan must tame and socialize the anarchic energies of Helen Keller, as the deaths of Bonnie and Clyde are engineered by C. W. Moss's father, supposedly to protect his son.

With *Alice's Restaurant* and *Little Big Man* the balance has shifted. The adults—Alice and Ray Brock, Marjorie and Woody Guthrie—are more sympathetic. Instead of being the betrayers of youth, the observing adults have become the victims of youth. Arlo's bland screen presence and the empty characterizations of many of the other young characters force us to look more closely at the adults. Only Alice and Ray really hold together the youthful Utopia of the Stockbridge church, while Woody, lying in his hospital bed, unable to speak, hardly able to move, implies a cannibalization of age by youth. Woody's music may live on, but his own end is still death. The grim possibility that Arlo himself may have the same disease that Woody suffers from under-

lines the fact that youth will fall victim in its turn. Both *Alice's Restaurant* and *Little Big Man* end with images of loneliness: Alice in a foreground of shuttering trees; Jack Crabb in the dark hospital ward. "Songs for Aging Children" is the real theme song of *Alice's Restaurant*. And the nervous ending camera, trying to look at Alice directly but constantly shifting its angle, is an image of the uncertainty of the film itself, trying to focus on Alice's problems directly, but succeeding only in getting itself waylaid by youth culture and cheerful songs against authority.

Little Big Man tries to reconcile youthful iconoclasm and freedom with the wisdom and weariness of age by emphasizing the continuity between the young Jack Crabb on the screen and the old survivor in his hospital ward. In the novel Jack tells his story in the first person. We match in our heads the timbre of his voice with the nature of his adventures. But in the film the narrative voice with its cracked quavers constantly reminds us that the young face on the screen has somewhere in his future an old decayed body. From the crowded life of his youth as a participant in so many different communities, Jack will finally come to a time when the only interest in him any community will show is to put him away to die, like the forgotten Woody who, in a scene left out of the final *Alice's Restaurant* but in the original script, sits unnoticed in a wheelchair in Washington Square, while nearby guitar players sing his songs.

With this kind of continuity in Penn's interests, why then does *Little Big Man* fail to hang together? Why does it seem more sprawling than rich, more scattershot than pointed? The answer I think lies in the character of Jack Crabb himself and how that character is conceived by Penn; for Jack Crabb's inadequacies as a central consciousness or a conscienceless picaro seem to be artistic failures intimately related to Penn's themes. The gap between the youthful Jack and the 121-year-old Jack in the hospital is never really bridged. Penn, like

his surrogate, the graduate student historian, finally stands outside his central figure, without making the imaginative entry into Jack's character that could have given the film some needed coherence.

In Thomas Berger's novel, and the retrospective or picaresque novel in general, this problem of main character continuity rarely comes up because the continuity of the narrative voice is enough to give an aura of unity. But when a film of such a novel is made, the events of the main character's life are objectified on the screen; they are no longer so intimately his; they have separated themselves from his point of view and his character and now exist as an independent reality. Only the voice-over narration remains to bridge the separate events, and with the loss of the continuity of personal reminiscence, such a device only emphasizes the many gaps. Jack's story in the film therefore becomes a series of vignettes, some good, some bad, some handled well, like the Gunfighter period, some lamely like the Religion period, and some poorly like the Down and Out period. The purported structure seems to be a variation on Ford's *Three Godfathers*. In his different guises Jack will act out all the possibilities for a man in the Old West, and the width of his perspective will then be a model for a wider view of man and society that no individual—not the Indian Old Lodgeskins, the preacher's wife turned whore Mrs. Pendrake, the itinerant con man Allardyce T. Merriweather, nor the soldier George Custer—could have on his own. With such experience Jack might then be the conscience *and* the hero of his society. Having experienced all, like some frontier Tiersias, he could gain wisdom and understanding: "It was no adventure. I knew Custer for what he was and the Indians for what they was."

Almost all the events in Jack's historical life (as opposed to his personal life), all the events that find their way into History, he observes either from afar or from a privileged position within: the death of his wife in the Washita massacre, the death of Shadow That Comes in

Sight, the Sand Creek Massacre in which he and Old Lodgeskins walk out as though invisible, and Little Big Horn itself, where he stands, wounded but uninvolved, watching Custer rant on the battlefield. Jack's place in the film is always behind or apart from the main action. When Custer vaunts before Little Big Horn, Jack sits behind him on a rise, while Custer postures in a little natural stage between rocks; when Old Lodgeskins goes up on the mountain to die, Jack helps him and then stands aside again. The grander heroes, good and bad, must have center stage, and Jack the observer lets them step forward.

This kind of a pose could be the best way to view history. It could be the main element in a kind of historical satire: the great men as seen by the little man, the outsider, who can reduce the pride of a Custer and make Old Lodgeskins into a true hero because he has an irony about himself and his pretensions. One figure behind Penn's Jack Crabb could be "Lyndon Johnson's dwarf alter-ego," that clownish "Mailer" who finds himself unwittingly at the center of great events in *The Armies of the Night*.

But Jack achieves none of these possibilities. He cannot play the role of the little man caught in History because there seems to be nothing inside him that can bring together the many faces of his experience. Nothing seems to hold Jack together and therefore nothing seems to hold the film together. Merriweather says that Jack likes Old Lodgeskins because "He gave you a vision of moral order in the universe and there isn't any." And Old Lodgeskins says late in the film, "A world without human beings has no center to it." Jack Crabb could have been the moral center of *Little Big Man*, but he is not. Amid all the certainties of the other characters, he could have been the one who knew all at their proper value and could act wisely and well. But he never seems to come to terms with the warring parts of his own nature. If he has learned anything from his experience, he has not been able to act on his knowledge. All the great spectacle of *Little Big Man* is

basically compromised because there is no vital center from which it is observed. Dustin Hoffman's acting in fact increases this episodic feeling. It is a versatile performance and that is its greatest fault. With Hoffman's ability to mime Jack's different states so accurately, Jack more and more separates into an incoherent handful of selves. And because he is not strong, the other characters have only a weak consistency: Custer slips into the shrillness of some superimposed ideology; there is no tension or release in the reappearance of Jack's sister Caroline; the death of Wild Bill Hickok, one of the few well-conceived characters, slips too easily into a checked-off vignette.

Penn's basic difficulty in *Little Big Man* is to have conceived the character of Jack Crabb as an imitation of a lack of moral authority rather than an expression of it. Jack may be the archetypal American liberal who knows and sympathizes so much with every side of the question that he becomes incapable of acting. Jack has lived for 121 years to wind up in a charity hospital. When he rests his head in his hands at the end of the film, he may be mourning more for his failure than for his loss.

But for all these fascinating possibilities, Penn has not yet worked out the structure and the images that will fully and complexly express these themes of age and wisdom, youth and vitality, historical involvement and artistic detachment. Authentic life exists in many parts of *Little Big Man*, but the film remains only fragments. Yet Penn's grapplings with these themes are more moving in their failure than the easy and limited success of most other directors. For all its faults, *Little Big Man* does embody a palpable sense of loss—the loss of youth, of time, and of opportunity. And if the ultimate emptiness of Jack Crabb is echoed by the incoherence of the film, it is only the mark of how difficult it is to dream clearly of Eden when one lives in a fallen world.

WOMEN, WIVES, FILM-MAKERS:

An Interview with Gunvor Nelson and Dorothy Wiley

Gunvor Nelson and Dorothy Wiley have been friends for eleven years, and have made films both together and separately. Schmeerguntz (1965) is their hilariously disenchanted view of the grimy side of American marriage. In Fog Pumas (1967) they produced an unnerving surreal vision of the inside of a woman's mind. Five Marin Artists (1971) is a documentary. Gunvor Nelson separately has made My Name Is Oona (1970), a gentle and lyrical portrait of her daughter, and Kirsa Nicholina (1970), a charming poetic documentary about natural childbirth at home. Dorothy Wiley has done a series of short 8mm films best described as filmic prose poems, using objects of daily life (red cabbage, coffee grounds) as materials. Distributing their films through Canyon Cinema, the two women have become well known for their work. In the past those few women who have directed feature films have had to adopt what was essentially a male role: that of the aggressive, individualist, managerial personality—what the Hollywood phrase called “the foreman on the set.” But as the old conventions of film form disintegrate, we may also expect that artists will come to work in far less high-pressure modes—and women film-makers may often lead the way in integrating their lives and their work.

BR: How did you get started making movies?

GN: Bob [Nelson] and I made one movie when we first started building our house in Muir Beach and we just wanted to make a movie to send to my parents in Sweden. That was his first movie, too.

BR: When was that?

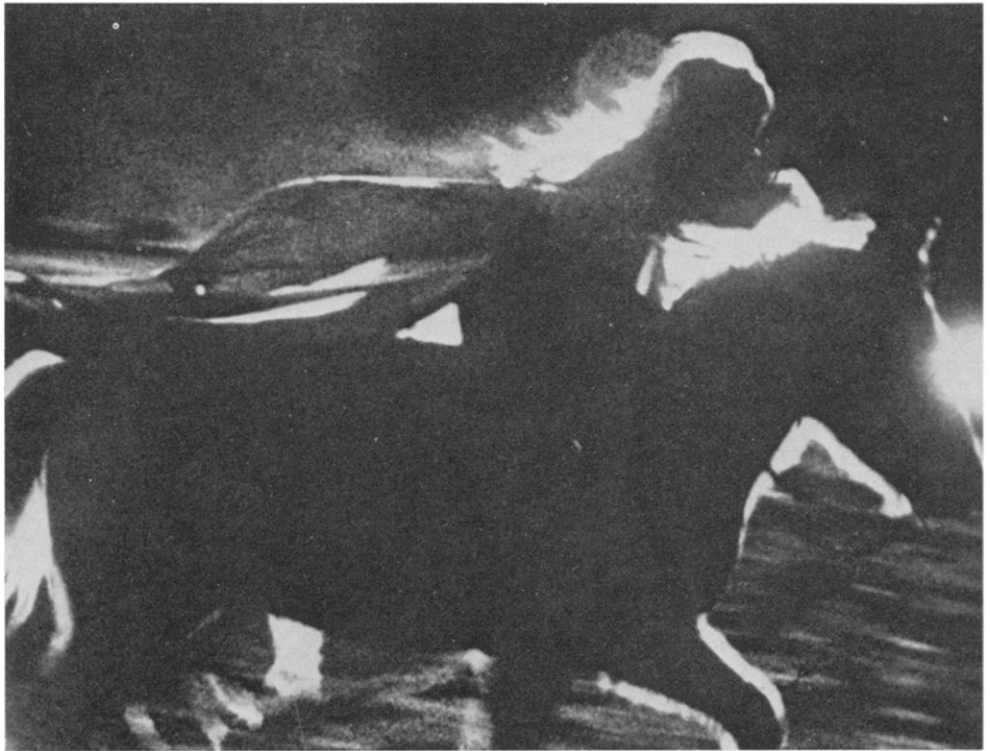
GN: In 1962. After that, Dorothy and I made two little 8mm movies, and Bob went with Bill Wiley, Bob Hudson, and Ron Davis and made *Plastic Haircut*, and that was more

like a professional thing—Dorothy and I just fiddled around with little stuff.

DW: I had never taken any photography courses, and Gunvor hadn't either. Later, for *Schmeerguntz*, I can remember telling Bob we wanted to make a movie, and he just sat down and in about half an hour showed us how to use a camera, and that you could move stuff around, and that was all the instruction we ever had.

BR: Were you ever especially conscious of

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being women making movies?

DW: Not the way you would be today, no, with women's liberation and all.

GN: But I remember with *Schmeerguntz*, we wanted to make a 16mm movie, I think. But we had no subject. And one day I was looking at all the gunk in the sink and thought of the contrast between what we do, and what we see that we "should" be—in ads and things—and that was the idea right there, from the sink.

DW: We always divided it all up equally for some reason. We both filmed, we both edited, and we seemed to agree on things.

BR: What do you think the advantages are of making movies together?

DW: For me, up until lately, I was never highly motivated enough to do something for myself. But if I said to Gunvor I'd be there at eleven, to please her I'd be there at eleven, and do it. But if it had been up to me, I would probably have done more dishes or something.

GN: Yes, for me too. It's like getting away from the fear of it or something.

BR: Were you surprised when the movies got famous? And you got famous?

DW: I was very surprised.

BR: Have you made very much money from them?

GN: Enough to make other movies.

BR: Was *Schmeerguntz* the first movie you showed publicly?

GN: Yes. It was New Year's Eve in Sausalito.

GN: Everybody roared.

DW: It was the last movie on a program with about five films. I didn't think it was so great or anything, but people hooted and hollered and stood up and clapped. It was just a good audience.

GN: And then it won about five awards.

DW: We sent it to the Ann Arbor Festival and it got one of the top prizes that year, and that amazed me, because I didn't know what was going on in the film world, and that we could just make a movie and get a prize for it—that was surprising, I didn't expect that.

BR: Dorothy, you were the pregnant one in

Schmeerguntz and therefore you were the subject matter of it in a way. Was that sense of hostility to the pregnancy really a factual thing—Miss America and advertising, on the one hand, and, on the other, pregnancy and falling over to get your socks on?

DW: I've thought about that, and at that time it was just factual. I just wanted people to see it, and I don't think I thought about the pregnancy very negatively from the more personal point of view.

GN: For me, that was America. Of course, some of the things in it are pure accident, because we were pretty careless.

DW: Like the sound track, we didn't know how that would fit in until we saw the copy of it.

GN: Like when you threw up, and "he kissed her again" is on the sound track. We didn't plan that.

BR: What did your husbands think about the movie?

GN: I think they were very impressed. Bob was anyway. And I remember Bill Geis came over, and he had never spoken to us as human beings before, and it was as if he was seeing us for the first time or something.

BR: Did that make you mad at the time, that you had to make the movie in order to be seen as something other than wives?

GN: No, we were pleased.

DW: I can remember being upset about that. I think I was probably pleased too, but I remember making that distinction—wondering why I had to have some kind of a product to be talked to.

GN: You could see through it, but at the same time you were very pleased, when finally you were seen as a human being. And it didn't matter to me what medium it was through at the time. It was a breakthrough of some kind.

BR: Do you feel that those films help express something you don't otherwise express? I guess what I'm getting at is that I think both of you are fairly unemotional women, and yet the movies are very emotional.

GN: Well, I feel I'm emotional, but as a Swede I have difficulty expressing it, I guess.

It's just not natural for me. You have to get it out somehow.

BR: I thought *Fog Pumas* was a heavy, depressing movie, filled with fear. Did that happen on purpose? Do you know where that fear came from, what it was?

GN: I think there's partly fear in there, sure, but I think the beauty of the unknown world, whatever it is, overwhelms or overtakes the fear.

BR: I guess one of those first shots, in the alphabet soup bowl, when it said *TOO BAD*, I was thinking about that through the rest of the movie.

GN: That was Dorothy's. She wanted it on leaves and everywhere. I didn't really understand where you got that from.

DW: I can remember a party we had at the church one night, and I was overhearing a conversation between two friends of mine, and this girl would constantly set up situations and talk about her problems and people would offer solutions, and then she would always work it around so that she would not have to accept any of the solutions and could talk more about her problems. And I could see that about the only way she could relate to people was to talk about these problems, and I just remember sitting by the bookcase and putting those letters up on the bookcase, "too bad."

BR: But you didn't know about all that, Gunvor?

GN: I just accepted it. If Dorothy wanted that. I stopped it a little bit, I think. The "too bad" on the leaves, you had made slides of that, and I thought one time was enough.

BR: But I kept thinking about it all through the rest of the movie.

GN: So it was strong enough that once to carry through.

BR: To me everything that came along just seemed "too bad." The dwarf seemed too bad, and those fish in the tanks seemed too bad. Just everything seemed too bad. The city with those negative shots seemed too bad; I kept thinking that was a war thing. The sound track was kind of scary.

DW: Gunvor did the sound track.

WOMEN, WIVES, FILM-MAKERS **=====**

BR: What was that about the bodies in the pool?

DW: We took down people's dreams and used some of them. That was in somebody's dream.

GN: We made a composite, though once we started the movie just made its own dream.

DW: It was pretty intuitive.

BR: Was every separate incident based on a dream that someone had?

GN: At least the starting point, most of the time, yes.

BR: Where does the title, *Fog Pumas*, come from?

GN: We wanted something that was an enigma.

DW: We had a huge long list of titles that we'd gone over for hours with Wiley and Nelson, like we've done with all our movies—just spend whole afternoons in hilarious laughter over titles.

BR: Is the new documentary the first movie you've made together since *Fog Pumas*?

GN: Yes.

DW: Our movies always take longer to put together than we estimate. *Schmeerguntz* we had to take nine months out while I was pregnant. *Fog Pumas* the same thing.

GN: *Schmeerguntz* and *Fog Pumas* were a year and a half each, I think. And this one has been longer.

DW: *Fog Pumas* was harder because I was hauling our child Zane around to everything, because we could never afford babysitters, and I can remember driving into the city with him, and wrestling with him on the bed when we were trying to do stuff.

GN: We used him in the movies too.

DW: It just always took so much longer because of that.

BR: Do you consciously select things that surround you—the objects, the housewife things, your own children—for subjects? Is that intentional, or is it just the easiest?

GN: Well, I don't see *Fog Pumas* as too much household surroundings.

DW: I don't mind using household things.

GN: It's like going really into it, and seeing



FOG PUMAS

the beauty of it, instead of like *Schmeerguntz* where you see the ugliness of it. Not that we didn't see the beauty in *Schmeerguntz*.

DW: We kept trying to get ugliness into *Schmeerguntz*, and everything would come out beautiful. We used a lot of things in Mary Collier's house, and I can remember photographing her table, and she was trying to type on it, and they have four kids and live in this tiny place. And it was her refrigerator and toilet and table and everything, and it often was so cruddy. But filmed it was all glamorous and beautiful and glittering.

GN: We would look through the camera, and say, "Look at that," real excited. It's all cruddy, but in the camera it just looks so beautiful.

BR: It's probably hard for you to be objective, but if you first saw those movies, would you know they were by women?

GN: People have said that *Fog Pumas* is really so feminine, and I've never understood that. I can see that in *Schmeerguntz* and maybe *My Name Is Oona*.

DW: Somebody related a conversation to me once. *Schmeerguntz* had been shown at Reed College, and they had overheard a conversation behind them, and one person was maintaining it was made by a man who hated women, and the other one was saying, no, it was by a woman who hated men. And they fought over that, but they couldn't tell.

BR: This gets into a women's liberation thing, but do you think there's any validity to making

it clear that the films are by women? Judy Chicago is teaching painting to a women's class at San Diego, and, as I understand it, she says part of the importance of women's liberation is to make people know that your art is by a woman.

GN: I just want people to know it's by me.

DW: I think that could have its usefulness for people—I don't reject the whole idea.

GN: I don't think of me as man or woman. I just want people to identify those movies with me as a character, without reference to being a woman.

BR: Since the beginning have you made much effort to learn technical things, or has all that happened by accident?

GN: It happens as we need it.

DW: We experimented in *Fog Pumas* with filters and different kinds of film and stuff, because we hadn't done that before. I mean, I just didn't know anything about any of that, so we tried out a lot of different things in that film.

GN: Technically we're not very good. It's just a matter of knowing what to select when you're putting it together, to have a sense of form and understand what you like, timing, whatever—all that goes into movies.

BR: Do you go to movies a lot?

DW: I used to, but I haven't in the last few years.

GN: Well, I know many people who see many more than I do, but almost every week I go to Canyon Cinema, and I go to "regular" movies. I like them too—the regular movies, you know, full-length features.

BR: Do you like any movie-makers in particular?

GN: Bruce Baillie was really the first one. Well, I had seen *Blood of a Poet* and some other experimental films in the late fifties, but Bruce Baillie, when I first saw *Mass*, was just a turn-on for me. I knew I wanted to make movies after that. So Bruce Baillie—not all his films, but most of his films—and Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* was another milestone. When I was fourteen or fifteen, I saw *Hamlet*. I saw it four or five times or something. I was

really knocked out by that.

DW: I was just thinking today that one of the first movies that knocked me out, when I was probably about ten, was *Tales of Hoffmann*. Now when I think about it, it seems real creepy, dramatic sets and things. But, oh, it was music and art and I just didn't have anything like that.

GN: Yes, romance with art. I remember when I was about ten I saw Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast*, and I would sneak into that movie and sit in the front row, and I was so scared when those arms came out through that hallway, with the candles, I mean, I was just shaking, it was just horrible to me, but it was so strong. I've seen it since, but it's from then that I remember it.

BR: Are you moving toward a documentary style consciously, or has that just happened?

GN: No, I don't want to head in that direction. I want more *My Name Is Oona* type movies. Or *Fog Pumas*. That's my direction. It just happened that I filmed the birth movie. And Dorothy was the instigator in the new movie on Marin artists.

BR: Did they ask you to do the birth movie, or did you think of it and ask them?

GN: No. A friend of this couple's is a filmmaker from New York, and he came down to me, I'd never seen him before, and asked me if I wanted to be a second cameraman, and I said sure, so he went back to New York to raise some money and he was going to do a big production of it. And he asked me to do some film on the beach before, and then the baby was two weeks early, and he wasn't there.

BR: Have any children or teenagers seen that movie?

GN: Yes. And Oona and her friends. Oona said it was almost as good as a cartoon.

BR: You said you were going in the direction of *Oona* and the *Fog Pumas* movies, Gunvor, but I thought they were very different, had a very different look to them. *Oona* is very impressionistic, both technically and emotionally.

GN: Well, to me, it's more the surreal I want, and I see them both as surreal. They might be different directions in surrealism.

BR: How do you see *Oona* as surreal?

GN: It's those childhood fantasies, the surrealism of those I see, and those haunting images.

BR: But you do think it's an accurate portrayal of her character?

GN: No, she is just the subject matter, and, well, she did most of the things naturally, but at the same time I used her because of the black and whites, and how I was filming and everything.

BR: So more than being a portrait of Oona it's a movie about childhood and fantasy?

DW: It's a portrait of Gunvor.

GN: There is a lot of me in there. And naturally there's a lot of my feelings about Oona, too, so I can't really separate them. It's probably me more than it is Oona.

BR: You never said, Dorothy, what you thought about fear when we were discussing *Fog Pumas*. Gunvor said it wasn't really the fear that was the overwhelming power for her in that movie. Was it for you?

DW: I think so. I think it has a lot to do with the sound track though, rather than the footage itself. I mean it was the sound track that intensified it.

GN: What I see in that movie is the humor.

DW: Yes, the parodies of all those movie clichés, like the chase.

GN: I had a showing of all the movies at the Museum of Art, and James Broughton was sitting by me, and he laughed and laughed, and I was so happy that somebody finally saw some of that in there. Of course I see the other thing too. I don't laugh out loud, I can't do that, but I chuckle at a lot of the things.

BR: Well, I think you're right that sound track was scary. But also, the movie is very dreamlike, very surrealistic, and all those things that could be parodies if they were done straight—if you just saw a woman screaming like that you would laugh—don't seem that way in this movie because it really is too much like the reality of what does inhabit our dreams, and that makes it scary.

GN: Well, we wanted that too. But we wanted both levels, like the Allan-Nelson

movie, *War Is Hell*. Like, when she screams the last time, she puts on the light, and there very calmly is Wiley's mother sitting there. And it's just very funny to me.

BR: Gunvor, is there anything in your character that's specifically Swedish?

GN: Dreams. And a general feeling of order, a classical type of form which is ingrained.

DW: I think so. I think in Gunvor there's a fantastic craftsmanlike sense that I don't have—high standards of perfection and taste. I associate that with European or Swedish craftsmanship—fine things finely formed.

BR: Do either or both of you think of yourselves as being very independent or very dependent women?

DW: I felt dependent, and I made great efforts to be independent. I mean, when I was younger, they were great efforts for me. Then, being married, I thought I had slipped back into dependency again, and I didn't like it.

BR: Do you think making movies helps you to be independent?

DW: Yes, it helps. But not much.

GN: I never thought of being dependent. I mean, this is the character, it's not because I'm a woman, and I had to fight through being so shy and backward. I never saw it as being because I was a woman, but that I just had that in my character, it was just me.

BR: What else would you like to say about your movies?

GN: For me, the intention is trying to dig

KIRSA NICHOLINA



deep and find those images, to find the essence of your feelings. I guess about a year ago it just struck me that the outside world for me, all the things that are there, are symbols for what I feel. Trying to use film as a medium to express what's inside you, you have to use those symbols. If you want to communicate you can't just show a simple cup the way it is always shown; you have to find an angle that actually expresses those feelings, not only for other people, but for yourself, so you don't just see that cup or the coffee grounds. Most people won't have seen it the way you have seen it, and you have to dig into it really deeply to show yourself, and hopefully other people then, what you see. But specifically it's very hard to tell what you want to express. I've had many people discuss with me, especially in Sweden,

how many artists have this line of doing art for a cause, or for the masses, or something like that, and they are just the medium for expressing this thing which is bigger than they are. I want to go into myself as much as possible and hopefully it will be universal, or another world that somebody can look it. In seeing other people's art, the more personal it is, the more into their head it is, the more I'm interested in it. To see other people's worlds. To communicate that way. So the more personal it is, the more interesting it is. Like Jonas Mekas's *Diary*, it's three hours, and the first hour I thought was just so personal and beautiful, and then he slacked off and somehow it wasn't so personal and beautiful anymore. He lost it somehow when it got more general. I only have myself to come from.

Correspondence & Controversy

THE AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE

I believe that most everyone connected with The American Film Institute read with interest your long and thoughtful article in the Summer issue of *Film Quarterly*. We appreciate your serious approach to the problems and possibilities of The American Film Institute and recognize that your piece, though in some ways critical, was affirmative in its intent and useful in terms of creating discussion about some of the problems we are trying to deal with.

In that spirit, I will prepare a piece commenting on yours for your next issue. Obviously, our experience has led us to choose different directions than you would have in some instances; and, perhaps to be expected in an article of such great length, there are some factual errors which we would like to correct. We appreciate and will, of course, not dispute your praise of the archival program and your acknowledgement of the high caliber of the selections made in the film-makers assist-

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In the meantime, we will soon be publishing a complete report of AFI's first four years—detailing the many projects that have been undertaken and listing all of the people who have received support from the AFI as well as all of those who have contributed to the Institute. This, along with an audited financial report, will be available to any of your readers and can be obtained by writing to 1815 H Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20006.

—GEORGE STEVENS, JR.

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Reviews

DEATH IN VENICE

Director: Luchino Visconti. Script: Visconti and Nicola Badalucco, based on the novel by Thomas Mann. Photography: Pasquale de Santies.

Like the playwrights and novelists of earlier ages, film-makers are under no aesthetic obligation to respect their sources merely for the sources' sake; indeed, departure from the source is precisely part of the challenge of adaptation, and it is always necessary, of course, in the drastic compression through which a novel must pass to reach screen length. Sometimes, as in *Jules and Jim* or *Bicycle Thief*, the film seems incomparably more powerful than the novel—though we need not always ask that film-makers “improve” upon the original, since an honorable job of work may be pleasurable and useful enough. But in any case comparisons are inevitable, since the way in which the original (or at least penultimate) author framed and solved the problems of the work cannot help but be of interest as we examine how the adapter attempted to frame and solve them.

However, when a film-maker chooses to call his work by the title of the original, it is always part of the critic's task to compare the spirit and the letter of the adaptation with the original. Pinter and Losey calling their film *The Go-Between* is an assertion that they are capturing visually the psychological nuances of L. P. Hartley's novel by the same name. The degree of their success, however great or small, is to some extent a comment on the significance of the original as well as a measure of how well they have achieved a self-assigned aesthetic task. By calling his film *Death in Venice*, Visconti asks us to discover Thomas Mann's story within the texture of his film, as Kurosawa, with more humility, does not ask us to do when he gives his version of *Macbeth* the title *Throne of Blood*.

Gustav von Aschenbach, as created by Thomas Mann, stood as a moral authority

epitomizing the values and precedence of the bourgeoisie. He was world-renowned, awarded a title of nobility by a German prince. His books were honored, chosen as texts in the schools, because he scorned those who failed to survive in the bourgeois world, who lacked the “moral fiber,” the discipline not to ask the wrong questions. He was the spokesman of those who would avert their eyes from men too weak or too sensitive to survive in a puritanical, callous, and self-centered age.

In the hands of Luchino Visconti, Aschenbach is instead the “weak and silly fool” for whom Mann's Aschenbach showed little sympathy in his ironically titled novel *The Subject*. Where Mann's Aschenbach approached tragic dimensions as an artist larger than life whose fall presaged the fall of his epoch, Visconti's is a repressed, priggish gentleman whose infatuation with an exquisitely lovely adolescent boy reflects more ignominy than irony. Far from Mann's distinguished author, he is a whining, whimpering man in need of smelling salts.

The notion that Aschenbach was based upon the composer Gustav Mahler led Visconti to two disastrous choices in his adaptation. First, he makes Aschenbach himself a composer, condemning him to an artistic world of abstractions. Unnecessarily, he forfeits the advantage of a character whose words could provide an ironic commentary on his own behavior with his repressed impulses liberated only in the corrupting lagoons of Venice. As a composer, Aschenbach cannot have the social role as guardian of the morality of his class that Aschenbach the philosophical novelist could enjoy.

Secondly, Visconti overwhelms his *mise en scène* with the music of Mahler himself, his requiems here oddly out of place because Visconti has not created a character as heroic or as large as the movements of Mahler would demand—though the music of Mahler would have fitted Mann's paean to the spiritual fall of the bourgeoisie. It is out of place in a film about a middle-aged man's infatuation with a young boy, a man lacking all will and strength. From beginning to end Visconti's character is

incredible as the moral voice of the idle bourgeoisie which wallows passively in the luxury of the Grand Hotel des Bains during the period preceding the First World War.

In Visconti's latest "masterpiece" (it is said that he was outraged at not being awarded the Golden Palm at Cannes), we are treated to every danger inherent in the adaptation of the classics of fiction into film. Milieu is made an easy substitute for analysis, melodrama (Aschenbach's choking with Asiatic cholera in the last scene, black dye running down the sides of his face, is quite ridiculous) for a sustained metaphor which would illuminate the contradictions inherent in the character of a man who would live simultaneously as bourgeois and artist.

Visconti does magnificently with his evocation of the wealthy bourgeoisie on vacation at Venice. He surveys the lobby of the hotel, introducing us to the world in which Aschenbach holds a respected place. Aschenbach enters the lobby before dinner dressed in the manner of his class, replete with white gloves. Women in the most elaborate of costumes outnumber the men, foreshadowing the oncoming of the war—a point Visconti makes beautifully merely by a pan of the camera, without a word of the didactic dialogue too frequently the technique of historical exposition in *The Damned*. The hotel is adorned with enormous vases of gorgeous flowers, the women are all in pearls and feathers, and the loveliest image in the film may well be not the boy Tadzio, but his elegant, superior mother played by Silvana Mangano. She shakes hands with her plain daughters and idolizes her son. As she walks through the film, her words are inaudible, incomprehensible, and thoroughly perfect. She is the glory of her class, a living example of privilege, but inexpressibly beautiful with her poise, control, pearls, mauve satin, and lace.

But this depiction of the vacationers, with whom Aschenbach blends in so well, functions in the film more as painting than as cinema. The image is static. Self-satisfied, these people can be no more than they appear. After the

panoramic lobby scene, their presence becomes superfluous. They cannot provide the film with a sustained dramatic action.

Visconti makes his most serious mistake in opening the film with Aschenbach already on the steamer carrying him to Venice. In rimless spectacles and scarf up to his neck, symbolically shielding himself from contact with the world, Aschenbach is irritable and impatient. But we are unclear about why. Mann introduced *his* Aschenbach to us *in medias res*, within the context of the routines of a normal day, the better for us to contrast the Aschenbach who began each day by a cold shower with the Aschenbach who can murmur "I love you" outside a young boy's door. Visconti gives us too little information about the man who is about to sacrifice all his previous standards for one more moment in the presence of a beloved to whom he must never speak.

Thus Visconti's tale is fraught with melodrama, because psychology is reduced to the violently inexplicable. The people in Visconti's films, lacking meaningful personal histories, emit an air of unreality. A flashback to a collapsed Aschenbach after a concert informs us that he travels because a doctor prescribed a change of scene. This is indeed a far cry from Mann's Aschenbach who travelled because his unconscious, struggling to free itself from bourgeois restraints which governed his daily life, felt a demonic need to flee from the rigors of Munich, to renounce his commitment to a culture which defined itself by his words.

Visconti omits the first demon wanderer in Mann's story, the red-headed traveller with a knapsack on his back, whose image awakens in Aschenbach the irresistible urge to travel. He wastes Mann's second demonic metaphor of Aschenbach's unconscious, the young-old man who assaults Aschenbach on board the steamer with his carmined cheeks and yellow teeth. He is repulsive, but we do not yet connect him with a latent self-destructive wish playing in Aschenbach's unconscious, undermining his will to lead a morally righteous life. Visconti should have shown us Aschenbach as he was in Munich, instead of offering meager, rather un-

believable, flashbacks of an idyllic relationship with a beautiful wife mysteriously vanished. In his past Visconti's Aschenbach is shown capable of an exuberant joy, an abandon which Mann would have found inconsistent with a character so closely resembling his paternal forbears: "officers, judges, departmental functionaries—men who lived their strict, decent, sparing lives in the services of king and state." But only for Mann's solitary, self-denying artist does an obsessive sojourn in Venice become either credible or interesting.

Because Visconti's Aschenbach is never in the German bourgeois world in which he was master of himself, we do not believe in the character, despite Dirk Bogarde's valiant performance. Visconti has not allowed his Aschenbach a wide enough arena for self-expression, and the twitching of the mouth and sly smirks with which Bogarde conveys Aschenbach's repressed lusts emerging are too frequently ludicrous, embarrassing even a well-disposed opening-day audience.

To compensate for such frail characterization, Visconti relies heavily upon an extended use of flashbacks. These, invented largely by Visconti, show Aschenbach in debate with one of his pupils, as heavy-handed a means of conveying ideas as is likely to be found in a "major" film by an acclaimed director. Tedious dialogues between Aschenbach and "Alfred" punctuate the more visually alive scenes in Venice. They are abstract in the extreme and do little to illuminate either the character of Aschenbach, the dilemma of the artist, or the dilemma of the bourgeoisie, Mann's essential themes. One suspects that Visconti cares little for the ideas being bandied about and is really using the flashbacks to show that homosexual impulses were present in Aschenbach before his fatal voyage to Venice—an easy psychologism in which Mann did not feel it necessary to indulge.

Visconti's conception of Aschenbach deteriorates as the film progresses. In the first flashback his mouth quivers at the thought of there being so little time left for him to create beautiful works of art, a sentiment which falls

flat since we doubt whether he was ever capable of genuine creation. Flashing forward to his room at the Hotel des Bains we witness him kissing the photos of his little girl and wife. Visconti has Aschenbach's daughter die in childhood, so that Aschenbach's parched emotional life can be attributed to the harshness of fortune. Mann has Aschenbach's wife die, but his daughter grow up to maturity and marry, only to see and be seen by her father infrequently, in an emotionless relationship. Visconti seems to be trying to engage our sympathies by suggesting that if only Aschenbach's wife and daughter were with him, he would not have needed Tadzio, undermining the point that sexual repression corrupts and love denied finds expression in the illicit.

Visconti turns the boy into an outrageous flirt, something Mann only hinted at. But it is surely exaggerating to equate, as Visconti does in his editing, the boy with the prostitute from whom an adolescent Aschenbach fled in fear. Visconti has both the boy and the prostitute play on the piano Beethoven's "Für Elise." The music continues from one shot over the other in the distant past; conceptually linking boy and prostitute. Visconti loses Mann's sense that the boy, while he represented the temptation of sensual beauty, was not therefore himself a temptor.

The debate between Aschenbach and Alfred regarding the origin of beauty is too little integrated into the perceptions of Aschenbach's life, as sterile as they are, to link the conversation with the advent of Tadzio. Aschenbach had argued that beauty was the product of intellectual labor and the discipline of will, his pupil that it is born spontaneously from unrestrained senses. The viewer watches the frenzied scene between the two men with distant interest. Why are they so excited? What has this to do with the flight of Aschenbach to Venice? Aschenbach is told that his great error is to consider life, reality, a limitation. His retort is that reality degrades us: "You can't expect life to illuminate the targets and steady your arm." Despite Visconti's nudging, it could be argued that within this abstract context

both men are right. Great art is the result of self-denying discipline; its inspiration may indeed be the "spontaneous" beauty of a Tadzio.

But the film does not give life to these words by embodying the real experience for which they are meant to stand. Partly this is the result of Visconti's failure to offer Aschenbach any opportunity for self-knowledge: a recognition that his way of life has led to its opposite. Mann's Aschenbach learns that his emotional and sensual denial has led to a degrading descent into the filth and corruption of impulses which he himself had taught the bourgeoisie to disdain. Visconti's Aschenbach is mildly bemused by his lust, tortured, but utterly uncomprehending. And because we have not seen Aschenbach in his ordinary life, (which Mann showed us in the minutest detail), we cannot accept Visconti's Aschenbach as a person who has tried to make of his personal life a balance, an example of the wisdom and human dignity which he is supposed to have expressed in his music. We cannot see him as a man who failed because the principles for which he stood ran contrary to the real experience of his age.

Visconti throws in one scene of moral judgment at the end of the film, as Aschenbach is already suffocating from cholera. We see Aschenbach, having completed a concert, greeted by the hoots and howls of an enraged bourgeoisie. Visconti has the bourgeois audience inexplicably see Aschenbach as a sham, whereas Mann never granted Aschenbach's admirers so great a degree of self-perception. For why should those whose values Aschenbach never questioned suddenly challenge his art, unless they were all too uncharacteristically criticizing themselves as well? It may be that Visconti intended the scene as fantasy rather than as a flashback into the past. In this sense it would represent Aschenbach's fear before death that his life had been in vain, that his music with its call for a discipline that denies life its vitality and freedom would suffer oblivion as deep as his personal fall.

The film does contain at least one other fantasy which occurs as well in a flashback.

Visconti cuts from the image of Tadzio to Aschenbach's memory of the funeral of his daughter, he and his wife weeping, the coffin being carried away. As he remembers the death of his child, he fantasizes that of Tadzio.



The cutting is clever because it is a perfect visual expression of Mann's insight into Aschenbach's secret wish that Tadzio not live to grow up, so that his beloved would not outlive him. But the scene of the hooting bourgeoisie flashed back at the end of the film matches with the flashback at the beginning in which the doctor urged Aschenbach (presumably after this great failure) to try a change of scene. That Aschenbach failed in his art first and then in his personal morality seems consistent with Visconti's generally contemptuous attitude toward a character whom he grants no integrity whatsoever.

Visconti's film is most successful when he returns to his visualization of the bourgeoisie. (Visconti only intermittently recognizes this class to be unworthy of an artist's concern about its capacity for dignity and wisdom. Mann never wavered in this conviction.) While the shots in the lobby of the Hotel des Bains showed this bourgeoisie in all its superficial beauty and invulnerability, on the beach they are shown uncovered, lewd, vulgar, disgusting. Old women wrapped in turbans in the fashion of the day laugh and the fat shakes on their faces. The children are chubby and awkward. The camera focuses on the bald head of a

man. The medley of voices murmuring in foreign languages (a technique Visconti used skillfully in the courtroom scene of *The Stranger*) effectively conveys the mindlessness of the bourgeoisie talking but saying nothing.

The calm image of Aschenbach by the surf watching Tazio appears then as a spiritual relief, although the danger inherent in his infatuation for the boy is nowhere better dramatized than in the following scene in which he is caught in the elevator with Tazio and his friends who seem to be laughing at him in mockery. It is at this point that Aschenbach packs his trunk to leave. But the subsequent flashback once again to the all-knowing Alfred accusing him of not living seems almost to suggest than an acceptance of life and the senses would demand that Aschenbach *remain* in Venice. Yet the extremity of Aschenbach's obsession with the boy has made it all too plain that only disaster awaits him. "Contact with reality" is too trite an expression of Aschenbach's needs at the moment. That "art is indifferent to morality," another of Alfred's arguments, is a gross simplification of Mann's insights: "And has not form two aspects? Is it not moral and immoral at once: moral in so far as it is the expression and result of discipline, immoral—yes, actually hostile to morality—in that of its very essence it is indifferent to good and evil, and deliberately concerned to make the moral world stoop beneath its proud and undivided sceptre?"

Mann felt in fact that one of the greatest dangers to art is that the artist not be attuned enough to the moral needs of the world from which the nature of his profession separates him. The challenge Visconti shirked was to translate this notion into cinema, to locate it in the texture of Aschenbach's life as an artist. By showing him to us only as a dirty old man, his flight to Venice loses its resonance. Gone as well is Mann's criticism of the bourgeois way of life which was at the root of Aschenbach's stultification as a human being. For it is one thing to show the bourgeoisie as physically distasteful and another to challenge its claim to moral precedence.

Only at rare moments does Visconti deepen his criticism of the bourgeois. Sitting petulantly in the railroad station, refusing to leave Venice until his trunk is returned, Aschenbach first looks toward, then loses his nerve and looks away from the poor and shabby man who falls in a seizure from the cholera—our first hint of the plague. Aschenbach's self-absorption is equated with the pestilence engulfing the city. Just as neither Aschenbach nor any of the other tourists lend a hand to the pale man in brown rumpled hat who sinks to the floor, so will none of them grasp the essential immorality of their class.

But the triumphant music accompanying Aschenbach's return to Venice, the blue water splashing around him, has too much of Visconti's sympathy to be as ironic as it should. Visconti in truth cannot decide whether Aschenbach's desire for the boy is a liberation or a degradation; perhaps this is why his death at the end is so stilted and unreal and endlessly, operatically long. The sunsets in their rainbow-painted splendor are only half ironic as they half mourn the fall of greatness in Aschenbach. These images negate the searing criticism of the idle bourgeoisie which Visconti achieved earlier with his camera. They further isolate Aschenbach from this milieu as if he were different, separate, more valuable, whereas in truth he is the epitome of the dying class gathered in Venice. (As a visualization of this corruption, a pestilence simultaneously symbolic and real, one of the best bits in the film is the vignette in which a demonic troubador and his troupe play at the Hotel, now abandoned by most of its guests. The troubador makes obscene gestures to the guests, an appropriate metaphor for Aschenbach's inner state. The finale is a song of hysterical, absurd laughter in which the players mock themselves, the guests, and life itself. It is ironically this devil figure whom Aschenbach asks whether there is a pestilence in Venice. He does not want to know the truth, just as he has failed to accept the truth about himself and the inadequacy of his belief that man can combat the irrational and the assaults to his

dignity, not by a transvaluation of values, but by will alone.)

Once he learns the truth about the cholera from a clerk at Cook's Visconti brilliantly has Aschenbach imagine his warning the Polish woman to leave Venice with her children, only to be rewarded by touching the boy's head (as Rohmer rewards Jerome with a caress of Claire's knee). He imagines the scene, he knows that to be moral he must attempt to save their lives, yet he cannot. As Mann says in *The Magic Mountain*, sensual desire may be repressed, but it will not disappear: "Love thus suppressed was not dead; it lived, it laboured after fulfillment in the darkest and secretest depths of the being. It would break through the ban of chastity, it would emerge—if in a form so altered as to be unrecognizable." Tortured by his failure to do the right thing, Aschenbach weeps, but he falls. Shortly he will visit the barbershop to be returned to his youth with black dye and carmine rouge, the music of Mahler heralding the depths of his degradation.



The last scenes are faithful to Mann's story. Aschenbach follows the Polish children and their governess through Venice. The streets are lit with bonfires and filled with lumpen elements who have emerged as symptoms of the corruption of the city. Prison bars shadow the circulars posted on buildings warning against the contamination; they symbolize Aschenbach's imprisonment in his lust. His

lip rouge smears. Feverishly, he sits down amidst the rubbish. Melodramatically, he both laughs and cries in his hysteria, crying in shame, laughing in irony at what he has become. He hears the now mocking words of Alfred: "You have achieved perfect balance. The man and the artist are one. They have reached bottom together." The words somehow are too strong, too unsympathetic to Aschenbach's plight, too much a victory in debate rather than, as in Mann, the mourning of a past order.

The final images reiterate the film's motifs, a technique Mann used in the story as well. An aging bourgeoisie sings a requiem for herself, for Venice, for her dying class. The wide expanse of beach with only a few figures small and isolated conveys a visual sense of a wider world existing, within which the visitors to the Hotel des Bains are small and insignificant. Tazio and his friend wrestle in a parody of lovemaking and Aschenbach tries to rise from his chair as if he would join them. Tazio walks toward the sparkling water, a vision of the beauty Aschenbach has denied, an image rather than the reality of a boy, as the antique camera placed expressionistically in the foreground of the shot reminds us.

Tazio wades into the water as Aschenbach crosses over into death. The boy turns, like art or beauty, indifferent to the suffering of the tormented artist. A boat on the horizon recalls the first image of the film, the steamer on which Aschenbach began his fatal journey. The boy points off in the distance, Aschenbach tries to reach out and then falls back only to be observed in long shot being carried off the beach like a sack of wheat. The man who called in Mann's story for a repudiation of the abyss ends ignominiously, rather than tragically, because Visconti has not sufficiently drawn Aschenbach as the best example of bourgeois man whose demise, in Mann's story, was mourned by a "shocked and respectful world."

The flamboyant Visconti is, at his best, the master of the bold stroke and the garish melodramatic gesture. Too often these fail as equiv-

alents of more subtle emotions, as for example when Visconti would have us equate Nazism with raving sadomasochistic homosexuality. Such an artist could find little appeal in the ambiguous character of Mann's Gustav von Aschenbach. For his discipline, rigor and precision, which Mann both admired and held suspect, Visconti has only scorn.

And even Visconti's magnificently mounted depiction of the haute bourgeoisie buttering its croissants and ordering fine wines on the Lido has about it an ambiguity, as if Visconti himself could conceive of no way of life as graceful. This is why the pale elegance of Silvana Mangano runs as a thread through all the scenes supposedly satirizing the bourgeoisie. Her beauty is there to remind us that the bourgeoisie is, despite its self-indulgence, also the highest degree of civilization yet to appear.

While Mann recognized the high degree of achievement of the bourgeoisie, its steadfastness and devotion to duty as valuable assets, he was unrelenting in his opposition to its essential amorality. His Aschenbach destroys himself because, despite his concern for the rules, he lacks a positive core of values by which to define both individual and society. For Mann, Aschenbach's surrender to sensuality is at once too late and a result, not of the chosen life, but of life revenging itself on a culture which has diminished it.

Visconti seems at times to be as severe a critic of the bourgeoisie, yet he cannot relinquish his appreciation for the superficialities of its achievement, for the veneer of style which, he also fails to see, serves primarily as a cover for an inherent absence of moral principle. Instead, Visconti offers a world whose sensuality and demand for every physical lust militate against its immorality. He chastises the artist for his abstinence amidst these delights, for ordering only soup and fish for dinner. Indian patterned cloths, huge plates of ripe fruit, including Mann's noxious strawberries, are equated by the camera with the greatest joys life has to offer. Tadzio too becomes one of life's splendors and Aschenbach's infatuation absolved. And Tadzio is idealized by the cam-

era with soft focus in the corner of a shot or the blur of a white umbrella in the foreground rendering his figure in deep focus like a Greek statue unobstructed by the gratuitous details of a world to which his beauty makes him superior.

Nor can Visconti, paradoxically, perceive the strength of the bourgeois era, and therefore the tragic significance of Aschenbach's fall. The images of his film tend to be ungrounded in a central understanding of who Aschenbach was and how his defeat was a historical as well as a personal event. The black smoke of the steamer carrying Aschenbach to Venice, the twilight with which Venice is bathed on Aschenbach's arrival, the boys in uniform running by the landing, the policemen who extort his tip from the old porter, the little boy in his cap passing Aschenbach as he arrives, the waltzes of a bygone age played by the band in the lobby—all, potentially significant, become disparate images, unconnected with the social origins and values of the central figure. Mann could give tribute to the bourgeois period while remaining implacable in wishing a dying order its overdue demise. Visconti, half-admiring the façade, never notices the substance—the tragedy of a man who could devote his life to proving himself and his class worthy of an unchallengeable social and moral status.

Meanwhile the slouching walk of a diffident Aschenbach, his shoulders hunched over, is pathetic, a senseless denier of life's feasts. Where Mann showed the moral inadequacy of the bourgeois *Weltanschauung* in Aschenbach's decline, Visconti applauds the trip to Venice, as if even the sight of the boy alone were enough to restore Aschenbach to the living. The conflict Aschenbach undergoes in the process is interpreted by Visconti simplistically as his failure to transcend remaining vestiges of puritanism. Confused and painfully callow, Visconti's adaptation of *Death in Venice* should remind us, not of the impossibility of adapting great literature to film, but of the danger to the film-maker who would translate into his medium the work of an artist whose ideas he has not mastered as his own.—JOAN MELLEEN

THE WOMAN'S FILM

Written, photographed and edited by Judy Smith, Louise Alaimo and Ellen Sorrin of San Francisco Newsreel; available from Newsreel, 322 7th Avenue, New York 10001 or 1232 Market St., Rm. 104, San Francisco 94102.

This 45-minute film, the best woman's film so far, starts off with a series of stills in rhythmic collage of women working, women in TV and billboard commercials, women in wedding gowns, models in magazines, etc. The tempo is to the beat of the once-pop hit "Can't Get No Satisfaction." The film then focuses on individual interviews with white, black, and Chicano working women in their homes talking about their pre-marital days—days when the big hope was of the one man who would transport them from the drudgery of their four walls. Following that disillusionment comes a raising of consciousness about women's real position in life. At this point the film is interrupted with a series of cut-outs from the days of the slave market. Black women like black men were sold to the highest bidder. The parallel: "women as niggers," the private property of one man to another, from father to husband.

The second part of the film follows the women to their individual consciousness-raising groups where the attempt is to help each other in specific matters, from child-care centers to personal problems. Other women find action in strikes where they can finally pinpoint a big enemy in the large corporation. The film largely shows women's economic exploitation and finally how women learn to be fighters.

So far the reviews and criticism on *The Woman's Film* have been a miserable conglomeration of misunderstanding, tidbits of backhanded compliments, and damnation with faint praise. Whatever traces of liberalism surface to demonstrate sophistication are, at heart, reactionary. The *Los Angeles Times* brushed aside *The Woman's Film* as having potential were it not for its propagandistic coloring. Yet it is precisely the political and propagandistic nature of the film that makes it an important and excellent Newsreel film. What good would

be a woman's liberation film which merely reinforces existing ideology? The film is not limited however to merely echoing familiar lines chanted by the faithful; its *radical* nature, uncompromised by tokenism, serves to raise a level of consciousness. This, after all, is the essence of a political film, the goal being a collective action for a collective solution.

The film deals with black, Chicano, and white working-class women. These women are not only oppressed but multiply oppressed—as women in the home, women-workers, and women victims of racism constantly coping with gut problems. The first woman in the film, a mother of several children, relates how she thought marriage would transport her to wishful luxuries of candy, Coca-Cola and books—things she never had as a kid. But, of course, even such minimal wishes were quickly transformed into daily battles for survival. Through these experiences she has finally begun to organize the neighborhood women to tackle problems of child care and personal fulfillment.

Another young black mother with an illegitimate kid was forbidden by the Welfare to have any boyfriends. She retorted that her mother had told her the same thing and if she did not listen to her why should she listen to Welfare? The point here (which was totally missed by Molly Haskell in the *Village Voice*) is the inhuman threat that Welfare uses with women with illegitimate kids. If these women are found with men their meager aid would be lost altogether which means that social life is denied them or arbitrarily curtailed. A third white woman and factory worker tells of how her first husband tied a string across the door to keep tabs on her while he went out to work at night. She didn't even discover this for several years. When she remarried and joined her second husband on the picket line at his steel plant she was accosted by a cop who called her a Communist. Her reply: "If what I'm doing is Communism, then thank God for Communism." Another young woman working as an editorial assistant discovers that her daily job is nothing but that of a glorified maid—

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typing letters dictated by men in reply to other men, making the bosses' coffee, cleaning the office and putting up with all sorts of insulting and demeaning quips or "compliments."

The film, which begins with a series of portrayals of these women in their daily surroundings, follows the logical progression of their struggle to get a gut understanding of their collective situation by organizing their own groups for collective action. All these women had looked to marriage or adult life as a means of escape from oppression but then found them extensions of the preexisting oppression. As one of them says, "They're not going to give it to you so you've got to take it from them."

The film has a beautiful "script" not written in the recesses of a library but by the daily experiences of these women. The film is clear and forthright in its views and there is a flowing ease between the women and the film-makers. It is important to note that this ease between subjects and film-makers was established within a very short period (a few months). This was possible in a documentary situation because the film-makers were all women whose level of consciousness complemented that of their subjects. The flow could only stem from a common understanding. Under no other circumstances could the end result of this film have been successful: the film was made *for* these women; it didn't simply *use* them.

An unfortunate lack in the film is the exclusion of Chinese and Japanese women whose silence so far should not be equated with contentment. Silence is an alternative manifestation of oppression. The other slight fault is calling it *THE Woman's Film* instead of *A Woman's Film* for this forty-five minute documentary is an apt introduction to, I hope, a series of woman's films exploring the specifics of the myths of male and female roles.

Finally, *The Woman's Film* is revolutionary. It shows that working-class women bring an advanced consciousness to the common struggle, that the struggle against oppression is basically and naturally intrinsic to these wo-



THE WOMAN'S FILM

men's lives, and that herein lies the essential energy and collective spirit of any ongoing movement. Their daily reminder of oppression at the gut level makes them the stronghold of women's liberation. They are the ones who daily confront oppression at all points of production—with, therefore, the greatest potential for eliminating it. It is mindblowing for the educated that these women have come to revolutionary conclusions about the oppressive nature of the power structure, making them born leaders of any revolution, while they have been so thoroughly restricted in their official, presumably "meaningful" education. The film shows that personal experience leads to political action as these working-class women come to realize that the personal is political and the goal is political power. —SIEW HWA BEH

WANDA

Written, directed, and starred in by Barbara Loden. Bardene International, 1900 Avenue of the Stars, Los Angeles 90067.

Barbara Loden's *Wanda* deals with life at such a harsh, crude, and primitive level of existence that attaching fashionable, socially conscious labels to it obscures its simple, urgent meaning. It is a painful document of

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WANDA

America's lost and poverty-stricken classes, conceived within a traditional and wholly American theme which still has a fascinating hold on us: the poor country girl trying to transcend her sordid, backwoods environment through a series of adventures on the open road.

Surely Wanda, the frail, passively helpless young wife and mother, is one of the most reluctant and unenergetic picaresque adventurers in literature or film. Apathetic, bereft of emotion, frightened and withdrawn, she hasn't the strength to cope with anything, not even her husband and children. Wanda's simple honesty about her own sense of worthlessness isn't meant to disguise any inner resources, and she doesn't surprise us suddenly with a shrewd sensibility—something we've come to expect from countless portraits of the tough-minded country-born who seek their fortunes in the city. Barbara Loden plays against all the optimism surrounding the odyssey myth. Her protagonist has absolutely no prospect of survival and Loden refuses to compromise her grim vision of life with any trace of sentimentality. A few moments of ironic humor and a fragment of a touching relationship are all the spare joy we're allowed.

Though some critics have taken the film as a statement for women's liberation and interpret Wanda's road adventures as her defiant protest against the circumscribed life she has

led as a woman, this is too sophisticated a notion for a character as destitute as Wanda. Unlike the rebellious action of the pregnant young wife in *The Rain People* who abandons husband and home in deliberate protest against her suffocating suburban life, Wanda's departure bears no such conscious intent. Without a job or a home, there isn't much Wanda *could* do except take an aimless bus ride. Her apathy towards her children and husband has more to do with her own infantile, undeveloped character and emotionally deprived life than any deliberate intent on the director's part to use her as a representative of female subjugation. (Loden's amazingly sensitive performance accentuates this childish immaturity and dependence.) Wanda is so burdened with the horror of belonging to the abject, outcast race of impoverished Americans that she hasn't the luxury to lament her role as a female. Loden is concerned with a more basic, universal question than sexual politics—the stark deprivation of the abandoned poor. The film seems almost anachronistic because it evokes the depression thirties; the ravaged faces of its Appalachian coal field inhabitants resemble those of dust-bowl dwellers.

Wanda's relationship with a gruff, middle-aged bank robber and petty thief gives her a brief taste of the self-respect and identity she has hungered for. Her total dependence upon this man and the fact that she is defined only through her relationship with him dispel further the notion that Wanda is a social rebel. He is fatherly to her, scolding her for not appearing respectably dressed and praising her for her small contributions to his robbery attempts. When he bungles a bank heist, Wanda is left alone again, but the traces of a better life she shared with him, her brush with dignity, linger a while. She beats off a repulsive serviceman (who would have succeeded in mauling her in her earlier state of servility) in her first gesture of protest against her victimization. Wanda finds herself in the streets again and is taken into a noisy bar filled with drunken riff-raff, and the portrait of her as she sits in

total isolation from the beer swillers who crowd around her is one of shattering defeat. She is dimly conscious of how the relationship with her middle-aged lover elevated her momentarily from this grimy, sordid world. She makes us poignantly aware too that she deserves something better than the company of these coarse carousers—and that she is doomed.

Loden conveys the searing honesty of her own subjective vision with disturbing images of poverty: the moving treatment of Wanda's aged, incoherent, and trembling father (to whom, ironically, Wanda turns for assistance) and his off-handed farewell to her; the bleary squalor of her homelife with her sister and brother-in-law; the maddening stillness of the vast, empty coal wastes which overpower their wretched inhabitants. Yet Loden gives us little complexity of character or any understanding of her mute-like protagonist's inner life. Wanda's motivations are totally denied us. She is such an extreme case of mental and physical deprivation that she emerges as an anthropological study with whom we can feel little identification or respond to with anything but pity. Because Loden has limited her theme through her narrow conception of the protagonist, our responses to the film are thereby limited as well. The 16mm blow-up is marred by the bleeding quality of the color, but though raw and unrefined—like the central figure she has chosen—Loden's first directorial effort has a harsh, abrasive power.

—ESTELLE CHANGAS

LE GAI SAVOIR

There are times when class struggle is the struggle of an image against an image and of a sound against a sound. In a film, it is the struggle of an image against a sound and a sound against an image.

—BRITISH SOUNDS

Le Gai Savoir (released in 1968) is Godard's discourse on method: not so much a film as the sustained investigation of what it means to

make a film, what a film should be and how it should work. It represents, in the fullest sense of the word, a *prise de conscience*: the marking of a methodological hiatus between the still conventional character-story based films preceding it and those following it. Without an understanding of *Le Gai Savoir*, the passage from *Two or Three Things* to *One Plus One* seems almost incomprehensible.

It was perhaps the disheartening commercial—and commercialized—success of *Weekend* that made Godard aware of the inevitable complicity with the “real” involved in such a film. Fast-moving parody is fine, but it is utterly incapable of calling into question the system it parodies; we are fascinated by a mirror even if it be a distorting mirror. The analysis must be pushed to a more fundamental level. The scene is a darkened, empty television studio. From stage right and left there emerge two human forms: Emile Rousseau (Jean-Pierre Léaud) and Patricia Lumumba (Juliette Berto). They talk, they discuss, they analyze, they set down a curriculum. The filmic unit is almost chemically broken down into its constituent parts: image and sound. The goal, we learn, is “to dissolve images and sounds.” Emile and Patricia set out on a three-year program of study: a year for collecting images and sounds; a year for criticizing them; and finally a year for constructing from this analysis a revolutionary model.

With this film Godard takes up a radically different approach to the problems of language and of the individual's relation to society, the very problems at the center of all his films since *Two or Three Things*. The essential is no longer, as Emile mistakenly claims, “to start from zero”: to believe, with his eponym Rousseau, that man's individual innocence is somehow redemptory. The problem is rather, as Patricia points out, to “get back to zero”: to force oneself away from the vantage point of “reality” as a disguised synthesis toward a vision of its formative elements. The goal is to understand, in terms of themselves alone, the images and sounds which coalesce to make up man's

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make a film, what a film should be and how it should work. It represents, in the fullest sense of the word, a *prise de conscience*: the marking of a methodological hiatus between the still conventional character-story based films preceding it and those following it. Without an understanding of *Le Gai Savoir*, the passage from *Two or Three Things* to *One Plus One* seems almost incomprehensible.

It was perhaps the disheartening commercial—and commercialized—success of *Weekend* that made Godard aware of the inevitable complicity with the “real” involved in such a film. Fast-moving parody is fine, but it is utterly incapable of calling into question the system it parodies; we are fascinated by a mirror even if it be a distorting mirror. The analysis must be pushed to a more fundamental level. The scene is a darkened, empty television studio. From stage right and left there emerge two human forms: Emile Rousseau (Jean-Pierre Léaud) and Patricia Lumumba (Juliette Berto). They talk, they discuss, they analyze, they set down a curriculum. The filmic unit is almost chemically broken down into its constituent parts: image and sound. The goal, we learn, is “to dissolve images and sounds.” Emile and Patricia set out on a three-year program of study: a year for collecting images and sounds; a year for criticizing them; and finally a year for constructing from this analysis a revolutionary model.

With this film Godard takes up a radically different approach to the problems of language and of the individual's relation to society, the very problems at the center of all his films since *Two or Three Things*. The essential is no longer, as Emile mistakenly claims, “to start from zero”: to believe, with his eponym Rousseau, that man's individual innocence is somehow redemptory. The problem is rather, as Patricia points out, to “get back to zero”: to force oneself away from the vantage point of “reality” as a disguised synthesis toward a vision of its formative elements. The goal is to understand, in terms of themselves alone, the images and sounds which coalesce to make up man's

“comic-strip world.” Godard is pointing out, visually as well as verbally, that film-making is not a construction from the real (the model of montage, the model of all his previous films), but rather a dissolution of the real: a breaking down of the ideological binder on the interface of image and sound.

The word is unmasked as the far from innocent—and far from simple—unit of ideological discourse. The societal voice, that language born of exploitation, allows itself to be used only in the service of its creator. To be understood implies that one first accept the dictates of the very medium one sets out to destroy. Left to itself, society furnishes us with a voice capable only of reciting the doxology of the real. The army of words, the dictionary, is presented as the arbitrary, self-sustaining, yet brutally totalitarian symbol of all culture. We look for a word’s definition, but this definition itself is made up only of other words for whose definitions we are equally dependent upon this encyclopedia—this encirclement—of all possible knowledge. Circular and self-referential, as long, that is, as we agree to remain within its circle.

It is with the word that analysis begins rather than ends. It must be broken down into its constituent sounds. Patricia and Emile repeat individual letters and phonemes until they take on an almost incantatory power. The question is raised as to how one can locate the “unspoken difference” between the sound *O* and the word *Stalin*. This problem of the unspoken difference must find its solution on the other face of the inseparable sound-image continuum that film sets out to re-create. Thus it is much later—after the analysis—that the image behind this acoustic passage is acted out as the brutal yet methodic throttling of a sung *O* until it conforms itself to the orthodoxy of the *A* (*StAlin*). Sound rejoins image, but this new union is no longer unconsciously enslaved by the categories of the unexamined real.

What is true of language is equally true of the visual image itself. To film reality—in no matter how superficially (and film is always of

the surface) subversive a way—is to arm oneself with an arsenal conceived in complicity with the enemy. To accept “reality” as the film’s referent ends our revolution before it is begun. There is nothing innocent about aiming one’s camera at the world. No matter how ironic and devastating our montages and commentaries might be, to start from the real *as real* is to become the victims of a mystification—the mystification of that very ideology we set out to destroy. The various objects within the seamless web of our environment are not *facts* standing innocently ready for our interpretation. They are themselves interpretations of yet other interpretations already solid, already defined, already “real.” To approach this plenum as a passive material awaiting the artist’s creative synthesis is to ignore—and to lose control over—a sedimentation of preexisting meanings (intellectual, economic, political) more than capable of neutralizing his most beligerent attacks.

As the bourgeois tradition subjects sounds and language to the tyranny of an image, so *Le Gai Savoir* opposes complex sounds to the simple images of two human forms in a darkened television studio. Emile requests a moment of darkness for our perverted and abused images.

Once collection and analysis have taken place, there remains the elaboration of a model for this new union of sound and image: a model capable of sustaining revolutionary action. We find this model in a long, incomprehensible speech given by Patricia as she stands full face before the motionless camera. The sounds we hear are those same phonemes making up the French language [the language of ideology/the language of diplomacy], but they never come together so as to make up a recognizable word. That we, the audience, cannot understand this language is proof both that our own liberation cannot be accomplished vicariously, and that it is, as Patricia points out, *nothingness* which is the final lesson of *Le Gai Savoir*. The joyful knowledge (*viz.*, “the joyful union of man and the world” as longed for in *Two or*

Three Things) depends, at this point in our glutted, supersignificant culture, on an unlearning of the automatic associations between images and sounds. Man must come to know these images and sounds in themselves, stripped bare of all those self-justifying accretions dragged along by every word and every object snatched from the closed circle of an ideological real. Of Patricia's inaugural, revolutionary, incomprehensible speech, Emile has caught but one word: *misotodiman*. This, Patricia is quick to point out, means "a combination of method and sentiment to define images and sounds." What more need he know?

—THOMAS M. KAVANAGH

THE CLOWNS

Director: Federico Fellini. Script: Fellini and Ugo Guerra. Music: Nino Rota. Photoplay: Dario di Palma. Distribution: Leavitt-Pickman.

The Clowns was made as a documentary for Italian television, but the difference between a documentary and a fiction film can be slight indeed, especially when the director is Fellini. As he has noted, "there is already in the fact of choosing one episode instead of another, one face in place of another face, as well as the fact of photographing, a very relative objectivity, since precisely here intervenes a choice, a selection, thus an interpretation."

In *The Clowns* Fellini has chosen to emphasize the dying of a certain kind of circus and particularly the dying of two traditional, death-defying clown archetypes—the elegant white clown Pierrot and the tramp Auguste. Further, Fellini emphasizes in this film the circus as an emotionally painful ritual, initiating the young into life through the fierce mockery of bodily injury and death. The theme may not be startlingly original; but good films are not necessarily built on original and complex themes as much as themes deeply felt, experienced. Such is the case, I think, with *The Clowns*.

"Be careful or those gypsies will carry you away," the little boy, presumably Fellini as a child, is told at the beginning of the film. But

the little boy isn't scared off by the warning; he enters the circus tent that has risen in the night, and there he seats himself directly on the circumference of the circle in which grotesques from around the globe collect to flail at each other, to shriek out, to laugh and dance, and most of all to defy in their acts the inexorable journey to an unknowable death. The quest must be futile—each time the traveling circus picks up and moves to another town the prison of the circle or stage must be formed again. But at least within these spatial limits, necessity, or the movement through time to death, will not only be challenged but also defied; and fear will be purged. At least to the child, both young and old, the circus according to Fellini offers a catharsis similar to that which Aristotle attributed to Greek drama.

The matter of the confrontation of death in life receives succinct expression early in the film in the image of the fetuses of Siamese twins locked in a bottle shown to the little boy (whom we see mainly from the back—he can be any child). As if to emphasize the image's effect on him, he now is directly addressed by a member of the circus for the first time: "Are they nice, little boy?" Just before this the child has witnessed a fakir being buried alive in a glass coffin for a period to last 40 years. The flame which, together with the slanting moon, lit the rising of the tent is no longer visible; but the ceremony into death in life has begun.

Next, as if to mock and dispel this omnipresent death, an official-looking assemblage of clowns (the first in this film of many such Fellini processions) enters the ring. Meanwhile, a young, smiling man is hurling knives into a board against which his female partner is pressed. The frightening game with death is unceasing. But the little boy looking on from the circle's edge makes no sound. A small clown then rushes into the foreground toward the boy and begins to scream. This is another aspect of the clown's circus—it's a place not only where horrid fear is aroused, but also where the emotion of fear finds violent expression. However, no sooner is there a comforting

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release resulting from the open expression of fear than another clown punishingly slams an ax into the small clown's head. Meanwhile, before our eyes yet another clown is being prepared for roasting on the spit. Again, there is no final release from the horror. On the other hand, there's just enough release to belie the horror. For next the lively clowns whirl into a harmless carnival of fiddle- and accordion-playing, laughter and dance. And finally the little boy cries.

The clowns have reminded the child of the grotesque people (many of them as if out of a painting by Breughel) who roam his village. This, of course, is another theme in *The Clowns*: the circus is a microcosm of society. It also resembles the prison and the insane asylum. And as Fellini has written, he is director of all the lunatics. He imagined a sequence, which he didn't shoot, "in which I saw clowns everywhere in the street: ridiculous old ladies with absurd little hats . . . long-hairs with torn cloaks, businessmen with bowler hats and a bishop with the face of an embalmed man." But these types Fellini encountered in Paris would have possessed, I think, only the appearance rather than the active expressiveness of the clowns. Fellini must move his camera back to the village of his childhood to find the coarse, earthy, rugged kick-'em-in-the-behind expressiveness and acting out of fantasies which he finds vanishing in contemporary society. The dying of the clown, of the circus, reflects the dying of a healthy animal expressiveness in man.

The clowns of yesterday knew well how to brandish water hoses, cannon, hammers, saws, and axes, to threaten, slap, and actually cudgel each other, to evoke from one another and the audience huge howls of pain and laughter and, in a sense, to make the body through it all appear invincible, even immortal. But actually the body is not immortal, and an essential fact of reality, time itself, enters the film to dispel the illusion of life's invulnerability. As Fellini the director (acting in a film for the first time since *The Miracle*) tracks down the great Augustes and Pierrots of yesterday, he finds them

old-boned men trying to forget while treasuring the glories they knew, which by contrast sharpen the pain of their present decrepitude. The now emaciated clown Jim Guillon, a creator of Auguste, steals out of his hospital death bed to go see two clowns he loves. But in the outcome, after the performance, Guillon is a wasted, skeletal figure dead on a colorless bench in the deserted circus. If part of the problem of the great old clowns is that a changed society less in touch with its basic emotions fails to appreciate them, another problem is simply the rush of time bearing old age and death.

The clowns of yesterday by their outrageous acts could for a few moments grip the feelings of death and dispel them. This perhaps was the greatest gift of the old circus to the child Fellini, to anyone who would enter into the spirit of the clowns with accepting innocence. The tragedy is that today the clowns, because they and their tradition are dying, can no longer give this gift.

Near the end of the film, in the fantastically composed funeral orgy, there is at first a beautiful stalemate between death and the bumptious, even arrogant spirit of the clowns. They gather, all the clowns with cannon, saws, and other tools of their rebellion, and Fellini with camera, lights and his other movie weapons, to mourn the mock-death of a great clown. There is wailing in the circus, "Fischietto is dead! Fischietto is dead!" But in the midst of the macabre sadness, pity is rejected. One clown rejoices when another weeps (at this point the tears are very convincing) because he can catch the tears in a bucket to soak his sore, tired feet. Then the eulogizing white clown relates that the dead clown made other children laugh but his own children cry.

In real life the clowns aren't necessarily successful, regardless of the times. Only in the illusion they create in the circus are their lives ideal. In the funeral orgy a painfully credible acting out of death alternates for a while with an explosive, festive denial of it. Finally, I think, the clowns' defiant spirit triumphs, but the price is the banishing of reality. *The Clowns*

at the end cannot admit the realism of the vast, bare, unhappy beach Zampano confronted in *La Strada*. In general in *The Clowns* there are few famous Fellini panoramas of truth to challenge the illusion the clowns embody in the circus ring. The film is rather theatrical-looking, most of it is indoors, and it contains little spatial depth. For the funeral orgy even the audience—contemporary society with its somber, unimaginative reality—is excluded. Some of the old clowns grow tired in the frenzied, circular parade that climaxes the funeral, and these weary men with members of Fellini's film crew constitute their own appreciative audience. They watch with pleasure the ascension of one of their own as he floats in the silence of rustling streamers in the circus sky.

The closing scene is a recollection by one of the weary clowns of how in one of their acts he and his partner would defy death by summoning each other, as if from the beyond, on their trumpets. In a return to the flashback technique, we see each of them, playing his trumpet, slowly materialize from an invisible world into the totally empty circus. They step down from among the seats into the hallowed ring, move together toward the red-curtained exit, and evaporate, leaving us again with the empty benches and the deserted circle. In the final analysis, Fellini's very controlled manipulation of space, image, and time in this documentary reflects more the magic of Méliès than the objective camera of Lumière.

—IRA S. JAFFE

Short Notices

Klute is a romance of sorts, with little streaks of a suspense thriller mixed in. It's quite agilely directed by Alan J. Pakula, but what makes the

movie compelling and alive and exhilarating—in a way that most other American films just haven't been lately—is the hip, energetic tone of its screenplay, by Andy and Dave Lewis. The movie *sounds* right. In comparison with the limp, washed-out conversations that have been trudging across the soundtracks of this year's new releases, the bitter defensive verve of the Lewises' New York dialogue is racy and idiomatic beyond calculation. Their writing is wonderfully sharp, jumping with the tricks of the urban vernacular. And fortunately, the person who acts as the vector for most of the nervous city-smart-talk couldn't be better suited to it. The film's main character is, very properly, a young woman in her late twenties, clever and experienced and unmarried, and fitted out, naturally, with all the normal trappings of her syndrome—a tacky apartment and a slick wardrobe, acting lessons and modeling auditions, psychotherapy and a confusing mess of troubles that she can't begin to control. She's also a semi-retired high-priced Park Avenue prostitute. But all questions of career aside, Bree Daniel is really a classic metropolitan bachelor girl, and invariably she talks like one, seasoning her conversation with economic metaphors and, on occasion, convulsively bursting forth with spurts of shrewd self-analysis. In one typically astutely written line, she offers somebody two hundred dollars for a favor and protests, almost reflexively, that it's enough money to pay for "a perfectly good dishwasher"; and at the shrink, when she realizes that she might be heading for her first genuine love experience, she speaks in the familiar introspective rhetoric of someone who can talk intelligently and persuasively about his own feelings because his own feelings are almost all he ever thinks about. Very much to the picture's credit, Bree is played by Jane Fonda, who probably has the most excitingly volatile personality of any young actress around right now (what a performance she could give as Maggie in a revival of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof!*) Everything in the movie benefits from her mesmerizing presence, not just the blistering dialogue. The simple ability of the story to keep an audience engrossed and preoccupied is enriched repeatedly by the force of Jane Fonda's talent; and, in some ways, the story honestly *could* use a little help. Although individual aspects of the plot are gripping and frightening, the irregular, fragmented narrative structure that Pakula and the script are experimenting with punches a number of gaping holes in the movie's architecture. As a result, several potentially suspenseful moments are watered down, and some-

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times, the emotional power of what are evidently meant to be pivotal sequences and themes is lessened, too. To take the most important example: Bree's ambivalence about giving up prostitution for good is barely developed, and often the little that there is of an inquiry into her conflicts is arbitrarily interrupted or irritatingly reduced to a suite of clichés. Still, Jane Fonda's perceptive understanding of the character's difficulties keeps the film in one piece, magnetizing the jumble of random episodes that circuit around her into a coherent whole. Of course, she doesn't do it all by herself. Donald Sutherland's blunt, slaty speech makes him ideally cast as Klute, the ploddingly honest small-town cop to whom Bree is attracted; and the movie's authoritative, arrestingly complex image of New York's "illicit" subterranean pleasure syndicate, also helps. For, when vice is shown to be as harrowing and dangerous as it is in a scene depicting two panicky junkies waiting for their fix, and at the same time to be as vibrantly seductive as it is in the scenes played in an elegant pimp's fabulous living room, it's not hard to see how a beautiful girl could be torn up over deciding whether to leave such a world or to stick with it. In light of that, the scene in which Bree almost murders Klute isn't especially puzzling. She loves him, it's clear. But she also fears him and resents him for threatening to take her away from the sensuous underworld glamor that part of her, quite understandably, still craves.

—ELLIOTT SIRKIN

Struggle in Italy reveals Godard's continuing preoccupations—creating a revolutionary working-class movement and a film aesthetic to promote and "contain" the progress of that movement. As in *Wind from the East* Godard carefully and explicitly explores the correlation of sound and image as an aesthetic tool in a political struggle. And as in all his recent films his thematic focus is the creation and expression of revolutionary consciousness. The film consists of three parts, each one chronicling a different stage in a girl's political consciousness. First, she is a sympathetic bourgeoisie concerned with liberation through life-style and engaged in pamphleteering workers. Second, as an assertion of freedom, she makes love every afternoon and then takes a job in a factory where she continues to pass out pamphlets. In both these parts there are intervals of black leader, suggesting incompleteness, offering brief moments for reflection. The only dialogue (spoken in Italian, without subtitles in the print currently available) is in the form of a voice-over narrative by the girl herself as she

analyzes her world and her values. The first two parts end by bringing her into contact with factory workers. Throughout these parts she stresses the fact that consciousness is determined by the social and economic situation, but she offers this analysis from her bourgeois perspective. In the third part, she continues this analysis from her new working-class perspective, returning (many of the visuals are repeated) to the earlier parts and filling in the "blanks" (the black leader) with further analysis and reflection. Sections of black leader continue to appear in this last but not really *final* part as well, suggesting the same open-endedness as Godard's ending to *One Plus One*. Her reflection has reached a higher level of consciousness, criticizing her previous perspective as she will later be able to do to her present one, and her situation has become more explicitly aligned with the working-class. Godard couples the girl's monologue to essentially stationary, oblique images whose very lack of transparent significance enhances their power to catalyze our own reflection and analysis. Shots of the girl buying clothes, dining, reading and making notes, closing a white-curtained, glass-paneled door for her afternoon affairs, and working in the factory are all repeated several times, counterpointing the narrative and taking on different overtones as her political consciousness progresses. (She gives up her boyfriend and her afternoon love-making.) This shifting, but always indirect, suggestive significance in the images provides a balancing complexity to the girl's straightforward commentary and engages us aesthetically the way the formal juxtaposition of more explicitly didactic points does in, say, *La Hora de los Hornos*. Godard never links his solitary protagonist with friends, study groups or collective action, nor is it apparent that she has yet become one with her fellow factory workers. In some ways she may even represent an autobiographical reflection of Godard's own progress. If so, her solitary, outsider qualities and her predominantly intellectual route to political engagement represent bourgeois encumbrances to Godard's own political liberation. These encumbrances limit Godard to a depiction of individual politicization where questions of how workers can organize to resist class exploitation in a specific situation, or even the source and nature of that exploitation for the worker, do not arise. Working-class consciousness becomes a goal to arrive at rather than a starting point for revolutionary movement. Although the girl's progress is conveyed and contained within a formal structure whose effectiveness indicates that Godard is still clearly in the forefront of the struggle to merge

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analyzes her world and her values. The first two parts end by bringing her into contact with factory workers. Throughout these parts she stresses the fact that consciousness is determined by the social and economic situation, but she offers this analysis from her bourgeois perspective. In the third part, she continues this analysis from her new working-class perspective, returning (many of the visuals are repeated) to the earlier parts and filling in the "blanks" (the black leader) with further analysis and reflection. Sections of black leader continue to appear in this last but not really *final* part as well, suggesting the same open-endedness as Godard's ending to *One Plus One*. Her reflection has reached a higher level of consciousness, criticizing her previous perspective as she will later be able to do to her present one, and her situation has become more explicitly aligned with the working-class. Godard couples the girl's monologue to essentially stationary, oblique images whose very lack of transparent significance enhances their power to catalyze our own reflection and analysis. Shots of the girl buying clothes, dining, reading and making notes, closing a white-curtained, glass-paneled door for her afternoon affairs, and working in the factory are all repeated several times, counterpointing the narrative and taking on different overtones as her political consciousness progresses. (She gives up her boyfriend and her afternoon love-making.) This shifting, but always indirect, suggestive significance in the images provides a balancing complexity to the girl's straightforward commentary and engages us aesthetically the way the formal juxtaposition of more explicitly didactic points does in, say, *La Hora de los Hornos*. Godard never links his solitary protagonist with friends, study groups or collective action, nor is it apparent that she has yet become one with her fellow factory workers. In some ways she may even represent an autobiographical reflection of Godard's own progress. If so, her solitary, outsider qualities and her predominantly intellectual route to political engagement represent bourgeois encumbrances to Godard's own political liberation. These encumbrances limit Godard to a depiction of individual politicization where questions of how workers can organize to resist class exploitation in a specific situation, or even the source and nature of that exploitation for the worker, do not arise. Working-class consciousness becomes a goal to arrive at rather than a starting point for revolutionary movement. Although the girl's progress is conveyed and contained within a formal structure whose effectiveness indicates that Godard is still clearly in the forefront of the struggle to merge

aesthetic sensibilities with political consciousness, there is a greater abundance of the former than the latter. Were he now to face the problems that the working-class elements he admires already face rather than dote on the labyrinthian struggle of

bourgeois individuals to redefine themselves, sexually as well as politically in this case, Godard's tortuous attempts to "serve" the revolution might enjoy greater currency and more direct usefulness than they so far have.

—BILL NICHOLS

Books

CUKOR & CO.

The Films of George Cukor and His Collaborators. By Gary Carey. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1971. Paperback, \$2.95.)

On the cover of *Cukor & Co.*, under a mound of ornate lettering, there are two shrunken heads, about half the size of postage stamps, which close inspection reveals are portraits of Cukor and Katharine Hepburn. When you've finished reading Gary Carey's sketchy monograph, you feel like you've been through an expanded version of the cover; he must have looked at the intricate surfaces of *Holiday*, *A Star Is Born*, *Justine*, etc., through the wrong end of a telescope.

Cukor's work is more difficult to evoke or analyze than that of almost any other major director. His plots often creak and groan under the burden of excessive complexity or familiarity, but plot is to Cukor what tune is to Duke Ellington: merely the departure point for a stream of sensations, intonations, and rhythms. How is a critic to explain the workings of Judy Garland's broken monologue on her broken husband in *A Star Is Born*—sudden unveilings of hysterical agony twisting her childishly painted harlequin face into a tragic mask in the raw glow of dressing-room bulbs? . . . The critic can describe the way Cukor gets from *this* to *this*, but how can he freeze each frame and tell you what *this* is? Obviously he can't, so what we want from a book on Cukor, ideally, is a sensitive exploration of how he takes a situation and floods it with dozens of insights and impulses; how he makes human instruments, his actors, resonate with the richest possible timbre.

What we get from Carey, instead, is a potpourri of bald opinions about Cukor's taste in vehicles, actors, and settings. Only rarely, as in this passage on Garbo's death scene in *Camille*, is the subtlety of Cukor's touch conveyed: "As she lies on her bed, clothed in a robe that suggests a shroud, her body, barely able to support the smile she wears when she sees Armand, has an ethereal weightlessness. There seems to be not an ounce of strength in her body; to touch the camellias Gaston has brought her seems a herculean task. At the very end, as Armand holds her, her face, stripped of make-up, the skin translucent, becomes ecstatic. Her death scene succeeds in conveying what no other actor I have seen has been able to attain: a sense of the life slipping away and the weight of the body being shed." Otherwise, Carey resorts to inane generalities, such as: "*Little Women* is the most visually sophisticated of Cukor's films to date. It is beautifully lit and uses a number of imaginative camera placements, but as is typical of Cukor nothing calls attention to itself. The art direction is excellent . . ." In discussing *The Philadelphia Story*, Carey also labors under the preposterous delusion that Cukor is at his best when "one is absolutely unaware of technique." What he apparently means is that Cukor doesn't whirl his camera around the room or use flashy cutting. But the example he cites of Cukor's technique is "a take lasting almost three minutes between Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant"; surely there is nothing that smacks more of theatrical virtuosity than holding the camera still for an exaggerated length of time, which is one of Cukor's mannerisms. The book might have been helpful if

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He's on the right track at one point when he observes that Cukor's rhythm is "conveyed by the actor within the shot," but then he gets off the track again to wallow in crudely rationalized chatter, such as this comment on *David Copperfield* which, besides containing a grammatical error and an unsupported judgment, inaccurately represents the character in the film: "Also unhappy is the casting of W. C. Fields as Mr. Micawber. Though physically ideal, his personality isn't expansive enough, and the role contracts into a small ball of stinginess and misanthropy. One is aware of a famous comedian hamstrung with a part he has to play." What the hell does all this mean? W. C. Fields is nothing if not "expansive," and far from "contracting into a small ball of stinginess and misanthropy," the role reverberates with the tension between Fields's natural gruffness and Micawber's emotional generosity, a tension Cukor uses to suggest the pathos of Micawber's eagerness to serve anyone who will provide an audience for his bombast.

Carey's insensitivity to nuances within a performance extends into a misunderstanding of Cukor's ensembles, which he continually criticizes for containing "vulgar" or "arch" performances. One of the delights of Cukor's work is his ability to play actors of wildly varying methods and personalities against each other, creating a dazzling display of theatrical energy which makes each character stand out with unusual sharpness. *Adam's Rib*, for example, takes its spontaneity and behaviorial savvy from the conjunction of Spencer Tracy (sly naturalism), Katharine Hepburn (cunning bravura), Judy Holliday (brassy innocence), and Tom Ewell (mindless nonchalance). When these personalities dovetail in the theatrical confines of the courtroom, the effect is electric. Yet Carey sees little in *Adam's Rib* beyond "any number of bright lines as well as great polish in the staging," praising the supporting cast but objecting to the "intense archness" of the Restoration-comedy battle of wits between Tracy and Hepburn.

Carey has an even harder time following Cukor's sallies into theatrical fantasy. He gets all tongue-tied analyzing the second half of the exquisite *Sylvia Scarlett* because he can't figure out why Hepburn, abandoning her male disguise and "reverting to reality," suddenly becomes "distressingly fey." He objects to Brian Aherne's epicene performance as a painter for its "unbelievable narcissism" without realizing that the film is *about* narcissism, acting, disguises, and the difficulty of shaking off those disguises. He might have pointed out that the painter's impersonation of a man is no less clumsy than Sylvia's impersonation of a woman; that is what makes the scene in which Sylvia shyly enters the artist's cottage with a boyish gait and a girlish costume a lyric poem about the discovery of sexuality.

In the section discussing Cukor's work on *Gone with the Wind*, there is a comment from Olivia de Havilland which would have provided a good cue for Carey to follow: "George Cukor is the Cellini of directors. He has a marvelously intricate imagination which works on a very fine scale. Take a look at the scene where Mammy's lacing up Scarlett—it's just crammed with tiny fleeting expressions and motives—and then at the next one, where Scarlett sits on the stairs eating a chicken leg. There's no other scene in the film with so much detail, such richness—those were Cukor touches." *Tiny fleeting expressions and motives*. Cukor's interviews give a vivid idea of how he went about creating them; for critical analysis we will have to wait and see what Carlos Clarens's book on Cukor has to offer.

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NOTES ON A FILM HISTORY IN PROGRESS

For the film teacher and student, one of the most distressing aspects of film scholarship in this country is that much of the most provocative literature in film is only accessible to those with a good reading knowledge of modern European languages. We have Eisenstein's writings thanks to Jay Leyda's translation, and

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Bazin's thanks to Hugh Gray. But in history we have only Iris Barry's skillful though unfortunately abridged translation of Bardèche and Brasillach. Sticking to works available in English, there is scarcely a single other volume that can be recommended without serious, sometimes embarrassing qualifications. True, we do have excellent *specialized* studies: Lewis Jacob's *The Rise of the American Film*, Jay Leyda's *Kino*, Donald Richie and Joseph Anderson's *The Japanese Film*, Rachel Low and Roger Manvell's multi-volume *History of the British Film*, and Gordon Hendrick's scrupulous studies of early American cinema. But what of the broader cross-cultural perspective? Here we find a familiar and perhaps inevitable American phenomenon: the popularization of what is ironically already assumed to be a popular art form, *vide* Arthur Knight's *The Liveliest Art* or Richard Schickel's *The Movies*, or more recently Gerald Mast's *Short History of the Movies*—all justly informative, but lacking in scope and significant insights. Certainly we can no longer refer to that stale and often obtuse work, *The Film Till Now*.

Part of the problem in America and in England is that film historiography has never been considered a serious profession. Yet to write film history one needs more than money and leisure, one needs massive amounts of data, a keen visual memory, and an exceptional cultural and filmic sensitivity, among other things—none of which is acquired overnight. There are probably a handful of Americans and Englishmen with the dedication and energy to produce a major history of the cinema; but until their efforts take form, we must consider the enormous amount of material being produced by European historians, and in particular the French.

In France the tradition of the multi-volume film history is clearly a respected and valuable one, supported both by publishers and by an enthusiastic generation of *cinéphiles* spawned by the cinéclubs. With passionate dedication and years of scrupulous research, a few men have produced not one or two, but four major works, documenting and evaluating the main

currents of world cinema. The first two volumes of Jean Mitry's *Histoire du Cinéma* (the third volume should be appearing in 1972) from Editions Universitaires are the latest of these uniquely monumental works to appear, and because Mitry is a man eminently qualified in every way for the task, his writing should be considered by anyone seriously concerned with the complex history of the cinema.

Born in 1907 at Soissons, Jean Mitry became involved in the cinéclubs during his days at the *lycée*, and was thereafter a film addict. He matriculated in mathematics and physics at the university level, but soon began making experimental films (*Pacific 231*, and a series of tone poems based on impressionistic music) and writing film theory and criticism. In 1934 he began work on a voluminous *Histoire du cinéma universelle*, when he met Henri Langlois and Georges Franju; as a result he began to realize that the thorough revision of what then passed for film history would be an enormous task that must involve a precise documentation and knowledge of individual works. Two years later, he and his associates founded the Cinémathèque Française in Paris, now constituting the largest active film archive/museum in the world. During the early days of the Cinémathèque, Langlois conceived a vast project for a complete filmography of all directors since the beginning of the cinema, and Mitry, undaunted by the scope of the undertaking, assumed responsibility for the work, which was interrupted by the war and later abandoned. Since 1940, Mitry has been a professor of film history and aesthetics at the Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques in Paris and under IDHEC sponsorship has supervised the completion of his *Filmographie universelle*, gradually appearing in a series of paperback volumes. In addition, he has served as editor and occasional author for the series *Classiques du cinéma*, devoted to individual directors, and in 1965-66 his first major theoretical work appeared: *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma* (two volumes), which established him as a prodigious scholar and keen intellect full of insights equally as illu-

minating as those of the late André Bazin. An English translation of this important work is now reportedly in preparation. In itself, it provides an important theoretical structure carried over into Mitry's concept of film history.

Mitry sees the history of the cinema, like all history, as susceptible to varying interpretations and views. In the preface to his own work he sets forth an appraisal of the work of his predecessors, a summation of which is important to an understanding of his own point of view.

L'Histoire de l'art cinématographique by Carl Vincent (Brussels, 1940). Here, the author considers *separately* each of the national cinemas, studying the distinctions of style in the best-known directors. Considered outside their national context, however, they are inexplicable. Mitry does not consider this a *history* in the true sense of the word.

L'Histoire du cinéma by Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach (Paris, 1935; revised in 1948 and 1953). Mitry considers this the best written, easiest to read introduction to cinema history; but apart from its abundant errors, it is fragmentary and disorganized. Mitry finds the authors oriented toward film enthusiasts rather than historians; moreover, the coloring of judgments by the authors' political feeling falsifies the problem, making controlled objectivity difficult.

L'Histoire Encyclopédique du cinéma by René Jeanne and Charles Ford (Paris, Robert Laffont, 1947-1962, 5 vols.) Supported by much documentation, here one finds a scholarly atmosphere and intelligent comprehension of the cinema's historical periods. Judgments, however, consist only of a compendium of critiques, published upon the film's first release. As Mitry states, "Contemporaneity is used as an alibi and personal evaluations are faulty. Albeit charming, this voluminous work is the product of *mémorialistes* rather than historians."

L'Histoire Générale du cinéma by Georges Sadoul (Paris, Flammarion, 1946 — only five volumes published out of 7 or 8 conceived). Mitry finds Sadoul's contribution is the first

work of a true historian, situating the cinema in its historic context, that is, related to the social and economic structures that influence its evolution. But Sadoul neglects to examine the cinema's internal economics and the history of film aesthetics. While paying tribute to the economic and geo-political context of film, he resolutely ignores collective psychology, film-spectator relationships, the character, mentality and evolution of the cinema's public, and the development of genres and film subjects. (Curiously, Mitry never acknowledges, much less challenges Sadoul's Marxist tendencies that color his entire approach to film history.)

Having acknowledged the work of his predecessors, Mitry does not reject their methods but employs them toward what he considers more constructive ends. He goes to great length to correct their errors and to verify dates, facts, and historical judgments. For him, the historian must first of all be descriptive, determining landmarks, defining tendencies, and grouping schools. This process should, in his words, constitute "*the basis of all knowledge in this domain.*"

Mitry wants especially to correct the erroneous impression given by many historians that film art is the result of only a few isolated artistic summits. He finds it as absurd to suggest that *The Birth of a Nation* is the first authentic masterpiece of the cinema as to represent the last decade of French cinema by the sole example of *Marienbad* or *Pierrot le fou*. He wisely states that "a weak and uneven work, consigned in advance to oblivion, may have been important at the time, and the historian can only neglect it under penalty of deficiency in his role of following the stream, of drawing its contours. The major works are only landmarks, *singular accidents*, that emerge from this stream, but which could not exist without it." (Vol. I, p. 19). Just as it is necessary for a work to age, as all films do, it is necessary to periodically revise one's judgments, a fact not often recognized by Anglo-Saxon writers; often unknown or dismissed films are thus revealed in a meaningful light,

while certain apparently secure reputations are eclipsed.

It must be borne in mind, however, that Mitry throughout his work is careful not to confuse the historical importance of a film with its aesthetic stature. He notes, for example, that Sjöström's *The Phantom Chariot*, aesthetically inferior to the director's later films, is nevertheless historically important for its assimilation of a distinctive style in Swedish cinema, even if we find it somewhat tedious today. Sometimes, history and aesthetics are in accord, but this is not always to be assumed. For Mitry, a comparative and universal approach is necessary because the beginning of the cinema, up to around 1935, is, in Mitry's words, "still less the history of an art than of a new means of expression." Here, in brief, the cinema is seen as a *language*, the syntactical forms of which are removed from language in the proper sense. Its history is grounded in the birth and formulation of a new language or mode of expression, and it is only gradually that its significant qualities as artistic expression have been discovered by a critically aware public. Here, Mitry tries to give insight into what has become a rather recondite linguistic analysis in the writings of Roland Barthes and Christian Metz, with their attempts to define a semiology of the cinema.

In Mitry's first 470-page volume, covering the years 1895 to 1915, he is meticulously descriptive, defining virtually every photographic invention that in any way suggested an antecedent or significant development in early cinema. His most frequent source is Sadoul, who has already carefully documented this period in his *Histoire Générale*; but Mitry is fastidious in his reexamination of the period. Besides the numerous confusions of dates, many writers fail to reconsider an event or anecdote in the light of the period during which it occurred. Mitry cites as a significant instance the recitation of meetings between a Paris financier and Méliès and Charles Pathé. Previous historians tell us that in 1897 a M. Grivolos proposed a joint-stock corporation of five million francs to Georges Méliès, who

politely refused. Grivolos then made the same offer to Pathé, who immediately accepted. The conclusion drawn has been that if Méliès had not put off Grivolos, he could have occupied the position of Pathé in the film industry of France. But this hasty assumption ignores the historical conditions involved. First, pioneer firms were not initially interested in making films, but simply in merchandising cameras and projection equipment. Pathé, who began selling gramophones and kinoscopes, intended to build up an industry and needed capital. Méliès, on the other hand, was an illusionist, a man of the theater, who invested his own funds in film-making and was only concerned with making films for their own sake, i.e., for their magical dimensions. "To compare Georges Méliès to Charles Pathé," writes Mitry, "is as ridiculous as today placing Orson Welles and Adolph Zukor on the same level." Even if Méliès had accepted the offer, it is unlikely that he would have had the inclination or the capacity for becoming an industrialist. "By 1902, it is true that film production had become the major interest of companies, but one can hardly apply conditions that existed in 1902 to facts of 1897; at that time it could hardly be foreseen that film production would become an industry." This is precisely the sort of error in judgment in which cinema histories abound and which Mitry considers more misleading than the placing of a 1902 film in 1901. Mitry also sees the matter of a film's authorship as a changing, often arbitrary concept. The author is often considered, without question, today to be the director. He reminds us that in the period from 1906 to 1910, in France, and often in America, the true author of a film was the writer or scenarist, the director being only a kind of stage manager. This was, for instance, the case with Feuillade's early work, most of which was directed by Romeo Bozetti, until 1908.

In addition to a detailed examination of the pioneer film-makers, Mitry's investigation brings into play the historical development, international in scope, of areas such as film

distribution and exploitation, theaters and theater construction, laboratory techniques, production methods, advertising and censorship, in addition to new technological developments—all supported by extensive documentation.

In the final pages of the first volume, Mitry indicates his rather strong bias against the early directions of French cinema. He declares that the distinction between the cinema of Lumière and Méliès (realistic *vs.* spectacle or theater) ought to be totally rejected. Both are examples of *reproduction* rather than *creation*; the difference is only in the subject, not in the technique. For Mitry, cinema only becomes an art as it frees itself from the impediments of the stage through the dynamics of montage. This, in part, accounts for his strong sympathies with the early films of Griffith, Chaplin, and Ince, and his excellent discussion of early Danish films with their inclinations toward a freer, more natural type of film-making. He offers a keen analysis of the sociological and psychological development of early American films, opening up questions not answered by most film historians. "No history tells us *why* American films before 1912 were never more than the regulation 600 meters (300 meters before 1908) when European films had already been extended to 1,000 or 2,000 meters. Neither does any suggest *why* during the years 1910-1918, American scenario writers were almost all women, as well as the authors of plays or adapted novels . . ." (p. 12)

In the opening pages of the second volume, covering 1915-1925 (516 pages) Mitry establishes his position as the eminent French authority on Griffith, Ince, and Chaplin; with Griffith, "images become *signs* or *symbols*, elements of a discourse, foundations of a cinematographic rhythm;" and with Ince is established a formal screen dramaturgy based on the scenario. Here there is a more pleasing balance established between descriptive and evaluative passages, though Mitry remains close to his usual *explication de texte* method, commenting on long quoted passages. Follow-

ing his detailed documentation on the serial and western genres in the first volume, the author presents a 25-page discussion of the evolution of the serial in France, America, England, Germany, and Italy; an analysis of early animation work by Blackton, Cohl, McCay, John Bray, Earl Hurd, Raoul Barre, Gregory La Cava, Disney, and Vladislav Starevitch; and an excellent study of early comic and slapstick films in France, America, and Italy.

While Mitry very astutely points up the social significance of American cinema of the twenties, he is particularly good at detailing the complex rise of the American film industrial system, the movie moguls behind it, and its relationships with capitalist power structures; and a similar treatment follows for the more monolithic, less organized industries of France and Germany. The films of the period are broken down by individual studio, then by production standards (actors, directors, themes, writers, etc.) operative from around 1915 to 1919. An interesting chapter offers a little catalogue of primary source material for feature films and an analysis of the influence of scenarists at various studios during the twenties. In addition, Mitry gives complete corporation histories of virtually every production company for the period with an analysis of its personnel.

In regard to the treatment of European cinema, unfortunately a lengthy section was rejected from the second volume due to the bulky size of the work, covering much of the richest part of the twenties, roughly from 1924 to 1926. What remains, however, is provocative and worthy of mention.

At times, Mitry's rigorous aesthetic standards seem too harsh. Interestingly, he is extremely critical of the French avant-gardists of the twenties, an artistic circle with which he himself was intimately associated. Essentially, Mitry takes issue with their failure to apply cinematic techniques to what he considers creative ends, limiting themselves purely to rhythmic and specifically cinematic effects (*photogénie*). These faults he finds remedied, however, in René Clair's masterful *Entr'acte*: "Far from

being a theory or a demonstration, *Entr'acte* was first of all a poem." He is somewhat reluctant to credit the so-called "impressionist" school with any significant work. He enthusiastically admires the films of Jean Epstein, but is distinctly lacking in sympathy for the work of Abel Gance. Gance is seen as the victim of grandiloquent pretensions to High Art, even in what must rank as his finest films, *J'Accuse* and *La Roue*.

Mitry is thoroughly disdainful of the incursion of High Culture into the cinema, and the application of theater and literature, he sees as essentially a pernicious influence. "Before 1920, one can state that, with certain exceptions, the more cultivated a *cinéaste* is, the worse are his films. Unless this culture is pictorial, as in the case of the Danes, Russians, or Germans, where it is so total that it surpasses cultural taboos . . ." (Vol. II, p. 267).

On the other hand, Mitry seems justified in finding "pure" expressionism in the cinema a failure in its confusion of settings, objects, and characters in a linear graphics "absolutely contrary to the perception of space, the first condition of the filmic expression." In fact, though he owes a great deal to Lotte H. Eisner's *The Haunted Screen*, Mitry presents a more complete and exacting description of the literary and plastic antecedents of cinematic expressionism. Furthermore, he seems to recall some of the early "lost" Murnau films from his lycée days and insists that at the time they seemed less interesting than more mediocre films by Weine, Leni, or Kobe.

These notes only begin to scratch the surface of what will ultimately be accepted as a superior work in cinema history. In spite of its stylistic lucidity, its wealth of knowledge and insight, there are some inherent deficiencies in the scheme and plan of the work. Mitry's strictly chronological method allows for an in-depth analysis of small segments of historical time, thus providing a fruitful interplay of cross-currents and a proper historical sense. Inevitable, however, is the frequent repetition of names and film titles, and backtracking to refresh the reader's memory as to previous references; and

frequently one meets the phrase, "but we will have occasion to discuss this in a later volume." All this would not be too objectionable if there were an *index* to each volume. (A complete index covering the silent period is to be included in the third volume, 1925-1935.) For instance, early experiments in sound recording and color photography appear in at least eight different points in the first volume alone.

Although Mitry has chosen a number of rare stills to illustrate his text, the quality of reproduction is lamentably bad, and they are clumped together in the middle of the volume in the traditional European fashion. The design and construction of the books, particularly the binding, is similar to though sturdier than the format of Mitry's previous books for the same publisher, and unlike many European paperback volumes, the pages are all intact after much use.

As a final note, it should be mentioned that Mitry inserts, with the first major consideration of a film, basic production credits and cast, a precise and excellent method of introducing filmographical documentation. Mitry also not only mentions but discusses the career and work of the following directors, whose names are scarcely remembered by most film historians: Wallace MacCutcheon, J. Searle Dawley, Van Dyke Brooks, Joseph Golden, Colin Campbell, Reginald Barker, James Neill, Frank Powell, Ralph Ince, Barry O'Neill, George D. Baker, Frank Boggs, Larry Trimble; and Victorian Jasset, Albert Capellani, Arturo Ambrosio, Henri Pouctal, Gerard Bourgeois, Jacques de Baroncelli, Viatcheslav Tourjansky, Thomas Bentley, Urban Gad, Carl Froelich, August Blom, Robert Dinesen, Yevgeni Bauer, and Luigi Maggi. Obviously, the scope of such a work allows for this kind of expansion; for this reason alone, Mitry's history should be considered a major work, particularly if future volumes are as well researched and articulated. On the basis of what has appeared, Mitry must be ranked as one of the finest and most dedicated of film historians, whose writing should be read, studied, and savored.

—LEE ATWELL



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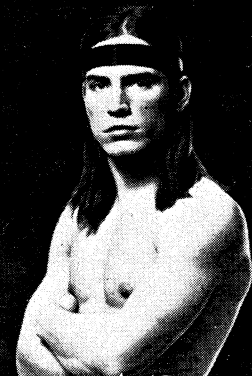
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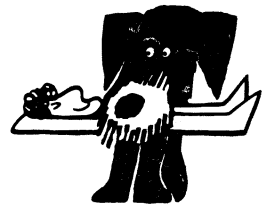


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