FILM QUARTERLY

FALL, 1966

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WILLIAM JOHNSON

Coming to Terms with Color

"GLORIOUS TECHNICOLOR!" (typical movie ad, 1940's)

"Glorious Technicolor!" (typical term of critical irony, 1940's)

"*Shocking Eastmancolor!*" (nudie theater poster, 1960's)

"I have rarely seen such a blaze of irrelevant color." (Kenneth Tynan on *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*)

"One of the most breathtakingly lovely films ever made." (*Life* on *Red Desert*)

"*Red Desert* only confirms my feeling that color is a drawback." (Arne Sucksdorff)

"*. . . these blear'd eyes*
Have waked to read your several colours, sir,
Of the pale citron, the green lion, the crow,
The peacock's tail, the plumed swan."
(Ben Jonson, THE ALCHEMIST)

Ever since the modern alchemists learned how to transmute different wavelengths of light into a film image composed of equivalent dyes, there has been wide disagreement about the role of color on the screen. Until the early 1950's, the chief disagreement was between the public—which generally flocked to color movies—and the critics—who generally dismissed color movies as garish, pretty-pretty, or otherwise inartistic. During that period, of course, only a handful of critically respectable directors—Ford, Hitchcock, Olivier, among others—had made films in color.[1]

But in the past decade or so the picture has changed. Not only has the proportion of color films increased—overwhelmingly so in America—but the number of critically respectable directors who have worked or are working in color may by now form a majority. The list includes Antonioni, Bergman, Buñuel, Chabrol, Chaplin, Demy, Fellini, Godard, Huston, Ichikawa, Kazan, Kozintsev, Kubrick, Kurosawa, Lean, Losey, Malle, Renoir, Resnais, Richardson, Rosi, Truffaut, Varda, Visconti, Wajda, Welles, and Zinnemann, as well as the late Max Ophüls and Ozu. No critic can dismiss this entire group with "glorious Technicolor" irony, or claim that they are all exceptions which prove the rule.

Thus disagreement today about the role of color on the screen arises chiefly among critics when they try to assess the color films of these directors. (The public, of course, no longer flocks to color as in the past; it merely stays away more from black-and-white.) The disagreement stems partly from perplexity. Recent color films have undermined many accepted "facts" about screen color—that it is more realistic than black-and-white (does *Juliet of the Spirits* look more realistic than *8½*?), that it is more sensuous (is *Muriel* more sensuous than *Last Year at Marienbad*?) and that it is slower (does *Help!* move more slowly than *A Hard Day's Night*?). And it isn't easy to discern any

[1] This article is concerned with the photographed film and not the animated film. The two differ widely both in their approaches to color and in the problems they face, and it would be confusing to deal with them concurrently. Of course, many of the general statements about screen color will also apply to the animated film.

more dependable rules of thumb about color in the recent films. What common denominator does the color have in *Muriel, The Umbrellas of Cherbourg, Red Desert,* and *Juliet of the Spirits?* Not surprisingly, in appraising the use of color in these new films, critics have tended to take refuge in generalities, accepting or rejecting the color as a whole.

One obstacle to any deeper study is the sheer elusiveness of screen color. There is no durable record of the flickering images except on the film strip itself. While a black-and-white still can record the form of the screen image accurately enough, a color still is bound to distort the original colors, if only because of the physical difference between a projected image and printed inks. One's memory may be even less reliable: I have clearly "remembered" colors which a re-viewing of the film showed to be nonexistent. For that reason I've limited my examples of screen color to those which I noted while viewing the film; and in most cases I've checked my notes against a further viewing.

A second obstacle to critical study of screen color is the difficulty of attributing credit (or blame). If a director paints the grass, of course, the critics know where they are; but if he doesn't, do they praise the local weather, the photographic lab workers, or who or what? A similar doubt exists about effects in a black-and-white film, but it seems much more acute when the fragile and elusive phenomenon of color is concerned.

Probably the reddest of herrings that confronts a critic examining screen color is the fact that the history of photography runs back to front. If Nièpce, Talbot, Daguerre, and the other pioneers of photography had found a chemical that distinguished among different wavelengths of light, they would surely not have rejected it in favor of the silver salts that distinguish only between bright and dark. And in that case, black-and-white would have been the later and more sophisticated development—in both still and movie photography—that it is in the other visual arts. But because color came later, many people saw it as an additive to black-and-white instead of a medium in its own right. Those in favor of screen color welcomed it for its decorative value; those in opposition condemned it for painting the lily.

This view of screen color as a mere additive was supported by the earliest attempts to introduce color into films. Before the end of the nineteenth century color films were being produced by two methods, both of which consisted of adding color to black-and-white. Some film-makers almost literally painted the lily by having their films hand-colored, frame by frame. The far more widespread and longer-lived method was to tint the film, bathing entire scenes in a single color. Often the tinting was little more than functional: yellow for sunlight, blue for night. Sometimes it was used for dramatic or expressionistic effects, like the red-tinted shot of gleaming swords, expressing the husband's violent jealousy, in Arthur Robison's *Warning Shadows*. Sometimes the functional and dramatic uses were combined, as in the impressive red-tinted night scene of Babylon under attack by fire in Griffith's *Intolerance*. While tinting was more esthetic—and certainly more practical—than hand coloring, its expressive possibilities were obviously limited by the fact that everything in a scene had to be the same color.

Attempts to record "natural" color on film date back more than half a century. But the earliest successful color film process was three-strip Technicolor,[2] first used for a feature in 1935 (Mamoulian's *Becky Sharp*). This process dominated color film-making until the early 1950's.[3]

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[2] Three-strip Technicolor in effect breaks down every tone into a combination of three primary colors, which are recorded on three different strips of film. An earlier version of Technicolor used only two strips and two primaries: a number of films were made with this process in the 1920's and early 1930's.

[3] The second successful color process was Agfacolor, developed in Germany during World War II and subsequently taken over by the Russians. It too used a three-primary system but combined the three color layers on a single strip of film.

Naturally, the standard of success in the quest for a color film process was the ability to reproduce colors as closely as possible. There is an analogy here with painting, since art students must usually learn to imitate nature before achieving independence. But the prentice years of color film-making dragged on and on, occupying a longer stretch of the cinema's short history than the prentice years of sound or the wide screen.

One reason was technical. Since color was *not* an addition (like sound) or a simple modification (like the wide screen), the color images had to be clear and legible or the whole movie would collapse. Technicolor was a less flexible medium than the black-and-white films that directors were used to: it was slower (that is, it needed brighter lighting) and it had a narrower latitude (shadow areas were more liable to black out and highlighted areas were more liable to white out). In addition, color was relatively more expensive than it has become since. So directors were not encouraged to take chances.

Indeed, they were actively *dis*couraged. The Technicolor Corporation exercised tight control over the way its film was used. The earlier two-strip film had been widely condemned as crude and garish, which the Corporation blamed largely on the film-makers' choice of colors. So now the Corporation insisted on leasing (not selling) the special cameras required, on doing all the developing and printing and—most important of all—on supervising the choice of colors for sets, costumes, and so on. Technicolor was anxious to display the range and subtlety—indeed, the *un*garishness—of its process. But in so doing it fell into a different trap: too many of the early color films contain scene after scene of finely modulated, tasteful, and utterly cloying harmonies. A typical example is Norman Taurog's *Words and Music* (1948), whose interiors are a genteel riot of beiges, oaks, olives, lavenders, and other modest shades. Not surprisingly, some of the most exciting color effects in any Technicolor film occurred in Huston's *Moulin Rouge* (1953), which broke the Corporation's ban on using filters.

By the time *Moulin Rouge* was made, however, Technicolor's preëminence in the Western world was being challenged by several new color film processes, of which by far the most important was—and is—Eastmancolor.[4] Unlike Technicolor, Eastmancolor could be used in a conventional camera, and Eastman Kodak did not impose control on either its use or its developing and printing.[5] Before long, Technicolor was dethroned.

At first, films made with Eastmancolor were generally inferior in color quality to those made with Technicolor. Hitchcock's *To Catch a Thief*, which was made with Eastmancolor in 1954—and won an Oscar for its color photography—contains scenes of the Riviera which are coarse and unpleasing compared to the delicately nuanced Riviera scenes in Powell and Pressburger's *The Red Shoes*, made with Technicolor in 1948. Of course, Eastmancolor was a new product, starting from scratch, and the absence of any central control over the prints meant that they could fall far short of the film's capabilities. It took years of improvements in Eastmancolor itself and in the processing of it to raise the color-recording quality of the general run of color movies to the late-1940's level.

This may partly account for the fact that few film-makers in the 1950's made imaginative use of the freedom which Eastmancolor brought them. The earliest and almost lone exception was Kinugasa's *Gate of Hell* (1953).[6] In general, the old habits of decorative color persisted—and still persist in many film-makers today. Fussily

[4] All the new processes used a single-strip, three-color system. Today by far the greatest number of color films produced outside the Communist countries are made with Eastmancolor.

[5] Eastmancolor goes under many different names according to the studio or laboratory that controls the developing and printing, e.g., Metrocolor, De Luxe, and Technicolor (which still thrives on its distinctive printing process).

[6] I have not seen the film again since it first appeared, but if my memory is at all accurate there was a sharp break with the "tradition" of lush landscapes and multi-tinted interiors, and different sequences were keyed to dominant tones.

conceived harmonies, "tasteful" to the point of nausea, abound even in colorful-sounding films like *The Pleasure Seekers* or *How To Murder Your Wife.*

One spur to a freer use of color was the spread of location shooting. Even the glossiest Hollywood production, like a high fashion model revealing a human blemish, admitted to scenes with heavy shadows, silhouettes, twilight, real mist, and other "imperfect" lighting conditions. Theoretically, of course, these conditions led to increased naturalism; but in fact they presented audiences with unfamiliar, somewhat distorted color effects (as I shall explain later). The unrealism of such "naturalism" becomes obvious in films like *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* and Godard's *Contempt,* in which daylit areas are included in scenes filmed in artificial light and thus appear an unearthly blue.[7]

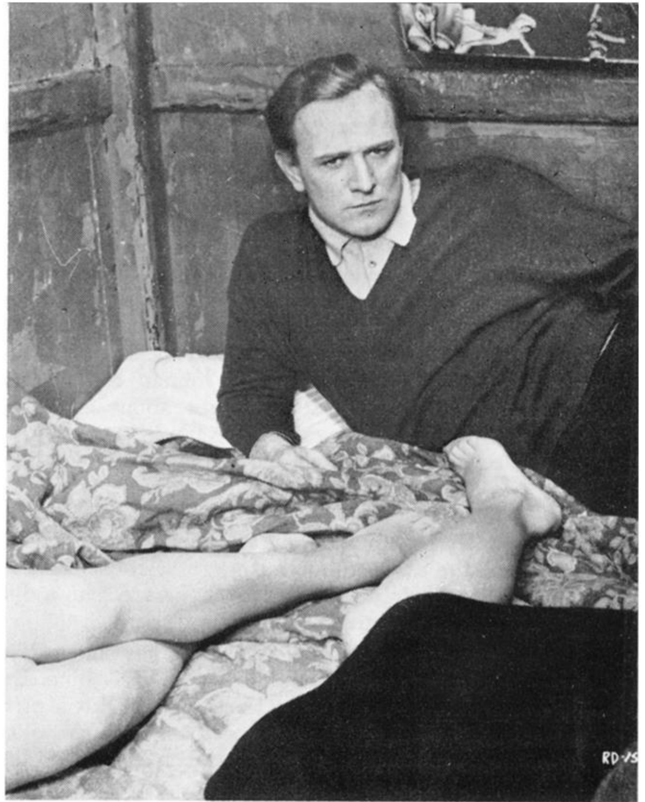
Meanwhile, the extra cost of using color rather than black-and-white was no longer big enough to exclude directors with modest-sized budgets and audiences. The important thing was not that these directors used color well (which many did not: Baratier's *La Poupée* was messy, Malle's *Zazie* incoherent, Bergman's *All These Women* insipid, among others)—but that they used color primarily because they wanted to, not because they would suffer at the box office with black-and-white.

Ever since the first Technicolor film, some directors had tried to do more with color than soothe or dazzle the eye.[8] But only in the 1960's did that "some" become "many."

What exactly are these directors trying to do? To answer this with any clarity, I must first deal (as briefly as possible) with three more basic questions:

1. How do colors affect us in real life?
2. How do colors affect us aesthetically?
3. How do colors affect us on the screen, where esthetic experience and a representation of real life are combined?

1. Unlike shape or mass or even sound, color is not an attribute of the object;[9] it is a subjective experience. Color is the brain's response



Antonioni's Red Desert

to a particular wavelength of light emitted, reflected, or refracted by the object.

For physical and physiological reasons, colors form complementaries, contrasts, harmonies, and clashes. That is, colors interact to enhance or diminish one another's effectiveness, with results that strike the viewer as more or less pleasing.

[7] The eye adapts easily to the difference between bluish daylight and yellowish tungsten light, but film cannot.

[8] I have not seen *Becky Sharp,* but according to statements made by Mamoulian he attempted to use color symbolically and dramatically in certain scenes.

[9] If grass, for example, could be said to possess a color, it would be a combination of everything in the spectrum *except* green, which is the one color that grass does not absorb.

Colors stimulate various psychological responses. Many attempts have been made to codify these responses, and the dicta of color engineers and theoreticians today exert a considerable influence in fields ranging from fashion to packaging. But, as a recent survey of color[10] points out, there has so far been very little *scientific* investigation of human response to color. There is some doubt about even the simplest responses. For example, red is generally considered an "advancing" color and blue a "receding" color, the physical reason being that these wavelengths of light are refracted differently by the eye's lens and do not focus at the same point; but some scientists believe that a bright color "advances" more than a dim one irrespective of hue.[11]

One series of scientific tests has shown that the color adults tend to like best is blue, the one they tend to like least, yellow. But a preference expressed about swatches of single colors displayed against a neutral background has little bearing on the interplay of colors in real life—or else few women would ever wear yellow.

Emotional responses to particular colors in real life probably depend to a great extent on associations. Thus red is felt to be warm and blue to be cool because of the associations with fire and blood on the one hand, water and ice on the other. But such responses don't necessarily work in the abstract, and may not work at all if the colors are attached to objects with associations of their own. Green may be restful so long as it can conceivably be associated with summer foliage, but not if it suggests moldy bread or Ben Jonson's lion!

2. All the visual arts which involve color make use of the relationships and associations described above. Although architecture and sculpture do not usually involve so much variety of color as the stage arts and, above all, painting, the artist in every one of these media has an extremely free choice of colors and modes of using them. Even in a strictly representational painting, the artist can modify the color of any or every object within wide limits.

The painter's control over his color effects can be very precise indeed. He can choose colors solely for their harmonies, solely for their expressionistic value, or in varying combinations of the two modes. At the same time, he can determine the strength of any color associations by the degree of realism in his painting. Thus certain colors in an Op Art painting may evoke virtually no associations; the same colors in an abstract expressionist painting, in which forms are on the threshold of recognizability, may evoke an emotional response through the association of color with form; while the same colors in a Pop Art painting may evoke an entirely different emotional response because they are *not* usually associated with the all-too-recognizable forms.

3. The film-maker is in an equivocal position. On the one hand, he can exercise a much wider control over the colors in his film than many people realize. As far as interiors are concerned, the colors of virtually everything that appears in front of the camera—sets, costumes, props, make-up—may be chosen or modified at will.[12] This control is readily recognized in Hollywood musicals, especially in set pieces which are colored with a nonrealistic palette—the dream sequence in *Singin' in the Rain,* where Cyd Charisse's long white gauzy stole floats against a surrealistic, lavender-lighted void, or the Mickey Spillane spoof in Minnelli's *Band Wagon,* which metamorphoses a New York subway station into pale clinical green, a bar into misty pink and powder blue, and so on.

But it's a mistake to assume that creative screen color must begin and end with fantasy. In natural exteriors, the film-maker can still choose the settings—and therefore the colors—

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[10] *Color: A Guide to Basic Facts and Concepts,* by Robert W. Burnham, Randall M. Hanes and C. James Bartelson (Wiley, 1963)

[11] *Op. cit.*

[12] I'm not suggesting that such complete control is the general rule. Budget considerations will often preclude much trial and error. And in any case, the film-maker (director or producer) may not be interested in exercising his freedom of choice, which may be delegated partly to someone else and partly to happenstance.

he wants. Whether Terence Young knew it or not, filming parts of *Thunderball* under water was just as much a choice of blue-green tones as Roger Corman's deliberate blue-green tinting of the dream sequence in *The Premature Burial.*

The film-maker can also control the colors of an exterior scene by deciding what season of the year, what time of day and what weather conditions to shoot in. For both exteriors and interiors he can exercise still further control by means of lighting, exposure, filters, and adjustments in printing the film.

Perhaps the most important—and most easily overlooked—of all the film-maker's tools for controlling color is the camera itself. By changing the camera angle the film-maker can include or exclude a particular color in the setting. By moving the camera back for a long shot or forward for a close-up he can minimize or emphasize a particular color in the scene—just as Hitchcock keeps us detached from the mysterious spots of red that disturb Marnie until the dénouement, when he moves in for a screen-filling close-up of blood.

So the film-maker does have considerable control over color; but on the other hand, it is impossible for him to determine all the colors in a scene independently of one another, as a painter can. Unlike a painting, the screen image is not completely autonomous but is linked closely to the objects filmed. Except in the extreme case of *trompe-l'oeil,* a painting is seen and accepted as a two-dimensional image, distinct from reality; but a film is seen partly, perhaps chiefly, as a window on a three-dimensional reality "behind the screen." Thus a green lion in an otherwise representational painting may be mystifying, but the spectator doesn't seek a *physical* explanation for its greenness. On the screen, however, a green lion in an otherwise realistic setting is automatically set apart, since the viewer consciously or unconsciously wonders *how* the lion is made green as well as why. He expects screen colors to obey the same rules of cause and effect as in real life.

Yet in spite of this, screen colors *always appear different from reality.* For one thing, they almost certainly *are* different to a slight degree, because of the nature of the film process.[13] More important is the equivocal nature of the screen image: although the viewer sees it primarily as a representation of real objects, it is also an object in its own right—an object unified by its isolation amid darkness and by its dependence on a single light source, the projector.

In real life one's perceptual mechanism takes all sorts of liberties with colors. Often it tones them down: one doesn't normally much notice colors unless they are unfamiliar or unexpected. Even colors that must be noticed—functional colors like traffic lights—are seen in a generalized way: one doesn't observe whether the red tends to orange or crimson, or the green to lemon or turquoise, one simply registers red and green. At other times the brain changes the colors reported by the eyes, or even creates colors where none are reported. For example, an object will take on different colors in daylight, lamplight, sunlight filtering through foliage, etc., but the brain sees it as its "normal" color at nearly all times. Moreover, the brain grasps a black-and-white image of a familiar object as if it were in color; so that even with an effort of will it is almost impossible to see a black-and-white portrait as a faithful record of an ashen face! In real life, one generally sees the colors one expects to see.

But the color film offers no scope for this subjective vision. The brightness and isolation of the screen image compel attention; and because the image is a single object it compels observation of all the colors on the same terms. In short, the viewer is made to see specific colors which differ from those he's accustomed to seeing.

By objectifying the deeply subjective experience of color vision, the color film can work

[13] Color film contains the equivalent of three layers of black-and-white film, which record the amount of red, blue and green in each object color. In the final print, the monochromatic tones in each layer are replaced by red, blue and green dyes. Thus there is only the most indirect relationship between object colors and print colors.

for (or against) the film-maker in three broad areas:

Color sharpens the viewer's perception of the screen image—or, more simply, it brings out details.

Explaining how *Neighbours* was made, Norman McLaren says:[14] "We selected color: there was going to be speeded-up action and moments of very fast cutting, and I think it's possible to sort out an image more quickly, grasp it sooner in color than black-and-white, especially if the image is at all complex and the movement fast."

Obviously there can be a greater variety of visual contrasts among colors than among gradations of black-and-white. This is a functional effect—but it can also enhance any emotional or dramatic content in the film. In Aleksander Ford's *Five From Barska Street,* for example, there are several long shots of the heroine playing a kind of hide-and-seek with her boyfriend at dusk amid the ruins of Warsaw, and her gleaming blond hair stands out vividly, even at a distance, against the predominantly bluish surroundings. The visual contrast, keener than anything possible in black-and-white, heightens the emotional contrast between love and destruction.

But color is not a wonder detergent, making every script situation automatically more sparkling than with Brand X. In *Five From Barska Street,* the girl's hair is one bright spot against a background of near-complementary tones. In *Neighbours,* the setting—grass and shrubbery—forms an almost uniformly green background which contrasts well both with the warmish colors of the neighbors and with the white of their "houses." If a film-maker lets his colors get out of hand, the accumulation of detail may lead not to clarity but to confusion. There's a striking example in Minnelli's *Meet Me in St. Louis*—striking because the use of color in this film is otherwise careful and imaginative. But the color literally falls to pieces in the ballroom scenes toward the end, where the variegated dresses of the dancers and the Christmassy decor collapse into a formless jumble.

The ability of color to emphasize detail carries with it another disadvantage: fakery of any kind is far more obvious and jarring than in black-and-white. Painted backcloths and models do not have the minuteness of detail that color film can reveal in landscapes or large-scale objects; in back-projection or process shots, the colors in one part of the image may be in a different key from those elsewhere.

Most of the earlier color films escaped the worst of these flaws because they were either action pictures shot outdoors or frankly artificial musicals. But directors who turned to color after many years of working with black-and-white often did not allow for this difference—hence the glaring fabrications in Hitchcock's color films, the poor process shots in Wyler's *Ben-Hur,* and the ill-fitting patchwork of such DeMille stunts as the parting of the Red Sea in *The Ten Commandments* and the collapse of the temple in *Samson and Delilah.*

In watching a color film, the viewer has a heightened awareness not only of details but of colorfulness in general.

This probably accounts for the fact that many people found the early Technicolor films garish. (Some films actually were garish, of course, but far more were bland.) Viewers were simply not accustomed to seeing colors as the objective screen image compelled them to. Now that audiences *have* become so accustomed, the blanket charge of garishness is rare—even though recent films like *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* and *Juliet of the Spirits* use bright colors far more freely than almost any film of the Technicolor era.

Instead of balking at this heightened awareness of colors, many viewers reveled in it for its own sake. And if theater managers are to be believed,[15] a majority of moviegoers in America today look upon color as a decorative wrapping that adds pleasure to any film.

A film-maker who doesn't want his colors to be taken for mere decoration can of course

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[14] In an interview reported in *Film: Book Two,* ed. Robert Hughes (Grove, 1963).

[15] See the exhibitors' comments in almost any issue of *Box Office.*

Fellini's GIULIETTA DEGLI SPIRITI

tone them down. One of the most rigorous examples of toning-down is *Red Desert:* in most scenes Antonioni chooses settings and lighting conditions which make all colors tend toward gray. A milder case is *The Bible,* in which Huston carefully avoids any chromatic resemblance to other films based on the same book.

But it would be self-defeating to try to eliminate all sensuous color—even Antonioni doesn't try that. It would certainly be out of character for a musical not to make some of its colors as sensuous as possible—like the stunning set, all of luminous rose madder, in the Mickey Spillane spoof in *Band Wagon.* And recently there have been successful attempts to use sensuous color as a dramatic foundation of the entire film. I shall have more to say about this later, in discussing *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* and *Le Bonheur.*

The viewer responds more keenly to specific colors on the screen than in real life.

Let's look deeper into the case of the "restful green." In real life people are of course well aware of the difference between a dirty olive and a brilliant chartreuse, and wouldn't insist that either is restful; but within these extremes they tend not to notice a particular shade of green (or any other hue) unless compelled to in some way (e.g., by being in a room decorated entirely in that shade). Normally they can just look away. But the hypnotic screen image, filled with objectified, not-quite-familiar colors, forces them to see the specific shade of green, its relationship to other specific colors around it, and its relevance (if any) to the dramatic context.

Under these conditions a green *may* still be restful, as in Resnais' *Muriel:* the foliage seen through the window when Hélène visits her quiet acquaintances, Antoine and Angèle, suits this haven of contentment. But green may also be:

Oppressive—Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder:* the dark green of the large window curtain

behind which the would-be murderer is to hide.

Nauseating—*Red Desert:* the blotchy wall cut in after Giuliana reluctantly submits to her husband's embrace.

Nostalgic—Rosi's *Moment of Truth:* the ochreous greens of olive trees and fields when Miguelín revisits his home village.

Stimulating—*Singin' in the Rain:* the sleek lime-green dress worn by Cyd Charisse for her first dance number.

Tense—Fritz Lang's *Rancho Notorious:* the bright pea-green lampshade in the sheriff's office when Arthur Kennedy and Mel Ferrer make their jailbreak—green for danger!

For all I know, none of these color effects was intentional. In any case, I'm certainly not implying that each shade of green denotes the corresponding state of mind. Working through the relationships and associations described earlier, the color acts as a kind of servo-mechanism, amplifying a mood that would still exist without color. The "green for danger" effect in *Rancho Notorious*, for example, derives partly from the fact that the green is an eye-catching tone (by far the purest and brightest color in the scene) and partly from the viewer's realization that its light might expose the jail-breakers. If the scene were in black-and-white, the mere brightness of the lamp would convey some of the tension. Just as the greater visual range of colors can make details more legible than in black-and-white, so it can bring out moods and emotional reactions more sharply.

But color is more than a heightened black-and-white, as some less casual examples will show. In *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg,* color reinforces the mood directly in the scene where Guy decides to ask the quiet Madeleine to marry him. The setting is a sidewalk café painted a brilliant orange—a vibrant color generating a sense of energy and radiance that would be absent from its equivalent in black-and-white.

In the high school commencement scenes in Robson's *Peyton Place,* color reinforces the mood by contrast. Amid the general excitement and optimism, Hope Lange is gloomy at the thought of her prospects. The cheerful crimson of caps and gowns which dominates the screen forms a striking dissonant setting for her down-cast face.

There is a subtler example of this kind of contrast, the coloring of the face being as important as that of the setting, in Peckinpah's *Ride the High Country.* During the wedding ceremony in the saloon-cum-brothel of the mining camp, Elsa's freckled face and golden hair shine out against the darker, viscid colors of the decor. Black-and-white could easily convey the visual contrast between light and dark, but not between the freshness of over-innocence and the staleness of over-experience.

A special form of contrast with no counter-part in black-and-white is the color clash. Usually, of course, the film-maker tries to avoid this effect, regarding it as one of the additional possibilities for error with which he has to pay for the additional expressiveness of color. But it can also be an asset. In the middle episode of Asquith's *The Yellow Rolls-Royce* (a film not otherwise distinguished for its use of color) the disarming uncouthness of the gangster's moll (Shirley MacLaine) is neatly suggested by the juxtaposition of her shocking-pink dress and the yellow Rolls itself. And in *The Battle of the Villa Fiorita* Delmer Daves uses a color clash to editorialize on Moira's decision to leave her husband and live with Lorenzo: for a shot of the two relaxing quite innocently in the villa, he arranges the decor and lighting to produce a color scheme of bilious greens and blues.

By far the most common type of contrast is the one that usually occurs in exterior long shots—between the blue of the sky and the generally warmer colors of landscapes or buildings. Whether because of the contrast alone, or because blue recedes and warmer colors advance, such exterior shots tend to give a stronger impression of spaciousness than black-and-white. The color-film maker can modify this sense of spaciousness by shooting in different atmospheric conditions. One example (which may or may not be intentional) occurs in the early scenes of Hathaway's *Nevada*

Smith, when the callow young hero sets out in pursuit of the men who killed his parents: the sky here is a particularly limpid and distant blue, and its extra spaciousness suggests the long way Nevada must go to attain his goal.

The finest use of this outdoor contrast I've ever seen is also one of the earliest. In Henry King's *Jesse James* (1939) the James gang holds up a railroad train at dusk. Jesse leaps onto the train and runs along the top while it is still moving: he is silhouetted against the deepening blue of the sky while the car windows below him glow with orange lamplight. Thanks to the bold silhouetting, which eliminates virtually all colors except those of the sky and the windows, the scene conveys a striking and economical contrast between the cold, dangerous world of the outlaw and the warm, comfortable world of the law-abiding passengers.

All the examples I have cited so far merely scratch the surface of screen color, since they do not involve one of the most important attributes of the film—duration.

A good color film must consist of more than individually effective scenes. Failure to relate color to duration accounts partly for the weakness of Satyajit Ray's first color film, *Kanchenjungha.* While many individual images show a perceptive use of color, the effect is frequently annulled by movement within the scene or by the transition to the following scene. These continual shifts in color keys are particularly unfortunate because the action of the film leaps to and fro among six or seven members of a family: instead of helping the different sections to cohere, the color only increases their dislocation.

Thus a whole new area of possibilities—for good or ill—is opened up by the fact that *all the foregoing effects of screen color work in time as well as space, and tend to work more powerfully in time than in space.*

There are some obvious similarities here between film and stage. In plays, especially costume plays, colors are often chosen for what might be called emblematic purposes, so that the characters are easy to identify when they appear onstage or intermingle with others. The costumes in Olivier's film of *Henry V* are emblematic in this way: warm reds and golds for the English, cold blues and silvers for the French. The fact that *Henry V* is adapted from a stage play doesn't mean that this kind of color effect is uncinematic. It can also be put to good use in unstagelike films such as Terence Fisher's *Horror of Dracula,* where Dracula's castle and all the vampires appear in bluish tones while the humans are keyed to warm tones. However, the flexibility of the film medium—its power of showing both the wood and the trees, of controlling transitions from one scene to another—enable it to go far beyond the simple use of color to which the stage is largely limited. Indeed, as was implied earlier in the discussion of responses to specific colors, this flexibility even enables the film to override or reverse such emblematic associations. Silver and blue may stand for coldness and lack of vigor in *Henry V;* but in the context of Varda's *Le Bonheur* a silvery statue and a blurred background of silver birches can become lively; and because nearly all the other colors in *Ben-Hur* are drab, the blue scarf that Charlton Heston wears for the chariot race can become vibrant and exciting.

Another stage device for organizing colors in time is to change the lighting. Here again the film is far more flexible, since it can move at will from day to night, sunlight to mist, and into any kind of artificial light. Insofar as these conditions are naturalistic, they are means of controlling color effects rather than effects in themselves, and do not need separate discussion. But artificial lighting on the stage is sometimes emblematic in color, and a few films have borrowed this device.

When the situation as well as the lighting is artificial—as in the ballet sequence of *An American in Paris*—the device can be successful on the screen. But attempts to bathe naturalistic scenes with mood colors—like the rose-tinted scene between the Norman knight and the peasant girl in Schaffner's *The War Lord,* or the variety of pastel-lighted interiors in Bergman's *All These Women*—are unsatisfactory. The mixture of naturalism and artifice in so

basic an element of the image as its lighting is disruptive; and as with our old friend the green lion, the viewer is distracted into wondering about the how as well as the why of the color.[16]

While stage colors can be varied in time but have little flexibility, colors in painting have great flexibility but cannot be varied in time. As Egbert Jackson writes in his book *Basic Color:* "Although discord is often carefully written into music, it is not so common in painting, where there is no time element to resolve it; a color juxtaposition on canvas, once established, remains." For "music" one can read "movies."

Some painters argue that painting does have a time element because the viewer rarely takes in the whole canvas at a glance but lets his eye travel over it. But a painting is not *organized* in time like a film. A series of paintings—such as Monet's studies of Rouen Cathedral—may be very loosely organized in time if hung side by side; but only when a painting becomes the subject of a film can it be fully organized in time. The director then transposes space into time by the use of close-ups, long shots, movements, etc.—or, in a rare instance like Clouzot's *Le Mystère Picasso,* by recording the actual process of creation.

Attempts to return the compliment and give individual film scenes the balanced, finished look of paintings are successful only insofar as they respect the time element—that is, insofar as they fit into the succession of scenes. In *Meet Me in St. Louis* the two older sisters are shown singing at the piano in a scene which, in its composition and soft coloring, calls to mind Renoir's painting *Jeunes Filles au Piano.* The similarity is justified because the scene fits both visually and dramatically with what precedes and follows; otherwise it would stand out as a mere effect. Ironically, Jean Renoir runs afoul of the time element in *French Cancan,* which he tries to imbue with the sensuousness of his father's paintings by the systematic use of soft, pale pastels; but being repeated in scene after scene this coloring quickly cloys. Minnelli avoids this trap (if not others!) in *Lust for Life.* Here the colors—predominantly yellow-orange-red-brown-black—are reminiscent of Van Gogh's own vivid sunlight-and-shadow palette; but instead of repeating them totally in scene after scene Minnelli extends them through time. As Van Gogh approaches death, for example, the colors are progressively withdrawn until there is virtually nothing left but the black of the crows and the straw-yellow of the wheatfield in which he dies.

The principle that color effects in time are more telling on the screen than static effects applies just as strongly when there is no allusion to painting. In Corman's *Masque of the Red Death* the demonic scenes in Prince Prospero's sanctum—lighted throughout by the glow of a red window—are far less striking than the sequence in which the victims of the red death swarm around the prince, filling the screen with more and more redness. The relative effectiveness of the two sequences is in no way altered by the fact that the sanctum set is elaborately designed while the climactic red death obviously comes straight out of the make-up box.

All of the color effects described earlier can be developed in time as well as space. For con-

Corman's MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

[16] This article is not meant to be prescriptive. The failure of colored lighting in *The War Lord* and *All These Women* is undoubtedly linked with the fact that these aren't very good films anyway. In a really imaginative film, a similar use of colored lighting—or any other effect termed unsatisfactory in this article—might be fully justified. There is hardly any device that the film *can* use which it cannot occasionally use well.

venience I will discuss the ways of developing them under three broad headings:

1. A color progression within a scene. Moving objects are more eye-catching than static ones; moving colored objects, or the movement of the camera among static colored objects, can form the basis of striking color effects.

In Donen's *Funny Face*, when the fashion magazine crew have left the somber bookstore which they invaded to take photos, the young salesgirl finds a hat they overlooked. She begins to sing "How Long Has This Been Going On?" and at the same time slowly unfurls the hat's gauzy chartreuse veil, which gradually brightens up the whole scene with its romantic coloring—a visual equivalent of the romantic awakening of the girl herself.

In *Le Bonheur*, François and his wife are picnicking in a wheatfield when he announces that he has a mistress, assuring her that this does not diminish but increases his marital love. When the wife, submissive, says that she too now loves him more than before, he joyfully stands up and pulls her to her feet. As the camera follows them, the background changes from the pale yellow of the wheat to the luminous green of distant trees. The color change is ambiguous: it takes François' view of his wife's reaction as a joyful cadence, but it also presages the green setting in which she drowns herself.

2. A color progression from scene to scene. The climax of *The Masque of the Red Death,* described above, is a simple dramatic example of this. A simple atmospheric example occurs in the scenes of the Seville Holy Week with which *The Moment of Truth* opens: blue-black silhouettes against a pallid dawn sky; then the yellow of lighted candles; and finally the brightly colored processional altar.

There is a subtler use of a color progression in Abram Room's *The Garnet Bracelet.* The action of the film is set in Czarist Russia: the princess Vera is loved from a distance by a government clerk who sends her letters and a bracelet but hopes for nothing in return. In one scene Vera stands pensively in a room furnished richly with reds and mahoganies. In the next scene the admirer is entering a cellar café whose walls are a pallid green. The extreme change—between complementary colors—obviously suggests the gulf between the princess' circumstances and the clerk's; but Room adds overtones to the contrast by means of the sound track, which leaps from near-silence to a vigorous saltarella played by the café violinist. Thus the green setting creates an impression not only of poverty after luxury but also of liveliness after languor.

An even more complex color progression occurs in *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* when Guy makes love to Geneviève for the first and last time. After showing them together in Guy's room, Demy inserts four transitional scenes, each cut in rhythmically on a beat of music, which on the surface merely indicate Geneviève's homeward journey. But the scenes do more than that. Each is keyed to different colors—the rather sickly green of the entrance to Guy's apartment building; the crimson, pink and yellow of a poster across the street; the blue light in which the street itself is bathed; the pale green and pink of the striped wallpaper in Geneviève's living room—and these rapid contrasts mark out Geneviève's inner journey through a turmoil of emotions until, at the end of the fourth scene, she buries her head in her mother's lap.[17]

This kind of transition is made even more abstract by Agnes Varda (Demy's wife) in *Le Bonheur.* Taken out of context, her rapidly cut sequences of colored façades, sunsets, and colored fadeouts might seem to consist of manner without matter. I will discuss their context later; I mention them here as a reminder that a good color film does not present a simple series of color effects but an intricate skein, and even an entire sequence may make little sense if the rest of the film is ignored. That's why the third basic way of developing colors in time, namely

3. A combination of color progression within a scene and from scene to scene is necessarily a

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[17] It's also possible to react to the sequence as suggesting stages of the love-making itself.

catchall. Endless variations are possible, and it would be ludicrous to try to offer even a representative sample. One example is enough to show how screen colors can enhance a film by ramifying and intertwining through time.

In the first episode of Kobayashi's *Kwaidan* the ambitious samurai leaves his humble weaver wife and marries a well-connected but selfish woman. The newly married couple wander around a street market, where the wife sees a roll of blue-violet fabric that seizes her fancy. She picks it up, almost embracing it, and the sight of this reminds the samurai of his first wife at her loom. Time passes, and the marriage deteriorates. One afternoon as the samurai is taking a nap his wife comes into his room wearing a dress made of the blue-violet fabric, which looks more somber in the shuttered half-light. Irritated by his sleeping, the wife wakes him by slapping his face with her fan, and they quarrel. As the wife turns to storm out, there is a brief flash of white from the petticoat beneath her dress. Here, the change in the appearance of the blue-violet fabric between the two scenes reflects the change in the marriage; and the sharp flash of white amid darker tones creates a visual sensation of bitterness.

In my attempts to describe complex uses of color as succinctly as possible I may seem to have implied that a specific color can have a specific absolute meaning. Let me repeat that the context is all-important. As Eisenstein writes in *Film Sense:* "In general the 'psychological' interpretation of color is a very slippery business. . . . In art it is not the *absolute* relationships [associations] that are decisive, but those *arbitrary* relationships within a system of images dictated by the particular work of art."

In considering particular works of screen art in their entirety, it's easiest to begin with the most elementary form of color system—the insertion of a brief color passage into an otherwise black-and-white film. The 1925 *Phantom of the Opera* and Lewin's *Picture of Dorian Gray* reserve color for their dramatic peaks: the unmasking of the Phantom in the former, the portrait and the corrupted corpse of Dorian in the latter.[18] The "arbitrary relationship" here is a simple one between black-and-white on the one hand and the totality of the colors on the other—a stark contrast in which the *individual* colors play an unimportant role.

These examples are crude but successful. The device of interpolating color into a black-and-white film originated at a time when the available film processes were themselves crude, since it set them off to best advantage. Yet even today, when film processes have evolved from Eliza Doolittles into My Fair Ladies, color and black-and-white are still used together from time to time.

Ironically, the contrast that enhanced the crude color of the 1920's can easily degrade the subtle color of today. It depends largely on whether black-and-white or color dominates the film. In all the examples I can think of which follow the *Phantom of the Opera* practice, the injection of color has a melodramatic and strident effect. This is true even of a documentary like Joris Ivens' *A Valparaiso*, which leaps into color for an impression of the Valparaisanos' streak of violence. While the sequence is obviously intended to contain some melodrama, color amplifies it out of all proportion: it is much as if Segovia's guitar were suddenly electrified in mid-performance.

On the other hand, there's nothing inherently melodramatic about injecting black-and-white scenes into a color film, and nearly all the examples I can think of are subtle and effective.[19] A survey of a few of these examples will show how color and black-and-white can set each other off to both visual and dramatic advantage.

The role of black-and-white in *Meet Me in St. Louis* is brief but typical. The film is divided into sections according to the season of the year, and each section is preceded by an album-style black-and-white still picture of the Smiths' house at that particular season. The still then

[18] These color scenes were in the early two-strip Technicolor. The prints I have seen are entirely in black-and-white, and I don't know whether any survive with the original color.

[19] The one exception is Vadim's *Blood and Roses*, and here the black-and-white scenes have color running into them.

comes to life in color. These touches of black-and-white add poignancy to the film's gentle nostalgia, reminding the viewer that the action he is watching is set in a past which has long since been fixed and drained of color. He is all the more delighted when, in a casual cinematic miracle, color and movement return and the past is resurrected.

Black-and-white can add poignancy even to a color film as ungentle as *Peeping Tom*—the story of a photographer who kills women with a sharpened tripod leg because, as a child, he was used by his psychologist father as a guinea pig for the study of fear. If Michael Powell had followed the *Phantom of the Opera* practice in this film, reserving color for the killings and leaving the rest in black-and-white, the film would probably have been as melodramatic as my brief description makes it sound. Instead, everything is in color except the films projected by Mark Lewis: those taken of Mark as a child by his father, and those taken by Mark himself while killing. The former are poignant because they juxtapose the doomed innocence of the past with the terrible experience of the present. At one point, for example, the black-and-white film-within-the-film shows the father giving Mark his first movie camera; the scene is interrupted by a brief color shot, in the film's present, of the same camera perched on a shelf above Mark and his projector. Like a spark leaping between electrodes, this alternation of black-and-white and color lights up the gap between a wonderful novelty and the deadly obsession to which it led. When Mark screens his own films, the sharply delineated black-and-white frame within the color frame rivets the viewer's attention like Mark's, and the viewer shares Mark's disappointment that the image of each killing (black-and-white) falls short of the "actuality" (color). Here too black-and-white represents the past—though a much more recent one—and underlines the fact that Mark is too deeply enmeshed in the past to be able to grasp the present. All in all, the use of black-and-white helps to make the viewer sympathize with Mark, and thus to elevate the film from grand guignol into something approaching tragedy.

Michael Powell's PEEPING TOM

Perhaps the simplest and most powerful use of the contrast between black-and-white and color is in *Night and Fog*, Resnais' documentary about a Nazi concentration camp. Here there is a complete reversal of the *Phantom of the Opera* practice. Black-and-white is used for the flashbacks of the horrors of the camp during the war and at its liberation,[20] while color is used for the postwar views of the camp, now in ruins and overgrown with weeds, and looking serene and innocuous in the sunlight. The contrast strengthens the film in several ways. It serves the practical purpose of distinguishing past and present. (One weakness of Rossif's all-black-and-white documentary about the Spanish Civil War, *To Die in Madrid*, is that one can't be sure where the archive scenes end and the specially photographed scenes begin—a doubt which tends to compromise the entire film.) Second, the transitions from pleasant color to black-and-white throw the horrors into stark relief. Most important of all, it emphasizes the remoteness of those horrors, drained as they are of the colorful detail of the postwar scenes. The contrast between black-and-white and color thus crystallizes the way in which time swiftly

[20] It doesn't lessen Resnais' achievement to point out that he had to use monochrome for these scenes, since none of the archive material was in color. In films it's rarely possible to distinguish between what was intentional, what was accidental and what was unavoidable; but the good director manages to work with the grain of those elements he can't control.

Claude Lelouch's A Man and a Woman

buries all events, no matter how terrifying or how worthy of remembrance.

The foregoing examples make it clear that when black-and-white and color are juxtaposed there is only one fundamental difference between them. Neither is necessarily more dramatic, more realistic or more sensuous. But color, being more specific, has more immediacy than black-and-white—the scenes in color appear closer in time and space. This doesn't mean that black-and-white must always represent the past when used with color. In *A Man and a Woman,* Lelouch uses black-and-white for the "present" scenes in which Jean-Louis Duroc first meets Anne Gauthier and drives her home to Paris. Then, when Anne talks about her dead husband, there are brief color inserts of her memories of them together. The point here is that Anne finds it difficult to accept Jean-Louis' love because her husband is still so alive within her, so much closer to her than the reality of his death.

Used by itself, of course, black-and-white no longer lacks immediacy. Indeed, it is a protean medium which can seem to take on nearly all the qualities of color. This adaptability is one reason why black-and-white can be used in color films with little risk of a jarring effect. But there is a much greater risk when a single-color tint or tone[21] is inserted into a full-color film. The stronger and more assertive the single color, the more likely it is to clash with the full-color scenes that surround it—no matter how "realistic" the tint or tone may be. For example, the red and blue tints in Bert Stern's *Jazz on a Summer's Day,* intended to represent sunset and nightfall, are just as jarring as the symbolic red and blue tints at the beginning of Godard's *Contempt.* On the other hand, a paler or more neutral color may be successful even when it is "unrealistic," as in the blue-green nightmare in *The Premature Burial.* Just on the borderline are the orange-yellow-toned scenes in *A Man and a Woman* in which Jean-Louis tries to make love to Anne and she keeps remembering her husband (in full color). Though not so strong as to ruin the transitions, the tone is strong enough to make them visually irritating.

There is a subtle use of a neutral tint in Wajda's *Lotna,* in which color is reserved for the daytime scenes and sepia for the night. At first the distinction seems purely practical: monochrome requires less lighting than color, and it conveys the real-life neutralization of colors at night in a way that is almost impossible with the highly specific screen colors. But there is more to *Lotna's* use of sepia than that. The film is concerned with the experiences of a Polish cavalry regiment during the Nazi invasion of 1939, and the contrast between color and sepia reflects the contrast between the romantic traditions of the cavalry and the somber reality of mechanized warfare. The film ends at night with the death of Lotna, the regiment's prize mount, as the few surviving men scatter across a bleak landscape that looks all the more bleak for being in sepia.

When it comes to films entirely in color, the possibilities for what Eisenstein calls "arbitrary relationships within a system of images" multiply tremendously. In recent years more and

[21] Tinting was achieved in earlier times by literally dipping black-and-white film in a dye. The gradations of grays thus seemed to be transformed into variations of the dye color; areas which were white in the original film took on the over-all dye color also. In toning, which is usually achieved by printing black-and-white footage on color stock with a filter interposed, the gradations of grays are replaced by varying tones of the color, and white areas remain white. Thus toning usually has a more delicate effect than tinting.

more color-film-makers have gone beyond mere decoration or disconnected effects and have attempted, for good or ill, to create a coherent color system for the film as a whole.

These attempts have as yet explored only a tiny fraction of all the possible worlds of color, and it would be ludicrous to classify them in any rigid way. Purely for convenience I have divided them into four main groups, roughly arranged in order of increasing complexity. But the groups overlap, and the differences between films within a group are often wider than those between films in different groups. These are indeed worlds of color, belonging to a universe that has still to be charted.

1. The simplest color scheme is one in which a single hue or palette dominates the entire film. At the very least such a scheme helps to give unity to the film and save it from a succession of "tasteful" harmonies. Often the dominant color is determined by the choice of a natural setting. For example, the Arctic setting of Nicholas Ray's *The Savage Innocents* establishes the unusual keynote of white: even though the use of other colors is mediocre, the film retains a visual distinction. Similarly, the Antarctic setting in which much of Delbert Mann's *Quick Before It Melts!* takes place gives a visual lift to this otherwise pedestrian comedy. Lean uses the blue-white of snow and ice as the keynote of *Doctor Zhivago,* just as he used the orange-yellows of the desert for *Lawrence of Arabia* and the yellow-greens of the jungle for *The Bridge on the River Kwai*—which partly explains why Lean's spectaculars are more impressive-looking than most.

In *The Trouble with Harry* Hitchcock adds piquancy to this kind of natural keynote by choosing a setting—Vermont in the fall—whose picturesqueness makes a sharp contrast with the macabre comedy of the action. Clément uses a similar contrast in *Purple Noon,* where an almost-perfect murder is enacted against a dazzling Mediterranean setting of white, aquamarines and oranges—colors that are carefully reflected in the interior sets as well.

In a few films it is the sets which determine the dominant color scheme: in other words, the film-maker uses an artificial keynote. The first film I saw that attempted this was *My Uncle* (1958), in which Tati uses soft pastels for the uncle's environment and aseptic whites and tints for the modernistic house. With this limited range of pale colors Tati creates a kind of distilled reality that suits his cool fable. Unfortunately, the location scenes fail to mesh with this color scheme, in rather the same way that the comedy itself frequently slips gear from quiet subtlety to sheer boredom. A more successful use of an artificial keynote is found in Petri's *Tenth Victim,* the story of a future society in which people are licensed to hunt one another to death. Here the sets are predominantly neutral or bluish, and the location scenes are chosen and filmed in the right conditions to match. Touches of warmer colors, especially golden browns, appear in unexpected places and sometimes in unexpected combinations, as when the American "huntress" wears a shocking-pink dress in a golden decor. The mixture of the dehumanized and the casually bizarre helps to create a convincing impression of what the world *could* be like in the future.

2. Probably the commonest type of color scheme is what might be called organized realism: the coloring in each scene looks natural, but the sequences are organized to contrast with one another and form a dramatic progression.

A simple but effective example is Gilbert's *Loss of Innocence,* a romantic melodrama about English schoolgirls stranded on their own at a country inn in France. The exteriors are all airy sunlight, clear blue skies, and luminous green foliage; the interiors are keyed to warm colors—rich wooden paneling, rows of wine bottles, and close-ups of Susannah York's golden hair and Jane Asher's red hair. As the film alternates between outdoors and indoors these two complementary palettes continually enhance each other. Thus the colors take on an apparent glow that reflects the schoolgirls' glamorized view of their surroundings.

Hitchcock uses a similar basic contrast between interiors and exteriors in *Vertigo,* but he creates some striking variations. The exteriors

Hitchcock's VERTIGO

are in subdued greens and blues, while the interiors—such as the apartments of Scottie and Midge—are keyed to soft browns, oranges, and yellows. But for high points in the film Hitchcock intensifies the contrast by modulating to bright colors. Among the interiors, for example, there are the gleaming red walls of Ernie's restaurant where Scottie first sees Madeleine and the orange firelight in Scottie's apartment when he brings her back after her attempted "suicide" by drowning. Among the exteriors, there is the brilliant green of the lawn in front of the art museum where Madeleine goes to look at the portrait of Carlotta Valdes, her "past incarnation," and the gaudy luminous blues and greens in the redwood forest where Madeleine weaves her spell of romantic mystification around Scottie. At the climax of the film, in "Judy" 's hotel room, when Scottie has finally transformed her into "Madeleine," Hitchcock turns his world of color inside out—he illuminates their embrace with the lurid green glow of the neon sign outside the window. Color helps elevate what might have been just a gimmicky melodrama into a haunting study of obsession and illusion.

It's hard to decide whether Antonioni's *Red Desert* is saved or compromised by its color. The notoriety of the painted grass, the wall that changes color from scene to scene, the care lavished on the release prints, and so on have tended to divert attention from the film as a whole to the color for color's sake. Certainly the color is the most meticulously planned of any film yet discussed. But despite all the artifice, the color is organized almost entirely within the bounds of naturalism; more important, it often conveys the meaning of a scene in a direct yet discreet way. (This marks an advance over Antonioni's black-and-white films, in which the visual signals tend to be either heavy-handed or obscure.) When Corrado drives Giuliana to Ferrara, the sunlit yellows and lime greens that appear in the scene suggest immediately that Giuliana is responding to Corrado's interest in her. Later, when they meet on the mooring tower out at sea, the touches of cheerful red paint again make one feel that Giuliana's neurotic fears are giving way to trust in this relationship. In both cases the signals work because they are unambiguous—being virtually the only cheerful colors that have appeared so far—and yet not so conspicuous that the viewer is forced to take conscious note of them.

These gleams of color are small-scale reflections of the film's over-all color scheme—a contrast between the somber and pallid tones of Giuliana's surroundings and the iridescence of her dream island. When she says "I am frightened of everything," one of the items on her list is colors; and throughout the film Antonioni ingeniously uses colors to represent the ebb and flow of all her fears. Thus the luminous ochers and creamy yellows of the rocks on her dream island refer back to the yellows at Ferrara, where she first began to trust Corrado; but after he betrays that trust all she can see is the poisonous yellow of the factory smoke which "the birds learn not to fly through."

Unfortunately Antonioni lavishes all this care on a boring subject. As a case history, Giuliana

is both too simple and too extreme to command deep interest, and as played (badly) by Monica Vitti she lacks any "there-but-for-the-grace-of-God-go-I-in-this-modern-industrial-world" universality. Thus in the end the color *is* divorced from the film as a whole, not because it's inappropriate or decorative but because what it says so aptly is not quite worth saying.

3. The films in the first two groups are selective in their use of color, eliminating or playing down many parts of the real-life spectrum. Now come what might be called the kaleidoscopic films, which stress variety and versatility. To do this, most of them rely heavily on artificial colors as in the costumes of *Juliet of the Spirits* and the wallpaper of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*.

In the best kaleidoscopic films, the profuse and scattered colors appear part of an organic whole. But that isn't easy to achieve. "Kaleidoscopic" is more often a euphemism for "messy," as in Losey's *Modesty Blaise*. Here, nearly every scene strives for effect at the expense of its neighbors: high-key Mediterranean exteriors clash with Op Art decor; cluttered sets overrun stylish compositions; the delicate and the garish continually stand in each other's light.

It may be argued that *Modesty Blaise* is high camp, not to be taken seriously. But that's just the trouble: the color is little fun to watch. If kaleidoscopic color is to be enjoyable, it can't be as slapdash as it may look. In Lester's *Help!*, for example, each sequence, no matter how brief or how dislocated, usually has its own palette—the whites and dark shadows of the Alps, the greens and khakis of the army maneuvers, the clear browns, whites and yellows of the pub.

Kaleidoscopic color is still harder to handle in serious films, partly because it gives them a frivolous surface. Fellini's *Juliet of the Spirits*, for example, is visually well organized: rich and varied as they are, the colors enhance rather than detract from one another. But they quickly expose Fellini's tendency to bombast in presenting the bizarre and the orgiastic. Faced with this bombast in his black-and-white *8½* and *La Dolce Vita* one can just sit tight and wait for him to move on; but in the fragmented color of *Juliet of the Spirits*, the Bishma sequence and Susy's party become vapid and irritating.

There is also a deeper trap. I'm not sure whether, at the end, Giulietta is supposed to become reconciled to her situation because she accepts reality or because she's taken refuge in her visions; but either way the ending is a letdown. The gorgeously detailed color that Fellini has accumulated in the course of stating Giulietta's problem simply overwhelms the resolution. Whereas *8½* has an equally perfunctory ending—the tacked-on circus procession—it does not seem so much of a letdown because the rest of the film has been "held in check" by black-and-white.

Nevertheless, Fellini makes excellent use of color in *Juliet of the Spirits* to show the interplay of fantasy and reality. At first the two are distinct: Giulietta's visions are somber (misty greens for the memory of grandpa, the vision of the Lord of Justice, the dream of the shadowy boat at the beach) while her real surroundings are bright and colorful. Then the visions become increasingly brighter until they merge into reality (the appearance of the child at the stake in the garden, of Susy in the bathroom). This transformation involves many subtleties. To give just one example, the shots of the orange paper flames which represent the burning at the stake are repeated more and more briefly: since one responds to color first and to form afterward, the flames seem more and more real as the shots become briefer.

The finest example of kaleidoscopic color—perhaps of any kind of color—so far is Demy's *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. Like *Juliet of the Spirits* it takes bright and artificial colors as its norm. Even the location scenes are dominated by fresh paint, posters, and colored lighting. But unlike *Juliet of the Spirits*, the colors have nothing to do with fantasy. The wallpaper, the umbrellas, and the rest provide a multicolored background for the most ordinary incidents, such as Mme. Emery's practical concerns with her store or the waiting period during Guy's absence. Life, says Demy through

Demy's UMBRELLAS OF CHERBOURG

his images, does not need "spirits" to make it tolerable; even at its most banal it has a colorful texture of wonder and of hope.[22] Thus the conventional Mme. Emery can bubble over with *joie de vivre* even when Geneviève is pregnant, Guy is far away, and Geneviève's solid suitor Roland has yet to learn of her condition.

With variegated colors forming the warp and woof of his characters' lives, Demy opens out into single colors for scenes of unusual emotion or insight. Strong colors are associated with the direct, unsophisticated Guy. The orange-painted café where he proposes to Madeleine has already been mentioned. Red and orange-red also mark out the high points of his relationship with Geneviève: the apricot-red walls of the dance hall where they first declare their love; the fire-truck-red reflection in the garage window behind them when Guy tells Geneviève he's received his draft notice; and, in their final, accidental meeting, the traffic-light-red neon sign behind Guy's head when Geneviève first sees him. But Demy does not try to make any rigid emblematic use of red: bright blue serves just as well for the love between Guy and Geneviève when they go to his blue-walled room. Later, when Guy returns from Algeria to find that Geneviève is married, and he enters the room where they once loved, his pang of loss is made visible in the sudden reappearance of that blue: its unchanged vividness, when what matters most to him is changed beyond repair, comes as a slap in the eye.

For crucial scenes involving the gentle and sophisticated Roland the dominant colors tend to be neutral, either dark (like the topcoat he wears when he first meets Geneviève) or light (the summer suit he wears when he accepts Geneviève despite her pregnancy). These neutral tones do not merely stand for his dependability: the sharp contrast they make with the basic variegated texture of the film reveal his emotions to be as powerful as Guy's though far more controlled. Thus one of the most visually striking scenes in the film is Roland's first sight of Geneviève as she enters the jewelry store. Dressed in white beside her mother in yellow, surrounded by spacious white-framed windows through which the street is outlined in pale and airy blues, Geneviève seems almost to be floating on light.

The stages of Geneviève's separation from Guy and her acceptance of Roland are marked out in progressively more neutral colors. Even

[22] The music, of course, conveys the same idea—every word is sung, whether it forms part of garage shop-talk or a declaration of love.

before Guy departs, the delirious scene in which they glide through the blue-lighted streets toward Guy's home modulates to a lurid, prophetic pallor at the very moment that he declares "I'll love you to the end of my life!" Later, when Geneviève tells her mother she can hardly remember what Guy looks like, she goes to the window of the umbrella store and looks out sadly at the carnival festivities: as the camera follows her away from the variegated colors of the store's decor, the screen is dominated by the cornflower blue of Geneviève's dress and the blurred pallid blues of the daylit scene outside. And the entire final sequence, when Guy and Geneviève have come to terms with their separate lives, is a resolution of all the film's colors into a firm and simple balance—the black of the night and the white of the snow. Tynan was completely wrong about *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg:* few films have used color with such relevance from start to finish.

4. My last group consists of films which make artificial use of naturalism. This is a wide-ranging group indeed, with the deliberate grittiness of Resnais' *Muriel* at one extreme and the deliberate seductiveness of Varda's *Le Bonheur* at the other.

In between the two is Lelouch's *A Man and a Woman*, probably the most eclectic color film ever made. It dabbles in almost every color device yet tried; and Lelouch seems so preoccupied with these devices that he often lets the film slide into banality (some of the scenes between Anne and Jean-Louis) or preposterousness (many of the scenes involving Anne's late husband, the stunt man, and Jean-Louis' late wife.) Yet the artificial manner in which he films reality—there are virtually no studio scenes—often puts it in a significant perspective.

Ironically, while Anne and Jean-Louis agree that Life is more important than Art, the film demonstrates how the Annes and Jean-Louises of today convert their lives into art—or at least artifice. In several scenes the yellow headlights of Jean-Louis' car are likened to the rising sun, manufacture supplanting nature; in other scenes the viewer is unsure for a moment whether Anne is daydreaming about her past or doing her continuity work on a colorful movie set. By systematic use of telescopic lenses and by continually zooming back from close-up to long shot, Lelouch squeezes and stretches space as if it were hot plastic; and he does the same to time with rapid cutting and lengthy holding. In many scenes, such as the nightfall sequence at Deauville, this compressing of time and space transforms a banal event into an exotic series of colored patterns.

In *Muriel* the natural colors are made not exotic but disconcerting. The patterns within many scenes, and in transitions from scene to scene, rarely gratify the eye like the black-and-white composition of *Marienbad,* for Resnais is using color to reveal a different aspect of time. His characters are all trying in various ways to come to terms with the past. In the course of the film they are forced to realize that the passing of time is not a flow like that of a river, which with heroic engineering might be reversed, but a continual shattering of the present into fragments that cannot be put together again. Resnais achieves this effect partly by his choice of colors and even more by the restless way he cuts from one to another. There are a lot of in-between shades—steely blues, beiges, umbers—and the interiors are often a quiet clutter of middle tones, with here and there a jarring bright color like Hélène's yellow kitchen. The basic color scheme is, in fact, autumnal, though it only takes on a pleasing *Trouble with Harry* aspect in the few exterior scenes by the sea. Elsewhere, by leaping to

Resnais' MURIEL

and fro across this palette—sometimes between day and night—Resnais neutralizes its languor in much the same way as Ernest's breathless, jerky singing of the Déjà song neutralizes *its* nostalgia. The one direct view of the film's past—the movies that Bernard shot in Algeria—are of trivial incidents that reveal nothing of the experience that affected Bernard most deeply: the torturing of the Algerian girl he calls Muriel. Resnais tints the scenes with pallid greens and ochers—like a verdigris—to make it clear that these fragments of the past can no longer be fitted into the present.

Resnais takes a risk in making his color deliberately nonsensuous, since many viewers balk at the film's gritty surface. Varda runs the opposite risk in *Le Bonheur,* since viewers may think that everything in such gorgeous color is to be taken as an ingredient of François happiness, including his wife's suicide! Here the glowing colors reveal how intensely François lives in the present moment: he is too dazzled by *joie de vivre* to see that other people need a more solid, less colorful foundation for their lives. That's why Varda fades into colors between sequences, instead of black—to convey the invulnerability of François' present moment, his dangerously beautiful Now.

These examples suggest some of the lines along which the use of screen color is developing. There is a certain parallel here with the development of screen music, from simple echoic effects to a freer association. In music, of course, the development is easier to grasp because it is not intimately bound up with the image as color is.

Yet often the color is divorced from the image, either by the film-maker when he tries too hard to make it significant, or by the viewer when faced with an idiosyncratic use of it. Color films today are in a similar situation (though on a different plane) to the first Technicolor films of 30 years ago. Nurtured on black-and-white, the film-makers of that era were tempted by garishness, the viewers prone to see garishness where it didn't exist. Today's film-makers and viewers, nurtured on indifferent color films and those which use color only piecemeal, are not yet at ease with the concerted use of color to shape the film as a whole. But the increasing number of films that do try to use color in this way suggests that the sense of ease will come to us all before long. Meanwhile we can look forward to the consolidation of recent experiments and to many fascinating surprises.

STEPHEN FARBER

New American Gothic

"American movies have never been worse," Pauline Kael wrote recently. Her remark seems like the final sellout. Fortunately, Miss Kael only partly believes it—unlike most of our serious critics, she continues to see and review American movies. And the slump Miss Kael sees is more universal than she suggests. Where *are* the great films today? *Juliet of the Spirits, Dr. Zhivago, Red Desert, The Soft Skin* are all, in important ways, disappointing recent works from artists who have achieved masterpieces since 1960. Bright young talents fizzle. In *The Knack* and *Help!* Richard Lester breaks the exhilarating promise he made in *A Hard Day's Night.* Everywhere, it's a discouraging pattern.

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The future of the American film, meanwhile, is intriguing, and it is unfortunate that almost the only energetic defenders of American

movies are the *auteur* critics: in a recent *Cahiers du Cinéma* most of the contributors included *The Sandpiper* (not even low camp, by any stretch of the imagination) as one of the Ten Best of 1965. Academy Award voters are more insightful. And yet, frustratingly, *auteur* criticism alone reminds us that there are many talented film makers, above ground, in this country. American film talent has always been strained by commercial pressure, and the success of James Bond and *The Sound of Music* is not reducing the pressure. But the best American movies, in their response to that pressure, exercise a peculiar cinematic fascination. Most of the few interesting American movies of the past year or so have in common what I shall call a Gothic quality: films as different as *Lilith, Hush . . . Hush Sweet Charlotte, The Collector, Bunny Lake Is Missing,* and, most curiously, *Inside Daisy Clover.*

It is difficult to define a trend still in progress, but I am using the term "Gothic" to describe arresting distortions in both mood and cinematic technique. All of these films deal, directly or indirectly, with horror, often with absolutes of Evil. The girl in *Lilith,* for example, is not dismissable as insane; she is meant to represent a particularly haunting version of the demonic temptress-destroyer. This suggestion of demonic or nightmarish menace, often in a setting of lush, ominous decay—the classic Southern mansion of *Hush . . . Hush Sweet Charlotte*—supplies a crucial thematic resonance in these Gothic films. None of the films is naturalistic in style—all of them seek to cut beneath the "realistic" surfaces of films like *The Hustler* and *Hud* and explore extremes of feeling, often in universal terms. But the technique is not symbolic in the manner of some European films; it is a very distinctive kind of baroque and self-conscious expressionism, relying on unusually over-ripe, even violent visual exaggerations and refractions. Thus films like *Charlotte* and *Bunny Lake Is Missing,* which may not seem very new in genre, achieve unexpected, trenchant insight through a desperately bizarre tone that does not belong to the conventional American thriller.

But this Gothic quality can be better approached by considering a film in which it is altogether surprising, *Inside Daisy Clover,* written by Gavin Lambert and directed by Robert Mulligan. At first glance *Daisy* is a film with an elaborate Hollywood ancestry that fits neatly into a generic mold—still another film about the making and breaking of a star, the usual Hollywood satire-drama, Natalie Wood's version of Harlow. Yet the film is insidious in a way that almost no one has noticed. Pauline Kael did notice it, but she couldn't make anything of it; she wrote recently and unsympathetically that the film is "full of lurking evil that seems to be unrelated to anything . . . an inside Hollywood movie with a Gothic atmosphere."

A plot summary would suggest only typical slick, melodramatic stuff—sex, ambition, Lonely Girl, with a touch of nostalgia. But there is a curious sinister distortion in *Daisy's* visual temper that complicates the plot summary. Again and again Mulligan composes bizarre shots of Christopher Plummer in black, lighting and oblique camera angle designed to discompose us. Black limousines—whether arriving for a Christmas eve celebration or a wedding—lumber menacingly across the screen like implacable monsters. Mulligan exaggerates shadows, uses large spaces for startling asymmetrical perspectives, groups his figures in weirdly irregular patterns, cleverly manipulates costumes and settings to reinforce the trace of grotesqueness that hovers around the film's edges. On the night of her introduction Daisy sits in one corner of a long, narrow palatial chamber, dressed in a simple white frock; the satanic producer and his wife, in flowing black, approach her from the hallway—the incongruities provided by empty spaces, fantastic setting, color contrasts create a poignant sense of frustrated human relationships. Mulligan's visual patterns persistently suggest the film's theme of disconnection and disruption. We literally *see* the disconnections, in a technique not unlike Antonioni's.

The resetting of Lambert's novel in the Hollywood of the 1930's is not a sentimental evasion; the stylization possible in a period

piece is absolutely necessary to the film's peculiar expressionism. Without the visual rhythms animated by archaic Rolls Royces and rococo gowns, the film's meaning would be blurred. Mulligan constructs a complicated world, in which a veneer of surface elegance covers a vicious waste land, Gothic visual mannerisms gradually, dramatically guiding us to recognize that what seems a palace hides a sepulchre, governed by a ghoulish "prince of darkness."

The evaluative process is more complicated than this suggests. Plummer's producer is deliberately described as a black prince because he is a highly sophisticated villain, both more sympathetic and more frightful than the usual version of the materialist-destroyer. His awareness of others is acute and delicate, and his emotional repertory is alarmingly various. In his "big" scene, after the failure of Daisy's marriage, he gently chides her for missing the cynical point of Movieland's illusion; with astonishing finesse he simultaneously comforts her, needles her, seduces her—to guarantee his investment.

Finally, that is, Plummer's world is a ruthless one, but it is a labyrinth of confusing appearances to the uninitiated: what looks like a lovely country estate is, in fact, the mental institution where Daisy's mother is hidden away and stifled; the glamorous idol Daisy marries turns out to be a homosexual. Mulligan's funereal mood, with its unsettling hints of Evil, warns us to test the appearances. And the test is tricky; consider, for example, the handling of the musical numbers. For Daisy's first audition Mulligan opens with a stunning long shot, the wide screen saturated with ominous black cameras, lighting equipment, technicians entranced for some ghastly ritual. Beyond the mass of black, in a corner, is a patch of color; slowly the camera moves in on the color, revealing it to be a particularly artificial stage set on which Daisy, in ridiculous gamin costume, has been asked to perform. But Daisy takes the set seriously. More than that, she transforms it. As she sings, against the network of shadowy equipment, surveyed by the producer's cortege, a group of dead souls mesmerized by the light, Daisy, even in tinsel, offers a poignant possibility of life in the midst of death. Her warmth, her innocence lighten the gloom and control the technology. But later, when we see the same number gussied up in the film within the film, it has been thoroughly drained of life by hideously clever camera trickery. The machine has efficiently destroyed Daisy's struggling humanity.

Daisy moves in a graveyard procession that can sterilize all it touches, yet values and sympathies do remain, desperately disguised—for a moment, in a catatonic picnic on the floor of a mental ward. One of the most tender scenes in the film occurs when the dashing homosexual whom Daisy loves finds her on the set of her new movie, in heavy clown make-up, and gently wipes her face clean. At her most garish, even in a circus, we can recognize in Daisy a touching image of possibilities of affection.

This recognition, not quite smothered by the world of ruined beauty that is crystallized for us in striking visual disconnections, prepares for the film's imaginative climax. Daisy, at seventeen, is divorced, her mother is dead, and the cruelty of the success game she has agreed to play is growing painfully clear. One morning she reports for work, enters a dubbing booth to re-record the sound for a scene she has just filmed. She must watch her image on the screen and synchronize the words she sings with the lip movements of the giant mouth before her. At first it seems easy enough, but the sound of the timing bell, of her own voice, the sight of her machine-polished self strutting on screen become more and more oppressive until Daisy goes hysterical. The scene is an ingenious cinematic representation of the disparity between public and private self, between the surface glitter of a star and the muted sensitivity of the girl buried beneath the rouge. Mulligan works the scene skillfully so that what might have been ordinary sounds and sights become grotesque and monstrous to us. As Daisy becomes distraught, Mulligan moves his camera outside her recording booth; we observe both the real Daisy and the screen Daisy from an imposed distance, and the juxtaposition of the two is

made more eerie and disturbing by ominous silence, blasted finally and only momentarily by Daisy's terrified shriek as the door of her recording booth is opened and closed. This is truly a scene of horror, but also of insight—we see not only Daisy's recognition of her own separateness from the image she has been forced to project, but, by extension, our isolation from the impenetrable inner life of another, and, perhaps, from our own suppressed terrors at the travesty of our public lives. The scene conveys an expressive, summary vision of dislocation, and finally, of perverted but untouchable power.

What gives *Inside Daisy Clover* its flavor is the devious, strangely fantastic way in which it works. Mulligan's technique for portraying the integrity and isolation of self is singularly elaborate, almost overly ingenious, and therefore bizarre. Appearance and reality, mask and feeling are not simply separated, they are painfully wrenched apart. The Gothic method—the visual distortions, the near-frantic inventiveness—is the film's interest, for in its method is a madness that suggests concern. I mentioned Antonioni earlier, and it is true that Mulligan's images of disconnection are not unrelated to those of *Red Desert*. But to tentatively suggest such a comparison is to be reminded of the more pertinent differences. *Red Desert*, obviously, is without the Gothicism, the sinister and baroque touches of *Inside Daisy Clover*. If Antonioni is an expressionistic film-maker, Robert Mulligan, in *Daisy Clover*, is expressionistic with a vengeance. It is as if the Antonioni images had been given a perverse twist; and it seems that only through such a perverse twist can a serious and original American film be produced.

As Daisy's inner self must be violently torn from her masked image, so in all recent American Gothic films piercing insight must be torn from the mask of generic convention. Otto Preminger's *Bunny Lake Is Missing*, about the disappearance of a little girl, begins as another slick London atmosphere thriller, but in its final scenes turns unexpectedly to a graphic exploration of subliminal and primitive feelings. In these scenes Carol Lynley, searching for her child, finally finds her in the hands of her psychotic brother. He and the child's mother enter a nerve-wracking struggle for little Bunny, expressed in terms of a childhood game they deliriously revive. The film's visual quality changes as it nears its conclusion—instead of the sharp composition and neat cutting of the early scenes, the scenes in the doll-maker's shop, in the hospital, the final confrontation in a hide and seek game, are intensely overwraught, hysterical.

Mulligan's INSIDE DAISY CLOVER

Through the visual extravagance and the nervous editing Preminger evokes a harrowing childish nightmare to suggest the child imperfectly submerged in the two adult antagonists. The undigested Freudianism implicit in the quasi-incestuous encounter of brother and sister is hardly annoying; for visual hyperbole cogently renders the irrational but gripping fear of the perverted child latent in the man. No other interpretation accounts for Preminger's shrewd decision to make the little girl completely passive in the scene in which her life is at stake. Her childish terrors have been appropriated, as it were, by her mother and uncle—a forceful external representation of the feelings that Preminger means to suggest. Similarly effective are the shots of the mother, who is sane, running from window to window and pressing her face against the glass as she tries to see what her brother is doing. Considered as realistic detail, these shots would be absurd; as an image of the mother's chilled bewilderment at the buried child within her psyche,

they are vivid and evocative. The nightmare of an adult's unwieldy, repressed childhood is an unusual area for any film to explore. It is explored effectively here, in what might have been conventional psychotic melodrama, through the atmospheric and stylistic excesses pecliar to Gothic cinema.

Gothic cinema also provides rare moments of recognition in *Hush . . . Hush Sweet Charlotte,* another film which would seem constricted by its genre, the Bette Davis monster movie. The best moments in *Charlotte* dramatize the close relationship of horror and melancholy, the astonishing fact of emotional susceptibilities that persist in the face of the most violent shocks. In an early scene, for example, right after the brutal cleaver murder of Charlotte's lover, a trembling Charlotte enters the ballroom, her dress swabbed in blood, as her father slowly, caressingly approaches her; it is an indelible moment of macabre beauty, that flows like quicksilver from the grotesque to the delicately poignant. Later, in a sequence of equally powerful emotional mobility, Charlotte searches for her dead lover in a fragrant, lingering slow-motion daydream, concludes by shooting him with her corsage, and realizes that a real man lies dead in the doorway of the room. To say that director Robert Aldrich is capitalizing on neurosis is probably true, but it is not entirely relevant to our experience in watching such a sequence. The film cannot be dismissed as simply sick or sensational, for its point, intentionally or intuitively rendered, is the surprising survival of vital emotion in a sick world. *Charlotte,* like other Gothic films, succeeds in apprehending, amidst the deathly flush that is its norm, a twisted, enduring humanity.

Robert Rossen's *Lilith* is a Gothic fairy tale instead of a Gothic melodrama, but again the film seeks to present to us a nightmare world—in this case a mental institution—and bring us to understand that the nightmare contains a bewitching dream of life. *Lilith* is about the beauty and destructiveness of madness, more specifically about the love of a sanitorium orderly for a gifted patient, and it aims at evoking a luxuriant but fragile lyricism that will both enchant and suggest its own qualification. Horror is always close to the film's surface, but the Gothic quality here is of a rather special nature—a richly decadent but hypnotic visual lavishness that will beguile and thus bewilder the eye, warping any clearly rational perspective.

Rossen's object is not exploitation, it is imaginative sympathy for his hero's seduction, and baroque lyric effects—composed with water and light and music—are the filmic equivalent of that sympathy. In the carnival scene that is the film's turning-point, we see that the "real" —brassy bands, chivalric games, a child selling ice—is outlandish, elusive, unreal; and the hero riding off into the woods with his princess, his sexual initiation into her magical world, are as poignant and alluring experiences as they are potentially shattering. The distorting mirror in all of these films is an illuminating one.

Whether Gothic cinema represents the death agonies or the awakening of the American film is not yet clear. Gothicism has long accounted for one strain of interesting American movies, from *Citizen Kane* to *Sunset Boulevard* to *Night of the Hunter;* exaggeration and distortion served Welles, Wilder, Agee as visual embodiment of the contorted quality of the American experience they wanted to explore. New Gothic perpetuates this characteristic vision of monstrous American blemishes and tantalizing correspondent connections of value and perversion; but the increasingly feverish quality of these recent films indicates the desperation of contemporary American cinema. In *The Manchurian Candidate,* perhaps the first in the current trend, Frankenheimer's best moments were Gothic in style—a scene like the hyperbolic press conference for the rightwing senator reminded audiences and movie-makers alike that only through freakish exaggeration could the nightmare of the American experience be realistically rendered. In addition, the film's unsettling mixture of comic-romantic-melodramatic provided a crucial jar to realism and strict generic definitions.

This formal challenge offered by the new Gothic should not be underestimated. If Gothic is appearing more frantically and in stranger places, this probably has something to do with the disappearance of the genre film in this country. Everything is spoof today, spoof Western, spoof thriller, spoof nostalgia, spoof of spoof. The genres that are thriving are lower than ever—the Joe Levine carpetbagger movie, or, worse still, the singing goofy nun movie. Gothic expressionism represents the need for surprise, the wild search by our talented movie-makers for a valid film art.

The search is a treacherous one; without a firm sense of control, Gothic cinema can turn easily into striving for effect. Much of *Inside Daisy Clover* is remarkably fresh movie-making, but some of it is fatuous trickiness. The kooky, absurdist scenes between Daisy and her mother or the laborious black comic anticlimax in which she attempts suicide by resting her head in the gas oven, are nothing more than flat attempts at Something Different. Nor can sophisticated visual style cover the important hole at the film's center—the nervous skirting of the one-sided "love" relationship of Daisy and the homosexual actor. Similarly, as sympathetic as one would like to be to the expressive macabre-pathetic mood of *Hush . . . Hush Sweet Charlotte,* it is impossible to blink the low comedy or the cheap melodrama—or, in fact, the confusion of purpose—that pollutes Aldrich's inventiveness. The confusions in all of these films force us to ask if this exciting new Gothic may not soon settle into bigger and more modish thrills for the popcorn audience.

But there is really no alternative to this chaotic experimentation. We have no tradition of the film as serious art in this country, but then judging from the recent products of that tradition in France, Italy, England, the art film is prone to a fatigue no less boring than that of the commercial film. If no American film-maker today is producing films as important as the best work of the best European directors, it is equally true that many apparently hack American movies are much more interesting than the less successful efforts of Fellini, Bergman, or Antonioni. The American film, because it is commercial, challenges the creative film-maker; he cannot simply keep remaking the same personal film, as, for example Antonioni does. There is a lot of waste, to be sure, but when the American film is alive, it is genuinely imaginative and perceptive and startling in a way that the latest Bergman or Godard film is not likely to be. The tension between enervated generic convention and fresh, serious vision sought by the film-maker is an important way of explaining the mannerist elements of these American movies; whether the serious vision will be achieved is still uncertain. It is interesting that *Inside Daisy Clover,* in its unsuccessful attempt to free its heroine from the System, ends simply and literally with an explosion. Gothic cinema is a kind of explosion, a strangely roundabout but violent struggle for freedom of expression.

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JUDITH SHATNOFF

The Warmer Comrade

The moviegoer with a long memory is likely to laugh twice at the image of his time on the commercial screen. Within a generation he has seen the shifting patterns of political alliance demand a comparable revision of his allegiance. His first laugh may accept the conditions of survival; his second may be slightly bitter, reflecting a loss of faith. If he is under twenty, he may be sophisticated beyond faith and still laugh. It's an age of black comedy. And he may be curious to examine what those who produce for profit, not enlightenment, offer today as images of political necessity.

Of the films recently released, perhaps it is best to begin speculation with *Dr. Zhivago* because its political tone ranges from archconservative to reluctant respect for contemporary Soviet power, and because it has attracted a huge audience. It won six Academy Awards. In its first six months, it has supposedly yielded the biggest box-office gross in MGM history—bigger than *Ben-Hur*—approximately $18,000,000. While this figure reflects the high cost of reserved tickets, at least six million people of the "free world" have seen and possibly welcomed the film's melodramatic distortions. As far as I know, it has been banned only in India.

Dr. Zhivago could have been a powerful film. Its content is an honest, traditional novel. Pasternak tried to do what the genius of Tolstoi accomplished—to provide a spectrum of characters through which a major historical event could be illustrated. Pasternak uses a main hero, Yurii Zhivago, the poet-doctor who transcends his time, a secondary hero, "Strelnikov," the revolutionary of supreme integrity, and unites them through Lara. All are destroyed by brutal political forces; nevertheless, Pasternak's record of betrayed idealism and suffering is based on faith and optimism. In three and a half hours of panoramic color photography, writer Robert Bolt and director David Lean have managed to reduce the novel to a political cartoon crowded with stereotyped figurines. Hollywood did as much for *War and Peace*. *Dr. Zhivago* is not worth seeing, nor is it worth much discussion except as it shows the selective design and manipulation of political images for a mass audience.

In the film, the revolution of 1917 is largely equated with its terrorist aftermath. The earlier sections concentrate on the separate personal histories of Lara and Yurii, and there is only one facile scene in which workers demonstrating for bread and freedom are ridden down by dragoons while the rich dance and dine in a luxurious restaurant. This incident is handled with stylistic rigor mortis; the massacre doesn't even attempt the horror of the Odessa steps scene in *Potemkin*. Wooden actor Tom Courtenay (Strelnikov) utters some wooden slogans; otherwise, there is no mention of the massive oppression which motivated the revolution. There are only successive references to the civil war and corruption which followed, until one can almost join the principals in a sob of regret for the executed Czar.

Only in the scene where Red partisan troops skirmish with White troops, and discover they have slaughtered a bunch of schoolboys, does the film attempt any higher view of the agonies of civil war. Even here, however, the pathos is undermined by the partisan commander's obscenity. The lingering image is that the Red partisans shot down children. (The scene in the novel is different.)

While his characters did "endure" the blackest post-revolutionary period—Pasternak spares no bitter detail—it is more likely that the continued threat of Communism accounts for the

film's bias. Audiences are quite accustomed to images of violence connected with images of success. On a smaller scale they structure many westerns, as out of some unfortunate shoot-em-up a happy prosperous town is born. But there's no need to deliberately extend these connections to Communist revolution.

Similarly, a shadow of evil falls upon the faces of the revolutionaries. The workers who occupy the Gromeko house in Moscow are a fine example of deliberate casting, costuming, make-up, and direction to form a slanted image. These revolutionaries are an ugly, dirty mob whose deformities dramatically contrast with the fresh beauty of the Zhivago-Gromeko family. When the mob comes to evict the family from their part of their former house, Ralph Richardson (Alexander Gromeko) exclaims: "They're not sharing, they're stealing!" A piece of crystal drops out of the hands of a fat, coarse worker-woman and we feel a comparable righteous indignation. Clearly, she is not one of the beautiful people, fit for finer things.

Noble peasant faces are reserved for those fleeing the revolution, like the sweet old couple embracing in the railroad car, or the loyal old man who welcomes the family to Varykino. In contrast, the face of the anarchist who praises Strelnikov is almost green, twisted with madness. Perhaps the epic flatness of the film requires comic-book images of good and evil. Perhaps the producers correctly assume that a mass western audience wants its Communist revolutionaries colored bad. But the prevalence of cartoon simplicity in other areas also betrays the producer's incompetence. Although she is supposed to be Lara, warm, mercurial, loving womanhood, Julie Christie is made up to look like Doris Day. To prove that Zhivago is sensitive, we get melodious views of Omar Sharif's wet brown eyes. One word of poetry would have been worth a thousand frames.

By the second part of the film, the creators seem to have despaired of handling the political-historical material and concentrate on the fairy-story love. There is, then, the necessity of making adultery acceptable to a middle-class audience. This is partly achieved because Zhivago is a poet, a lover by definition. Supposedly, the rules do not apply to him. Still, there is no "reason" for Zhivago to betray his wife (very agreeably acted by Geraldine Chaplin). His love for Lara exists as a natural response to her qualities and as a measure of his capacity to love. A usual solution is adopted. Punishment for illicit pleasure is neatly administered by the partisans who capture Zhivago; they refute his claim that he cannot join them because he has a wife and child in Varykino with the non-sequitur sneer: Yes, and a mistress in Yuriatin. The moralistic dialogue was invented for the film. Zhivago goes, he suffers, he staggers back purple with frost and expiated. For a while longer the affair is suspended in sugar music,

Omar Sharif, Michele Silver, and Julie Christie in DOCTOR ZHIVAGO

much the way the aristocratic furnishings of Varykino glitter, brilliantly preserved in ice. For by now the images have collected into an argument for private life, a celebration of private affection and private property, and anything else—contradictions, coincidence, pure nonsense—is swept aside by the urgency of this argument. The revolution has served a sentimental purpose.

It only remains for an adjustment to be made to contemporary reality. To some extent this is accomplished by intimating that although Omar Sharif and Julie Christie die, Art will survive. Alec Guinness will preserve it. The film (not the novel) is narrated by General Evgraf Zhivago (Guinness) as if he is a blood-connection between the state and the finest achievements of the Russian soul. Guinness plays his part with that covert look of evil glee he wore throughout *Kind Hearts and Coronets;* no one has to take him seriously. But the secret policeman who loves Art is an uneasy symbol—one is reminded of the scene from Munk's *Passenger* in which the keepers of a concentration camp weep luxurious tears during a concert. Moreover, Art turns into Rita Tushingham, an expert with a balalaika, while the major creation of the new state is a gigantic power dam. Soviet success has been simultaneously acknowledged and disparaged. But there is a garnish of a rainbow on the dam; Russia's future may be a pot of gold. *Dr. Zhivago* leaves us with the difficulty of holding onto our old fears and prejudices while assimilating a more up-to-date image of Russia from our changing political iconography.

Other recent films begin with this difficulty and try to resolve it. One is the American comedy *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming,* which, in certain scenes, say the one in which Carl Reiner and Tessie O'Shea are tied together, is extremely funny. *The Russians Are Coming* also illustrates some observations of communication studies—that the modern audience, nurtured on films and TV, is quick to recognize and utilize specific images and symbols; that it is often a knowing audience that delights in an odd-ball manipulation of these instant message units. Thus, *The Russians Are Coming,* although filmed in California, carefully keeps the New England setting of Nathanial Benchley's novel in order to use and comically distort Yankee Revolutionary images. There is, for instance, the Paul Revere parody, and Ben Blue's struggles with his horse provide one of the really funny quick-cut interludes. Yankee independence, the tradition of the Minute Man, are also played for a comic twist as the end man on the line of stalwart defenders is bearded and carries a bow and arrow. In its best humor, *The Russians Are Coming,* like the Richard Lester films, uses the sight gags and slapstick of silent comedy, a style happily back on the screen with all the hip inflections of the sixties.

This, plus the masterful performance of Alan Arkin, makes *The Russians Are Coming* a fine show, but in the midst of praise and laughter let's not forget that its inspiration is the threat of Russian invasion. Norman Jewison, the producer-director, was turned down by a couple of companies before the Mirisch Corporation (United Artists) agreed to present his film, but fifteen or twenty years ago it's doubtful if anyone in Hollywood would have considered the topic good for a laugh—certainly not a Panavision, multi-million dollar, gum-drop color, family-size laugh.

During World War II, Hollywood produced many films honoring our brave Soviet Allies. It was the correct reflection of the time. A few years later the motto of mass media became Better Dead Than Red. Then there were films like *Invasion, USA,* ground out as an echo and an exploitation of cold-war fears, in which the Communist invaders took over the fancy officer hats, the jodhpurs, polished boots, goose-step, and barking accent of the Nazis. The costume of evil was enough to establish evil, and it wasn't funny. The images in another film, *My Son, John* (1952) are more complex for they also reflect Hollywood's desperate reaction to the McCarthy investigations. *My Son, John* specifically refutes the charge of Un-Americanism, which was bad morals, bad politics, and bad box-office. Robert Walker, as John, swears on a Bible to his mother, Helen Hayes, that he is

Norman Jewison, formerly of the National Film Board, directing THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING

not a Communist. Helen Hayes is always her own image, but in *My Son, John,* with her hair in a bun and a sweet smile of approval on her lips as John swears, her personal authority expands. She is also the trade mark of Decent Motherhood, the lady who knows what's Good, like a picture of Betty Crocker on a box of cake mix.

I don't think that a film about the threat of Russian invasion made for straight laughs indicates a reduction in American-Russian political tension (although that has occurred since the Nuclear Disarmament Treaty) as much as it illustrates how the locus of the enemy has shifted. Not once, to my recollection, is there a mention of the words Communist or Communism in *The Russians Are Coming* (or in the last sections of *Dr. Zhivago*). It's almost as if we don't know what to do with the old equation between Russians and Communists (except, perhaps, to drop it?) now that we are all anxiously looking farther left at Communism Mao Tse-tung style. By comparison, the Russians seem benign.

One of the first films to concentrate on another enemy was *The Bridges of Toko-Ri* (1954), a "serious" big-budget color spectacle which starred the All-American images of that time, William Holden and Grace Kelly, and which contained as succinct an expression of American confusion about the Korean war as I have found anywhere: We don't know why we're here, but since we are let's die bravely. This was about the time that contemporary films from "Iron Curtain" countries began to be shown here, as part of a cautious resumption of cultural exchange.

On TV Russian and Asian Communists took turns as the villains in spy programs. Russian and Asian Communists still sat side by side in the brilliant opening brain-washing sections of *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962). By then Frankenheimer also felt free to make satiric hash of the demagogues in the U.S. who, in the fifties, damaged our democratic processes so effectively they might have been subversive agents. In Billy Wilder's brassy comedy *One-Two-Three* (early 1962) the red agents hark back to *Ninotchka* and The Three Stooges, and it is Coca-Cola which triumphs over Communism, which doesn't say much for our side. Still, the film has the distinction of being the first to approach the cold war as a comedy.

In the political area, Hollywood has always done better with comedy than with "serious" material, partly because film is a poor medium for intellectual analysis, partly because Hollywood caters to an audience that wants distraction. Also, the grim absurdities of contemporary politics seem to lend themselves to comic dissection and comic relief. For instance, *Dr. Strangelove's* black comedy exaggerations are

so horrible, yet so plausible, we must laugh at them or faint of terror. But in *Dr. Strangelove* (1962) there is an image change to consider; the Americans and Russians share honors in lunacy. Even *Fail Safe* (1964), under all its ponderous melodrama, expressed the anxiety that both the Russian and American bureacracies are well-meaning bunglers, unable to really understand or control their nuclear power. In *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1965), both the English and East German practitioners of cold war espionage are corrupt, and in a neat evasion-of-the-situation ending, the film says, A pox on both your houses, thereby reflecting the powerlessness many of us feel. But now that Red China has the bomb, now that we are more than ever confused by and embroiled in Asian war with all its racial complications, the time may be ripe to anticipate a further thaw in our relations with Russia with comparable image changes in commercial films—as that rainbow in *Dr. Zhivago,* the sweet, funny Russian sailors in *The Russians Are Coming,* and Bing Crosby's stamp of approval in *Cinerama's Russian Adventures* tentatively suggest.

And I've seen one new big colorful commercial film which presents a stock cold-war dilemma and explicitly re-names the enemy: in *That Man from Istanbul* (1965) an American physicist is kidnapped and the director of the U.S. government's "top cop agency" remarks in a briefing session: The *only* ones who would want to kidnap a famous American nuclear physicist are the *Chinese.* Accordingly, many Chinese from the Istanbul trade center are killed; but in this dull and dumb spoof which keeps forgetting to spoof, it turns out a woman is the real villain. Perhaps when we eliminate political and racial difference we'll be left with the ultimate antagonists, He and She—as that pop-art film, *The Tenth Victim,* suggests.

Conversely, women offer solutions to the comic dilemmas in *The Russians Are Coming.* Eva Marie Saint suggests how the Russian sub can be saved, and newcomer Andrea Dromm suggests how we can all be saved, as she and a handsome Russian sailor (John Phillip Law) connect. Miss Dromm was a fine casting choice. She is all teeth and bosom, white-blonde, vapid and clean—that is, she is the image of what many think the image of an American girl must be, a kind of a cartoon of an idea for a cartoon. And since hers are the sweet lips first seen on TV offering us National Airlines and Miss Clairol's Summer Blonde, it seems fitting that she now offer the big screen's kiss of co-existence.

But apart from which commodity offers the kiss, it is the kiss itself, permitted, wreathed in platitudes, which may indicate how far we have moved towards a warmer Comrade. It took about twenty years to revert to kisses of political integration; we have yet to see a kiss of racial integration. In *A Patch of Blue,* Elizabeth Hartman kisses Sidney Poitier, but she is blind, poor girl. (As Andrew Sarris remarked, that kiss insulted two minority groups.) And in most films, Poitier, while he has replaced the image of Stepin Fetchit, only works with white folks; he still doesn't live next door.

In terms of images that sell, this is reasonable. Most commercial films are animated advertisements which reflect and exaggerate national content. As a recent school-board election in Boston illustrated, there is a dogged prevalence of racial hatred even in the supposedly liberal north. No wonder Hollywood has tiptoed around the major domestic issue of our generation; Civil Rights is uncertain box-office.

Fortunately, the major international issue of our generation, the cold war, can be kissed and made better before a multi-million dollar audience. Most Russians are Caucasian. Also, John Phillip Law, who collects the kiss, doesn't look Russian; he looks like an *Esquire* model; his accent is full of foreign appeal. The Russians in *The Russians Are Coming* are not the buffoons of *Ninotchka* or *One-Two-Three.* Alan Arkin plays Rozanov as a tender man suffering an absurd predicament. To his perfect timing he adds a European flourish. The true irritant in the film is Paul Ford who plays a power-mad American Legionnaire at top shout. And, given a little boy in trouble, even the belligerent submarine commander (caricatured by Theodore Bikel) will cheer the rescue.

Yes, an image can change. The Russians may just be frightened, sweet old homebodies like us. But even if they're not, we can safely laugh out a cold-war catharsis. There are always those jets, zooming overhead at the end, to assure us that our government is there, watchful, ready. The kiss is an image which older folks can indulge, with caution.

There is another image in *The Russians Are Coming* which is even more interesting to speculate about.

In their last attempt to get safely off the island, the Russian sailors dress up in American clothing stolen from a cleaning store. Their struggles to memorize a few English phrases are very funny, particularly as orchestrated by Arkin, but it is the quick shots of them in their stolen clothes, the suits badly fitting or buttoned wrong, hats on at the wrong tilt, which make the image. Clever casting, direction, camera angle, and the sailors look just like Slavic immigrants photographed at Ellis Island, circa 1905.

Americans often view the world as a great conglomerate of underprivileged "immigrants" who need—and want—the American Way of Life. We recognize a global desire to improve living conditions and assume that this can be best achieved through means which are successful in the United States. The Russians also claim success as proof that their means are not only correct, but quicker, more equitable, which makes them *more* correct. If, during the overturn of systems, lives are lost or rights suspended, that is an unfortunate price for accelerating progress, or as the theory goes in *Dr. Zhivago,* After reconstruction, comrade, we'll have plenty poetry. Given a heavy dose of consumer goods, the average Russian may turn out to be an average American.

There is an uncanny suggestion of this top-level pragmatism in a recent Russian film, *Meet Me in Moscow.* Here a thin but pleasant story about a day in the lives of young Russians is the vehicle for projecting an image of the new Russia as affluent, cultured, Western-European. The means used are as subtle as those of the old days of U.S. advertising. I haven't seen material objects so idolized since the late 1930 ads in which Mom falls back in a dither of delight at the sight of her new Westinghouse. (Today, Mom smiles serenely at the new family yacht—she only shrieks delight when her scouring powder turns into a knight in shining armor, or her detergent turns into a beefy eunuch; today, it seems, only magic or emasculation turn Mom on.)

The camera of *Meet Me in Moscow* lovingly lingers on all the tangible success of new Russia. We see view after view of housing projects in spacious parks, streets full of traffic, well-dressed pedestrians, supermarkets with full shelves, business and construction projects booming everywhere. A workman ostentatiously learns English from records played on his own machine. A voice in the GUM department store announces: Silk or woolen cloth may be purchased on credit. We see the average Russian using vending machines, buying records, attending free concerts; and at a wedding party the boys attend, the camera slowly, in a long adoring pan shot, shows us a table laden with fine china, crystal, champagne, and gifts—the most impressive being some fancy skin-diving equipment. Then tape-recorded music is played for the formally dressed guests dancing in the patio. Lest this look a little too much like the end of *A Nous, la Liberté,* there is always mention of the work these young Russians do; the boys also have love problems and they worry about the draft.

The message is that on a material level Russia is as good as the United States. On a social-bureaucratic level, Russia is ahead. To prove it, the boys encounter Russian officials, a patient, understanding Red Army induction officer, a patient, understanding police officer. Even in Hollywood such sweet officials would signal a burlesque laugh. One wonders whether any Russians will laugh too.

Meet Me in Moscow was made by the same studio, Mosfilm, as *Ballad of a Soldier,* but there is a new young hero to match the illusions of the new era. The hero of *Ballad of a Soldier* was blond, serious, virtuous, a bit like the sailor who gets kissed in *The Russians Are*

Coming. The hero of *Meet Me in Moscow,* Kolya, is gay, joking, a good-looking dark-haired prankster. At the end of the film, Kolya sings the words to the jazzy tune which is the film's background music, and I, coming into the theater a bit early, noting the quality of the photography, the looks and style of the hero, thought I was seeing part of the French short, until I recognized the palatial marble halls of the Moscow subway. Kolya sings, "Romance, romance, I'm looking for romance . . . "

We can somewhat estimate the validity of this beaming image by comparing it with other Eastern European films and with written reports. For instance, *Knife in the Water* (Poland, 1963) comments on the disparity between poor and rich in a supposedly classless society. A Hungarian feature seen in Montreal in 1965 showed young professionals, lawyers, engineers, living comfortably, with enough leisure and funds to take frequent vacations. A June 5, 1966 article in *The New York Times* discusses the rise of Russia's new "middle-class man"—he who hungers for the same diving equipment, nylons, and radios which *Meet Me in Moscow* displays so lovingly. According to the article, this man, a professional, "is fascinated by things Western"; and if in Leningrad alone there are 300,000 engineers and technicians to 800,000 workers, the Party may be wise to grow with the trend and, through propaganda, even exaggerate its prevalence.

While new Russia smiles west, America smiles east, at *Bing Crosby in Cinerama's Russian Adventures.* This film is not a documentary, but an entertainment to utilize Cinerama's effects. Thus, a lot of footage is devoted to the Bolshoi, the Moiseyev, and the daring excellence of the Russian State Circus—where else have lions been trained to ride horseback? The film has Cinerama's usual blurred side-panels, and this time the triple projection is off-synch, the color is washed-out, but there is plenty of action as we zip center screen riding the nose of cars, trains, troikas, toboggans, on skis, on horseback, on airplane. We stampede antelope, race reindeer, waltz bears, shoot the rapids—until over-all there is a weird effect: Russia seems like a land of leisure going at breakneck speed; Russia seems like the United States.

That, of course, is the result of selective shooting. Actually, *Cinerama's Russian Adventures* is a filmed Intourist Office tour. Very little is shown of Russian heavy industry; there isn't a hint of a weapon or of any poverty. The dirty word "Communism" isn't used, not once. Instead we see traffic-clogged streets, people formally dressed for the Opera opening, or enjoying Carnival. We could be looking at any European country in need of a little more jazz and hotdogs to complete its Americanization. There is also an interesting geography lesson. The cameras show the vast Soviet landscape. We see a countryside as rich, as beautiful, as varied as —Bing Crosby says it—the United States. For a history lesson, the camera lingers over a city which Bing explains was once called St. Petersburg, then Petrograd, and now is Leningrad: "a change of name which reflects a change of power." (The revolution has achieved its blandest euphemism.) He goes on to mention the many national backgrounds and races of the USSR—just like the melting pot of America. A last sequence shows us Russian cowboys.

I, for one, don't doubt the validity of these comparisons (and others) between the space-age powers, or that the American producers of *Cinerama's Russian Adventures* think we are ready to buy and enjoy the similarities to which Bing Crosby adds a dulcet voice of authority. Add them to the wistful image of an American-Russian kiss, to a Russian boy singing, "Romance, romance, I'm looking for romance . . ." and we get a graphic hint of the continual adjustment we make in response to political pressures—and of the supranational desire to live and love in peace which these pressures, as they erupt in battle, seem to negate. *Dr. Zhivago* could have given a humanist contour to this weary balancing act, but it fails because of the bias and incompetence of its creators. We may, instead, look from the image of those funny western European "immigrants" in *The Russians Are Coming* to the image of those affluent Western European Comrades in *Meet Me in Moscow* to see the absolution of history.

JAMES STOLLER

Beyond Cinema: Notes on Some Films by Andy Warhol

Q: If you were very stupid, could you still be doing what you are doing?

A: Yes.

Q: If so, why do you do it?

A: Because I'm not very smart.

"Andy Warhol: Interview by Gerard Malanga," in KULCHUR 16

Loathing for Warhol, as it was doubtless meant to, comes by now—for some time has come—naturally: the outrageous waste of film (and money), the Reynolds-wrapped factory, the peroxide public appearances, Edie Sedgwick on the fashion page at the height of everyone else's moral involvement in Vietnam protest, and all the other manifestations of what is easily seen as an unwarranted and irresponsible success. (As I write this he is touring with his discotheque.) Once at a performance at the avant-garde theater of New York's Judson Memorial Church I saw Andy Warhol sitting very cool and very insolent on an elevated platform that seemed to be standing in, for the occasion, for Olympus; it was hard not to think that it was only a matter of time before someone would rise to the provocation and shoot, and Andy come tumbling down. But I hope it will be remembered, when he does, that he has shown movies of some interest, which some time back began to represent expansions and enrichments of the early, better-publicized efforts. For one thing, the Warhol films have seemed more and more to become showcases for other talents and other *auteurs*, although they generally retain (but even this may be changing as I write) the convention of the stationary, slightly off-balance frame, sustained until the film runs out and picked up again after reloading. Also, they all run too long (in some cases this is the understatement of the year), with the result—given the largely improvisatory conditions—that utterly worthless passages are bound to occur, and the corollary that any favorable judgment one may find oneself expressing is really a judgment upon an imaginary, edited version of the film.

Despite this, there are many different kinds of "Warhol films," probably more than I know since I am far from having seen them all. Between something like *Vinyl* ("screenplay" by Ronnie Tavel, magnificently acted— and danced —by Malanga) and something like eight hours of the Empire State Building, there is a reasonable difference. I can't imagine anyone wanting to see a minute of the latter; and yet even here it's more notable than not that the man of the hour—well, he was then—should have made a "film" so arrogant in its disregard for any conceivable variety of public taste; a film completely undercutting, by its *reductio ad absurdum*, Jonas Mekas' apologies on behalf of the earlier and comparatively enthralling peach-eating, pipe-smoking (by one of the least photogenic art critics in town), and so forth; a film, in short, that nobody could possibly sit through!* (What's almost funny is that it's signed by two people—Warhol and John Palmer—as if its methods required a meeting of minds.) On another occasion, a Cinematheque audience was treated to a sustained close-up of a corner of a buffet table, while hands sporadically removed or replaced utensils and muffled conversation could be detected in the background. This was called *Space*, and I assume it was still occupying same long after

* I was wrong. See Gregory Battcock in *Film Culture*, Spring 1966 (an article that almost makes me want to see it).

I had fled to the double bill at the St. Mark's a few blocks away.

For people sit there! Works like *Empire* and *Space* may serve no useful purpose in the world, yet those who can temporarily forget that real film-makers are starving regularly—as the *Village Voice* movie diarist who is Warhol's staunchest defender has often reminded us—would have to be awfully pompous not to feel amused about these "films" in a way, much as I felt amused when Alfred Leslie's miserable *Last Clean Shirt* drew exactly the reaction at the New York Film Festival that the program notes said it would. With *Empire* there were the predictable stories of people going to see it—the title sounds like Uris, or Edna Ferber—and then growing violent as they began to discover what it was, as if an audience that supports a culture like ours didn't deserve and even provoke exactly this kind of thing. (As for those others of us who are happy to sit there, how convinced we must already be of the justice of our deserts! And at each new capitulation—gazing at the first half of *Poor Little Rich Girl* and seeing that "intentional" blur as the source of an unexpected loveliness—how pleased with ourselves we are!)

But Warhol, I think, has also given his audience more than it deserves. From its defiantly primitive beginnings, his cinema has evolved into an agent which examines and questions the very nature of theater and film, and which, by holding up and then stripping away masks, shrewdly and painfully inflicts upon its performers the cruelties not only of self-exposure but of humiliation; a humiliation which, one begins to suspect, only the sheer stupidity of some of these "stars" could have led them to submit to. This is the motive force of the Chuck Wein–Edie Sedgwick films, *Poor Little Rich Girl* and especially *Beauty #2:* corrosive and unpleasant meetings of Pirandello and Strindberg in which the off-camera voice of Edie's friend (Wein) gives vent to all his apparent contempt for and ridicule of her (accompanying, we may infer, his equally real fascination) while, doing this and that, increasingly helpless and confused, she virtually asks for more. There is some of this kind of thing in the films scripted by Ronald Tavel also; in the extraordinary *Screen Test,* a transvestite, Mario Montez, is instructed by the off-camera "director" (Tavel) to lift "her" skirt, unzip "her" fly ("don't worry, the camera won't pick it up") and scrutinize "her" penis. "I know what it looks like," Mario Montez protests with evident disgust. Yet "she" is made to look and remind herself of . . . the awful truth. And it *is* awful, but you have to see the film, and perhaps even the whole film, I think, to understand. The beauty of much of *Screen Test* is the beauty of the rhythms of successive dissipation and renewal of an illusion: the illusion of Mario Montez as star of the silent screen. Well, Warhol has been *Herald-Tribune* property for some time, and a writer for no less aggressively hip a journal than the *East Village Other* was recently busy being appalled that Warhol had become a leading local spokesman for the homosexual experience. But homosexuality itself is not the subject of his films; in *Screen Test* particularly, there is a web of ambiguities and complexities so rich that it partakes of elements that are essential to tragedy and comedy alike, except that both categories are finally invalidated by the fact that what is happening, although absolutely dramatic, is also absolutely real, happening not only in the film but in the world.

And so, writing though I do from the outerlands of this world, it may not be irrelevant to record the extra-cinematic sadnesses, as they strike me, of the whole ambience: for example, that a young poet of uncommon gifts, the master of a distinct and promisingly private sensibility, should now be departing from his vocation to align himself with the fearful supercool of the Warhol environment, and appear Harlow-headed in public, and publish an affectionate but mysteriously spiteful-sounding profile of Baby Jane Holzer, the first "superstar," who apparently left or was released from the sacred fold because she wanted to play warm and human parts; that her successor, who is physically stunning if limited in style, should volunteer or be persuaded to exhibit herself in

ways so telling of these limitations (beyond any demands traditionally made by "art") that, unless it is more a matter of *persona* eclipsing personality than I would think likely, her very life is bound to be conditioned unfairly by the public context in which these rather nasty demands are met (and I do mean her life—not, as in the case of a merely bad actress, her career). And Andy Warhol himself—what are we to make of that poor round blank face that stares at us dazedly in the *Village Voice* from behind shades and foolish candy-striped shirts, witlessly and without inflection, lending himself to exhibitionistic extravagances that are already more than we wanted of him, the famous cool extending indiscriminately to the point where it carries an embarrassing suggestion of vulnerability? Yes, it *is* embarrassing, an image we would prefer not to consider much—we are almost grateful for those shades—and what is most embarrassing is that from this man who could be pushing his fortieth year there should come no hint at all of his feelings about the peculiar kind of indignity—however profitable—he has abandoned himself to. Behind the shades, we feel, the eyes might really say nothing after all.*

Of course I am being presumptuous and obtuse and none of this is my business, except insofar as compassion for people and what one may consider their mistakes is anyone's business. My point, however, is that such responses on my part—as I would expect on others'—are more than usually inseparable from my responses to these "films" themselves. In the case of Edie Sedgwick, no less is involved than the better part of the films in question (*Poor Little Rich Girl, Beauty #2*): the spectacle of the "superstar" isolated not by her glory and uniqueness, but by her desolation and inadequacy. All this is something very strange, casting a disturbing shadow from one angle or another over the seemingly trivial action of the films; not only the films themselves but the carefully created ambience provoking conditions which make it impossible for us to take the things as films alone. They presume to engage us in other ways.

J. D. McDermott, Gerard Malanga, and Edie Sedgwick in Andy Warhol's VINYL.

Apart from the early *Tarzan and Jane Regained—Sort Of*, whose final form apparently owed much to Taylor Mead, I can recall seeing only one Warhol film which was wholly pastoral and unneurotic in feeling, which contained or provoked none of these or other disturbing implications; and that turned out not to be a Warhol film at all, as I thought at the time, but a kind of homage, by Jonas Mekas, to Warhol—really a work of Mekas' own sensibility though seemingly in the official Warhol style. When I saw *Award Presentation* I was hung up for days on the kind of imagination that had produced it, an imagination revolutionary enough at once to conceive of a film as something so simple and to make that simplicity so pleasurable. Jonas Mekas presents the Independent Film Award to Warhol and his gang, who are formally grouped as if posing for a class portrait. The award is a basket of fruits and vegetables. Mostly unmoving from their fixed positions in the frieze, our friends, each beautiful or striking enough to hold his/her corner of the screen, proceed

* Since I wrote this, Donald Newlove in *The Realist* has provided new data: "Andy . . . had now taken off his shades and returned her looks with the big, batting brown eyes of a querulous lemur. Warhol's eyes are absolutely *strange*. They almost never have an emotion, only a gentleness."

to examine the things, eat them, pass them around, share them. I admit it, I found this film wonderful to behold—and well worth beholding. It was exactly what Mekas has said that Warhol's *Eat* was, for example, except that it was and *Eat* wasn't. Part of the difference is that the intention of *Eat* seems to have been to create irritation and boredom (one man in everlasting close-up, his face an arid mask) while the intention of *Award Presentation* was praise—coupled with the happy invitation to watch a group of watchable people engaged in a communal activity: sharing. I don't intend this distinction as absolutely qualitative or even especially suggestive, in spite of the fact that I prefer Mekas' eating movie to Warhol's. Such things can work both ways. The fascination with the sadomasochistic experience in Warhol/Tavel's *Vinyl*—a complicated and realistic performance, full of beatings and erotic role-changing, before which a viewer may be alternately amused and horrified—seems to me infinitely more honest than Mekas' treatment of a similar "scene" in his film of *The Brig*, where the violence, although comfortably guised in the name of protest (sister of praise), is all the more salacious for having been deprived by the action-camera methods of the elegant choreographic patterns which brought a strange tension to the Living Theater production, giving it a different and validating dimension.

Mekas as critic is an equalizer or leveller, blotting out jagged discrepancies and distinctions and promoting a kind of mystical continuity between art-works. On an anonymity kick recently (why sign films? nothing is created, everything exists already, etc.), he pointed out that Andy Warhol's films are unsigned. It's not exactly true—those I've seen are untitled, but a loud voice does come on giving Andy and everybody credit—but even if it were true, it would be misleading. Mekas' disingenuous neglect of all the unpleasantnesses and complexities of these films (like his failure to write about the really black or ugly ones: *Vinyl, Horse, Kitchen*) is really symptomatic of his neglect of exactly that condition of the created or forced outer environment which is essential to the full intended experience of them—including of course the fact that we come to see an Andy Warhol film loathing or at least doubting Andy Warhol and all he represents and daring him to prove his worth. One of Warhol's *Most Beautiful Boys* segments was a long close-up of a young man I instantly recognized from several Village productions as the late dancer, Fred Herko. I wonder what the segment would have meant to me if I had not recognized him and not recalled admiring his art and reading something about the circumstances of his death. As it is the footage became excruciatingly moving as I uncontrollably invested Herko's glowering expression with meanings brought from outside the film. It used to excite filmgoers to learn that the look on a man's face seemed to "change" as it was intercut with shots of different stimuli; it seems to me much more important to know the extent to which information from the world outside is likely to affect our response to something on a screen. Notably, of the Warhol films involving dialogue that I have seen, the least interesting were those to which I could find little or no outside information to apply: *Kitchen* was merely absurdist theater again, with Edie Sedgwick safe behind a script; *My Hustler* was like hip Paddy Chayefsky, and just as depressing. As for *The Life of Juanita Castro*—which had the distinction of evoking Andrew Sarris' first rave ever for an "underground" film—the only interesting thing about it, I felt, was its glimpse of the personality of the "real" Marie Menken, a far cry from what one would have expected the creator of her fragile little films to look like. It was Marie Menken's very evident annoyance with the lines she was supposed to repeat and with the whole project that gave the film what life it had—though it wasn't enough to keep me to the end. But the places where Warhol's "art" speaks in its own voice—which is consequently a voice worth listening to—are the places where film and gossip, which for so long have bolstered and helped sustain each other in secret, mingle openly and for the first time without shame.

JOHN BRAGIN

A Conversation with Bernardo Bertolucci

The following conversation, or *happening*, as Bertolucci prefers to call it, took place in the middle of June when he was just beginning work on the script for his new film. It is translated, slightly condensed, from a tape in Italian.

Did the style, half interview and half detective story, of La Commare Secca *come directly from the screenplay, or later, during shooting?*

It came to me at the moment of shooting, this manner, vaguely *cinéma vérité,* of the Police Commissioner's interrogation of the various characters of the film. Many things came to me at the moment of shooting that were different in the script. This happened because, when I wrote the script of the film, I did not know that I would direct it—another director was supposed to do it. I was hired only as scriptwriter; afterwards, the producer was very satisfied, and got the idea of having me direct. Thus, for me it was a question of taking in hand this script that I had written without going into the real problems, which I had left to the director who would have shot it. I had a great problem which was to bring this story, these characters (not originally mine because the treatment, two or three pages of the treatment, were Pasolini's), to bring them close to me, close to my sensibility. This explains how many things changed in the film. In the film there is this effort, that perhaps one senses, to adapt some characters, in the beginning not created by me—because the environment of the Roman proletariat is not an environment which I come from, but is Pasolini's. In fact, one episode is shot in one way, and another in a different way. Really, there is this continuous stylistic effort, still rather ingenuous, because I had never shot anything before this film. It seems to me a rather naïve film, and at the same time rather refined, because—having gone to films a lot, having dreamed a lot about films—I had some ideas about how films are made. Naturally, these ideas afterwards, in the concrete realization, changed or did not come out the way I had planned.

Anyhow, it is a first film, and that device of the interviews came absolutely at the moment of shooting. The Commissioner and all the particulars of his environment were described in the script: a typewriter, a desk—but at the moment of shooting I was in such an environment and didn't like it. I wanted this interrogation to be less realistic. In fact, the Commissioner is never seen, only his voice is heard. Why? Because I was a bit afraid of the mechanism of the detective story, the thriller; and, more than that, it did not interest me. The thing that interested me in the film was and is the thing I discovered shooting it: the thing that interested me was to render the passing of the hours, the passage of time, the sense of the day that goes by, as a poetic fact, rather tragic, through some locations and some characters. This idea, the sense of time passing, is very simple, it is an idea which is at the base of much poetry. (I had written poetry before this.) It is the thing that I felt in this story, the element that I felt the most.

Inasmuch as the subject of La Commare Secca *was not your own, did you have in mind another story to do as a first film, and, if so, was this* Prima della Rivoluzione *or a film much like it?*

I didn't expect to begin to make films so quickly. I had begun as assistant to Pasolini on

Accattone. It was very interesting and very important. I was not one of those fellows who have a script ready and waiting to be shot. I used to tell myself: "The day when I can do a film the story will come to mind."

In fact, after *La Commare Secca* I wanted to do a film of my own and thought of a story. Perhaps I already had the story inside, the idea of the film was inside me for a long time. It comes from a statement of Talleyrand that was put as an epigraph to the film, which says: "Qui n'a pas connu la vie avant la Révolution ne sait pas ce que c'est la douceur de vivre." The idea of the film came from this statement, that is it came from the need to contradict this statement, which is true, but whose contrary is also true.

I set myself to work and wrote a story with characters. I worked a bit to find the producer, and then made it.

The things which you did shooting La Commare Secca, *did they influence* Prima della Rivoluzione, *or did you try to begin again from the beginning?*

La Commare Secca was certainly of use to me. The new thing for me in *Prima della Rivoluzione* was my relation to the story, since in *La Commare Secca*, chiefly the style was my own, the major effort was stylistic, that is to render the film *mine* through the style.

Pasolini saw this world of the Roman proletariat in a primitive style—of fixed compositions, close-ups like the paintings of Masaccio; as he says himself he had looked at more paintings than films, with a few basic movies: *Joan of Arc*. . . . On the other hand I was much more of a cinephile, I had seen many films and had different ideas. In *Prima della Rivoluzione* the difficult problems were problems of story, characters, and structure. Also, because the film was "very much mine," I had written a huge script, three hundred pages, almost a novel, which at the moment of shooting, as perhaps must always happen, I no longer felt to be my own: it seemed to me to have been written by someone else.

Every day there was the problem of inventing new things, because, really, in film, in my experience, it is impossible to see ahead, it is impossible to write beforehand. It is necessary to make, at bottom, only sketches to be thrown away, and afterwards to leave oneself very free. Films must be open, even at the moment of creating them. For example, how can one say: "In this street or in this room these things happen." At the moment one is in that street that has been chosen, in that room in which one shoots, everything may happen outside of what was thought of. I leave myself very free, or at least I try to do so. . . .

I was told that you were working on a documentary for Radio-Televisione Italiana.

They are three programs of about three quarters of an hour each, on petroleum. I was asked by the large Italian petroleum industry, ENI, and they proposed this trip for a film that would be called *La Via del Petrolio*, and I accepted and made the trip.

The first program is on the origins of the petroleum that arrives here in Italy, from Persia, and the second is on the trip from Persia to Genoa, on the oil-tanker. The third is on a pipe line from Genoa to Germany.

What style did you shoot them in?

It was interesting because I had never made documentaries and thus it was, in a certain sense, the discovery of a way of film-making. I shot according to concrete demands; having very little time at my disposition, I would shoot whatever hit my eye. Thus such films have a very aboriginal aspect, they have the aspect of the discovery of a country; they have a style, also, because the style is born in the editing. I have spent four months in cutting these three films. It was a very interesting experience because I would shoot, in the Orient, without knowing what I was getting. It is not like film-making where every day one sees rushes.

I tried to create a rapport with the photographer, leaving him very free. It is very difficult to talk about this experience, because it is not yet digested enough, because I am finishing the cutting right now. The crew was very small. Practically there were three of us—myself, a cameraman, and an assistant cameraman who also did the sound, and also a produc-

tion organizer. The wonderful thing, the most poetic, was, at bottom, this small troup that would shoot in the deserts with its small 16mm camera with a great deal of freedom.

Did you have a large shooting ratio?

I shot a lot, I would shoot all the time without stopping, and thus had about 12 hours of projection which I cut to 2½ hours.

After this, what are your plans?

I should do—it is very difficult now in Italy—a feature in September, or, better. begin shooting in September; I am writing it now. The title is *Natura contra Natura*. The story of three young fellows who live in Rome. All three are foreigners. They are three foreigners not because I wanted to do a film about characters who were foreign but because, having chosen three foreign actors, and wanting to shoot in sync sound, automatically the characters will speak Italian with a foreign accent. That is, sync sound has conditioned me in the creation of the characters. One is Allen Midget, who is the young fellow in *La Commare Secca*, an American, who will play the part of the soldier. The other is Jean-Pierre Leaud who has just done Godard's film, and the third is Lou Castel, the one who did *I Pugni in Tasca*.

Did you have this in mind before doing the documentaries?

The idea came to mind a few days ago, travelling by car from Cannes to Rome.

When you shoot, will you use a fairly free system as with the documentaries?

It was very useful for me to shoot those documentaries, precisely to discover what is possible, even necessary, in shooting in sync. In Italy this is not usually done—everything is dubbed here, the talkies have not been discovered yet. But I think that shooting in sync is very important, and I don't believe that it will prevent me from having the same freedom I had making the documentaries, because I want to shoot with a very small crew this time also. I will work with the same cameraman who shot the documentaries. In Italy there is a mania for virtuoso sound created in the dubbing room, an absurd perfectionism. Godard said, and rightly, that, if two people are speaking and a truck or very loud car passes, it is right that one cannot hear what the two of them are saying.

When you write, do you describe the locations in detail?

Very little, very vaguely. That is I see the places then write, or first I write then I look for them, and if the locations are different I change the screenplay. It is the same thing that happens with the actors. One writes, and after having written looks for the actor. I find it very important to change the written character to fit the actor, not to try to have the actor become the written character. Generally they say to the actor: "Read this character to yourself and try to enter into him." I do the opposite, that is, I change the written character, I even have him become the opposite of what he was, to adapt him around the actor like a suit.

Do you work a lot with the actors?

It depends on the case. For example, in my first film no one was an actor, except for one or two very small parts (the soldier had been an actor before) and so my work reduced itself to this: having seen that actor, at dinner, laugh in a way that I liked, I would say to him: "Try to laugh as you did last night." That is, to refer the performance always to something of their own, never to something abstract. To always take, as a point of reference, their way of moving, of laughing, of speaking.

Do you prefer nonprofessionals, then?

When I was doing the first film, yes. In the second he was a nonprofessional actor, she was a theater actress—thus really professional down to the last drop of blood. In the next, all three are actors—however, they are film actors and also have done few films. They are rather virginal. Also, there is something that will help me: all three speak a language that is not their own. This is, already, a great help in eliminating the defects, the bad habits, the virtuosities that all actors have and that are so ugly. The fact of their speaking in Italian will cancel, brutally, all the artificial, forced intonations.

To return to present-day Italian film-making,

Of those directors who have made their first feature in the last few years, such as Pasolini, de Seta, Brass, Rosi, Olmi, are there any that you prefer?

All those you have mentioned are directors I value. The one I value most is Pasolini; he seems to me to be the most interesting director in Italy, the most important. I learned from him one thing that seems very important to me, that is that films are always being invented, and rediscovered. I would watch him work, watch him invent his film day by day, invent his filmic style, do his tracking shots or close-ups, and I seemed to be present at the birth of the cinema. The fundamental thing in films is to continually re-invent them and re-discover them. In other words to do a tracking shot as if it were the first tracking shot, and a stylistic solution as if it were always new, as if it were the first time it was used even if there have been thousands before you who have done the same things. This is very important, this sense of discovery—it should always be this way.

But I must tell you that the Italian films I love most are those of Rossellini. I like the French cinema as well—above all, Godard. Fellini, Antonioni, and Visconti are great personalities, but Rossellini is the greatest of them all. Regarding Rossellini's style there is this capacity of having things never too far away and never too close, the ideal distance that his camera has from things and from characters. It is one of the first cases of a truly open cinema. The best critical judgment of Rossellini I heard was given by Henri Langlois, Director of the Cinémathèque Française. One time I was at the Palais de Chaillot, and since the screen is very large (it takes up the entire back wall of the theater without borders), I asked him why the screen was so large. He answered: "It is a screen for the films of Rossellini," and I replied: "But it is very large, that is, the picture area is very small." "Yes, because Rossellini's compositions can really continue to the right, left, above and below." It is a very just definition, it is precisely that way.

Do any other arts influence you particularly? Do you feel yourself close to any contemporary movements?

It seems to me that the cinema has been influenced by everything and since films look at reality, and music, painting, literature are all part of reality, the film must be interested in these also. I am evading, for a moment, the question that you asked me: A film director must begin to take a position not only in confronting the world that he describes and the society that he describes, but, also, in confronting the art he creates. It would be good to see films becoming conscious of what they are, as music has done, as literature has done, that is that there might be a cinema that looks at itself, a cinema that speaks about cinema. In the films that I will do, and, also, at bottom, in the films that I have done, especially in the second, above all in those that I will do, I wish that I might take a position in confronting the language that has been chosen. It is very useful as well because the public does not know what films are, it is necessary to teach them. This is the thing that interests me most at this time. I like poetry very much, I don't have other specific interests, only poetry. I also look at much painting, listen to music, but poetry interests me very much. I wrote poetry for years; afterwards I stopped because, since I would have said the same things in poetry and in films, it would have been a repetition, so I stopped writing poetry. There is no movement, however, at this time of which I feel a part.

Pasolini told me that he had felt, when he started making films, that he was only changing techniques, but later realized that he had changed languages. How do you see your change from writing to film-making?

No, Pasolini, remember, is a philologist, a critic of style, thus he posed philologic problems to himself, linguistic problems; he has written several studies of philology. For me, instead, the change was very natural, it was a passage without problems. For example, experiences as a poet were very useful to me in doing *La Commare Secca*—precisely the experience of putting one verse after the other. Now I know that all this is quite different, that films

are rather a long way from poetry. . . . But at that time I saw films very much as music, rhythmic, made up of slowness, acceleration, of contrasting rhythms.

When you wrote the screenplay of La Commare Secca *did you feel influenced by this?*

No, it seemed to me that I was doing literature. While doing the film *La Commare Secca* it seemed to me that I was doing poetry, writing the script it seemed to be literature. In fact, as far as I am concerned, a film is much closer to poetry than to a novel.

And with Prima della Rivoluzione?

No, partly because some time had already passed, partly because with *Prima della Rivoluzione* I came out of a kind of idyllic state, a state of unconscious creativity in which I made *La Commare Secca.* I came out of this rather false kind of state and found myself face to face with very deep problems, very intimate ones. In *Prima della Rivoluzione* it was a question on my part of exorcising the fear, of clarifying my ideological position. The film is the story of the ideological experiences of a young fellow who believes himself to be a Marxist and later discovers that he is not. Now, this has nothing to do with my personal history, however, it was a film that allowed me to clarify many things, to clarify my position, and above all to put certain fears at a distance. Thus, poetry was very far away. . . .

And with Natura contra Natura? *If you can say anything this early.*

I know that it is a film that will cost me a lot, as *Prima della Rivoluzione* cost me. I feel that already there is a kind of struggle inside of me, because it is a film about sexuality, about eroticism as a painful fact, as a tragic fact and thus it is a film in front of which I am already inhibited—I have created characters before whom I am already inhibited. It also is a rather moral film, I hope, having real problems.

With Prima della Rivoluzione, *do you think you clarified, to a great extent, your ideological conflicts?*

Yes, but one is never content with what one does, on the contrary I am in general always profoundly discontent, that is, I do not succeed in being objective in the face of what I do. Also, the past interests me little, I am always interested in what is before me; it is this which films have helped me to discover. When I wrote poetry it was poetry entirely based on remembrance, on the past. On the other hand, film has made me discover that there is the future, where poetry is always a reconstruction of past moments. The poet (one can call him a poet as well) whom I like most is Proust. On the other hand, film has given me a different solidity, humanly as well; it has made me discover a new dimension, has made me leave an adolescence too prolonged, carried on too far ahead in years.

Could one call this discovery hope?

No, the hope of hope. Certainly, when one does his first film everything is easier because films are still something mythic. That is, one leaves behind, by degrees, with the first, with the second, this myth. I have gotten out of the mythology of film-making. Now it has become something more normal, that is more a part of me. I think, also, that films have remained rather static, that it is necessary to move them forward. At bottom, the film, since it was invented, has not moved very far forward, it has remained rather static, with a few exceptions. At first I thought that it might be the style, the technique that must move film forward. Now I no longer know. Perhaps, instead, it is the narrative forms. It is very difficult, at this time, to speak about films. Very difficult.

Do you have more ideas, stories?

Yes, I have many stories, and it would be fine for me if films became a way of life, as is writing for a poet, for a novelist; painting for a painter. Unfortunately, there is still a kind of barrier of ice, of glass to break.

What is that? The public, producers?

Everything, everything that is not the filmmaker. I said glass because behind it everything moves as in another world; one passes into it and then turns back out, it is always like this. Godard makes two or three films a year. So he lives films. This is something that I dream about: to live films, to arrive at the point at which one can live for films, can think cine-

matographically, eat cinematographically, sleep cinematographically, as a poet, a painter, lives eat sleeps painting.

Given this, how does the present situation of film appear to you in Italy?

It seems to me that films—but not only in Italy, almost everywhere in the world at this moment—are persecuted, hated, given kicks in the face. I was first at Cannes, and after at the Festival of Pesaro where a group of people who love films had come together. In general, at festivals one finds people who hate the cinema, who want to destroy it. In Italy, in France, as well, it is very difficult. This is a very sad subject. In Italy there is a great danger: that is of compromise. Even the best directors, even the best of the young directors, fall very easily into making films they believe in only half-way. I am making these documentaries precisely in order not to be forced to make such compromises. I believe that, as a novelist like Moravia in order to live writes articles on trips that he has made to India, or Egypt, or Cuba, it is right for a director to make documentaries in order to live—but not westerns he doesn't believe in. Instead, here in Italy there is this alibi of "the life that must be lived" with which many try to justify themselves. But there is television, documentaries, there are many possibilities to work. It is necessary that every Italian director, I mean those who have something to say (not the others, because it is right they make the films they do), should refuse to do those films.

Is your intention only to describe, or do you have, as well, some moral or message?

I cannot say it of myself, but it appears to me that all poets, from the moment they are real, are also moral: from the moment they speak about reality. It is very difficult to say what reality is, I don't know if you know Zen: when they asked the wise men what was reality the answers were many, for example, a very fine answer is a slap from the teacher, or a kick . . . at any rate I do not pose myself such problems. I pose myself moral problems in the style.

What is the thing that, above all, I do not like in films? In general? A style that is amoral, devoid of morals, downright immoral. The films of Jacopetti, those like *Africa Addio*. It is an immoral film for its racism, but beyond that it is also immoral because of how it is made, how he uses the lenses, how he uses the camera. Perhaps still more immoral than for its racism that, at bottom, is so obvious, hysterical, and fanatic. There is an amorality in the composition.

For La Commare Secca *and* Prima della Rivoluzione?

There is a search, but I don't know if this morality follows from it. Sometimes, perhaps. The style of Rossellini, for example, is a profoundly moral style; a style with its own ethic. An angle, a shot in a film is already a world. Every shot has its own story, its own atmosphere, and has its own poetry as well as its own moral. A tracking shot, for example, may be moral or not moral. It is difficult to define all the cases in which it is moral and it is difficult as well to give a single definition, because a definition does not exist which says that this is moral and that not. But, there is an ethic in the style of many directors; for example, for Godard the style is already a way of seeing the world, for Rossellini as well. They would be able, at bottom, to relate nothing, or to tell stories which were absolutely not interesting or not important, or not to tell stories. But, their style is so profoundly moral that their films would be quite valid. In this discussion someone could contradict me by saying: "But that tracking shot is functional because in that moment of the film, of that given story, it works like that." But the story is only important up to a certain point, because in a film the relation between shots is independent of the needs of the story; because it is enough to put one shot in the middle, one first and another after, and already there is a relation between the shots, whatever it might be. It is for this reason that every angle has its own particular value.

These things that I am saying are so confused that I don't know what will come of them, but I am not a scholar, they are things that I think on my own.

WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?

Director: Mike Nichols. Produced and adapted by Ernest Lehmann. Photography: Haskell Wexler. Score: Alex North.

Relations between film and theater have always been more complex than propagandists on either side would allow. The conventional highbrow disdain of the movies lasted well after wholesale desertion of stage for screen had begun on the part of both performers and directors. Film partisans, by a later but just as stupid reflex, sneered at the dying art of the proscenium—not being able to foresee that stage drama would inevitably recover from the onslaught of the screen and find new, more flexible forms. Only one documented study, Nicholas Vardac's *Stage to Screen,* has bothered to look into some of the actual historical connections between the conventions of the last flourishing years of the American popular theater and the early development of film narrative technique.

For the rest, we have been content with the vague supposition that there has been a continual interchange on every level—from performers to scripts to ideas to money. Aside from Vardac, all we know with much detail concerns the great comedians, who all sprang from a thorough stage training, in vaudeville or music hall. There is lore, within the trade and without, concerning the pre-tested property—often a play that has done well in that remarkable branch of the expense-account industry known as Broadway. There is also the counterlore that even the best stage directors never quite make it with films—a notion the films of Tony Richardson are usually cited to support. But of what actually happens in the perilous transition from stage-play to film, or in the even chancier one from stage director to film director, it must be admitted that we know very little.

The hypothesis awaiting disproof by each new filmed play is, nonetheless, that the genre is suspect, inherently and automatically; the corollary being that Hollywood's reliance on the filming of pre-existing stage properties is a chief symptom of its artistic paralysis. A bad movie, the theory goes, may still have some moments of visual interest, even grandeur, especially if it is in a well-worn genre—a western or thriller. A bad filmed play offers no such compensations. And the state of our drama being what it is, even a bad filming of a good play is rare. The run of the Broadway mill, as embedded on film, is unspeakable; a notch up the scale we get something like *A Thousand Clowns*—decent performances of a half-witted script, filmed with absolute incompetence—or ludicrously would-be-tragic disasters like *A View from the Bridge.* At the highest level the most we expect is *Long Day's Journey into Night*—a somewhat askew yet powerful re-enactment on a frankly theatrical level.

Albee's *Virginia Woolf* seems to me a good play, meaning by that a recent American work that is firmly, even flamboyantly theatrical—that deals in stage events not as if they were sociological verities duly established by statistics, but as constellations of moving human emotions and speeches. (This last term is unsatisfactory, but it serves to remind us that plays are above all patterns of spoken words.) Albee has been congratulated for salvaging true theater out of naturalism, but it seems to me his chief contribution has been to reintroduce a spirit of theatrical "games" which reminds me, more than anything else, of some Restoration comedies. He operates, true enough, with a realistic surface; he has an almost flawless ear for contemporary speech, and his characters are not unreasonably strange. But the actions in his plays are arranged not with an eye to probability but to emotional impact, particularly the impact of cruelty—sometimes cruelty among the characters, and sometimes cruelty toward the audience. (—Whichever the case, one usually bears it gratefully, because at least it is *intended.*) Albee likes reversals and shocks, and is especially good at a kind of figure-and-ground reversal effect when characters exchange dominant/submissive roles; though I think he overestimates the number of flipflops of this kind an audience will find interesting.

What is most intriguing about *Virginia Woolf* is that it does on the stage something like what

Resnais did in *Marienbad:* it presents a fabric of speeches (and a few other actions: drinking above all, a little dancing, and an attempted throttling) in which we cannot tell how much is "real." *Marienbad* was a rigorous French experiment, logically proving that it is possible to make a film which is fascinating and yet consists only of fantasies and fantasies-within-fantasies. In the Albee, we are led to believe that the minor couple speak a superficial, mundane truth some of the time—though even that has been severely restricted by the end of the play. What George and Martha say, however, is entirely unreliable. Even on a "factual" level, we have no reason to believe, for instance, that George is really in the history department of his college; it would be another interesting, mildly sadistic game if he and Martha pretended so, indulging in witticisms about "History and Biology," but he was actually in math or English. By the end of the play, when we see the tortuous extent to which their games can go—constituting to a clinical eye some weird paranoid *folie à deux*—we know, looking back, that nothing they have said can be taken for granted. (I don't mean to imply that their games and fantasies are not in one sense real enough: Albee's genius in fact chiefly lies in his ability to make them real, and to make us care about them.)

Now this game of Albee's is a genuinely theatrical one, and remains so even when filmed, without any photographic or editing hocus-pocus, in the more naturalistic medium of the screen. It is important to realize in this connection that although everything said in *Virginia Woolf* is suspect, nothing is said by George or Martha that is not *meant:* the games are played for real blood. And it is the peculiar nature of the camera, when it is pointed at persons (be they actors or not), to convey their physicality: the texture of skin, the pressure of muscle and bone, the sag of flesh, the things no words can change. Nichols and Wexler have, I think, used this fact as the basis for their remarkably successful strategy in filming *Virginia Woolf:* they continually allow the camera to undermine and redefine what is being said. This was a dangerous gambit—far safer to keep the camera at a formal distance, and play it for the words! But they brought it off successfully, and have thus added a new level of anguish to the play. For instance, in George's long speech about the boy who orders "burgin," they hold the camera close and steady on George. There have been complaints by stage-oriented critics that this prevents one from enjoying the "rich and vivid memory" the speech might be thought to be conveying. But since Nichols is dealing with the characters on the play's level of sophistication, he dares to move in tight and make us watch the man George (and/or the man Burton) who is telling a story that may or may not be true, and may or may not apply to himself. In addition, by expanding on a number of early quiet scenes, such as the walk home and the rather touching frolic on the bed, they counter the tendency to make the play an exercise in dramatic solipsism, a merely horrifying puzzle. They also give a curious filmic nostalgia to the ending— another quiet scene—when the "wits" have been walked into exhaustion, and what is left is two tired people. I think, in other words, that what in the ordinary filmed play is simple a stylistic strain has here been made the organizing principle of the film; and it is why *Virginia Woolf* is among the few filmed plays that are also good films—indeed, I think it is the best American film of the past several years.

The pacing, both in a structural and detailed sense, is admirable. Miss Taylor reveals a mistressly sense of the tag line. The play's transitions are handled with perfect delicacy; one of the best examples is when the ladies exit, and there is a close-up of Burton in his deceptive bleariness; his pale eyes awaken with a little interest, and he closes in on Nick with the "What made you a teacher?" dialogue. Nichols manages the savage thrusts and counterattacks of the play with firmness and variety, creating a repeated and yet varied choreography: Martha's shotgun assaults, her bluster and frontal attack; George's deadly pattern of recoil followed by vicious retaliation.

Nichols reportedly remarked that all you would need to film *Virginia Woolf* was the

actors and a cameraman; and his version, photographed with supple intimacy by Haskell Wexler, bears this out despite the typically enormous Hollywood budget attached to the project. The camera tracks the characters like a *cinéma-vérité* hound; its activity is reminiscent of another startlingly good filmed play, Kurosawa's *Lower Depths (Donzoko)*. It reels to the drink table as the endless drinks are offered, forced, refilled. It peers at the dusty accumulated academic bric-a-brac. It gets in close enough to register the bagging of Taylor's face, the quiver of Burton's. Occasionally, it gets too close, and a rhetorical effect ensues, as when we see Taylor's hand grabbing the lighter in giant close-up just as she begins to titillate Nick. But on the whole the camera is marvelously sensitive; like the play itself, its supreme virtue is intelligence.

Its sensuous grasping of the characters does not, however, entirely save one crucial scene—the one in the roadhouse parking lot. This is stylish cinematography: the two protagonists outlined against the glare of the parking lot and neon lights, circling each other, declaring total war. But here we face a slipping of gears in the dialogue; instead of playing the game, they are questioning it. George says he can't stand it; Martha says he married her for it; and we are asked to believe that the preternaturally acute George has never had this thought himself. This is either too much, or not enough—unless it is only a stance momentarily obligatory in the sadomasochistic pattern, and it is given rather too much weight for that.

For these harrowing games, Alex North has provided a faintly melancholy but not mushy theme, rendered on guitar, which sets the tone over the title scene, reappears several times, and then comes in again at the end. (There are also a few brief pieces of furry mood-sounds elsewhere.) Its dryness seemed to me perfectly apt, but its appearance has the side-effect of signalling the difference between the two kinds of scenes the movie contains: the straight dialogue scenes, in which the action consists of people coming at each other verbally, and the other scenes which are what we might off-handedly react to as film scenes, and which set forth different kinds of action or perception. The title scene is one such: it establishes the campus locale, and observes Taylor's lurch and Burton's tired trudging; we hear raucous laughter. After the first round is over, there is another such scene. George has vanished, and Nick goes out to the porch and spots him, sitting on the swing across the lawn; he looks at him, hesitates, then goes over, carrying a bottle. Later, when George finally gets home, finds Honey asleep in the car, and sees the shadows of Martha and Nick on the bedroom window-shade, there is another relatively wordless scene—which ends with his breaking the doorlatch, and breaking into laughter and tears.

It used to be thought that such wordless scenes=Cinema while dialogue scenes=Canned Theater. After three decades of sound films, we know these equations are false; we know, in particular, though nobody has yet formulated it clearly, that the function of the sound track is immensely important in film perception, and that frequently the sound (music, noises—or words) can control what we make of the visual images. There are intelligent and sensitive critics who find filmed plays perfectly satisfying. It may be, however, that the mixture of modes, in works such as *Virginia Woolf*, is a matter of very delicate importance in film style.

Unfortunately for us, though perhaps not for future viewers, the casting does create difficulties. This is *not*, as is too sadly usual, because the star performers are not up to the roles; quite the reverse. It is only George Segal as Nick who is deficient; Nick is a scientist, and hence perhaps not unusually sensitive to social nuance, but Segal gives him positive blank spots, and cannot read some of the ticklish lines, like "Have you gone crazy too?" Since the ending is made—unnecessarily for the play, and far more so for the film—to turn on his perception, this is a grave weakness. But Taylor is extremely good—a raging, slashing, ball-chopping menace, with sad-little-girl underneath, just enough gone to seed to offset her undue youth for the part. Burton is superb at the complementary deadliness, with a softness veiling the

hatreds and strengths, of George. But inevitably, despite Nichols' consummate direction, the casting of these two excessively well-known performers is not only the financing gimmick which made the project viable; it also colors the whole effect of the movie.

Stage audiences have sometimes found the play literally unbearable; at its heights of ferocity, such as the reduction of Honey, people have run out of the theaters. A skillful film version with unknown players would likely have sent whole audiences howling into the streets. Because of the casting game within the games within the play, however, nobody is going to get too anguished over Taylor and Burton. Their nerves may frazzle, they may score pulverizing hits on one another's vulnerable spots; no matter, we can always reflect comfortably that they are, after all, that famous pair, carrying on. While their fame lasts, this kind of emotional escape hatch can be fatal to the film; added to the undeniable comedy of many scenes, it provides audiences with a convenient way to detach themselves. Playing the opening scene broadly and softly, with Taylor "straightening" the house by stuffing dirty plates in drawers, and so on, was especially risky because of this—it sets a tone as of TV comedy of browbeaten husband and domineering wife. Albee also opens with a funny scene, but without so much funny business, leaving the effect harsher and rather more sinister.

By the end, of course, the tone is secure, while everything else has been hopelessly undercut. In a curiously effective shot, George's ashy face appears over the snapdragons, beginning the cheery scene when he and Martha join in humiliating Nick as either houseboy or stud, and when George, perhaps oddly in view of his own rejections of Martha's advances, is cast down by the verdict of stud, provoking Martha's "Truth or Illusion?" speech. Even on second viewing, I felt the acting and direction falter here; this moment, when Martha feebly rejects the game, and George relentlessly pursues it for one final round, ought to be more resonant and ominous and clarifying. For what follows is terrible enough: in a series of strong up-angled shots, George disciplines Martha in her recitation, "Our Son"; he *is*, we realize, driving her crazy; his threat to commit her takes on a new menace. Then, after her broken crying, and the departure of the guests, a chilly high shot of the room. There is a kind of resolution; he assures her that it had been time to destroy the fantasy son. A suicide like Virginia Woolf's having thus been averted one more time, they can sing the song together, exhaustedly, as the camera moves in on their clasped hands.—ERNEST CALLENBACH.

ALPHAVILLE

Script and Direction: Jean-Luc Godard. Photography: Raul Coutard. Cast: Eddie Constantine, Anna Karina, Akim Tamiroff.

Let me insist from the outset that *Alphaville* is a film about flickering lights, circular staircases, labyrinthine hallways, and Zippo lighters. That it's also a film about alienation, the dehumanization of man and all that other stuff serious movies are required to be about is undeniable; but in Godard's world this second set of themes carries no greater weight than the first, and neither can be said to constitute the "meaning" of the film. Increasingly Godard's films, despite a clearly defined intellectual content, must be seen as works of art in which that content is of no greater significance than anything else in the film. The importance of *Alphaville* is defined not by our conception of its themes, but by the fact that it exists, has life, occupies its own kind of artistic space.

It's necessary to say all this because *Alphaville* is so clearly the ultimate Message Movie that one may fail to see that it is, equally, the ultimate Meaningless Movie. Godard creates his future society with its rigid logic out of a series of images joined with carefree illogic, sketches his computer with the technique of a Pollock. His comic-book plot has all the predictability of its ageless prototype, yet what we see on the screen is perpetual surprise. There's a tension in this kind of thing that in itself is art, but I think there's another reason for what seems initially a pointless division of form and content. By

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means of his cops-and-robbers plot Godard establishes a framework so familiar that the recurring visual surprises don't overwhelm the viewer and disorient him. And with the "message" of the film spelled out in black and white it's easier for an audience to relax and enjoy all the other things happening on the screen.

Important as its intellectual content may be, I think the film's message is not its Message but the structure of its images. For the Message of *Alphaville* is negative, an attack on the over-organized, hyper-intellectual world of modern man. But the structure of its images—the seemingly erratic development of a number of gratuitous visual themes—is the very poetry that Godard, speaking through Lemmy Caution, offers as Alphaville's salvation. Each member of the audience has his own Alpha 60 in operation when he sits through a movie, and it is into this computer that Godard feeds a visual poetry designed to destroy it. But he's fated to be less successful than Lemmy Caution; for the movie's Alpha 60 must examine all the data it's offered, while we have our defense mechanisms and can reject the whole film.

Chief among the images that create the texture of this film is a flashing light. It opens the film with an hypnotic flicker, its intensity vaguely unsettling. It reappears as a car's headlight, then becomes the car's blinker signalling a left turn. Later on it's a light bulb swinging back and forth, the flashgun of Caution's miniature camera, the flicker of fluorescent ceiling lights, the wink of neon signs. To try to establish any "meaning" for this symbol would, I think, be pointless. The flashing light is as characteristic of modern civilization as anything else you might name, and particularly appropriate to Alphaville, where direct sunlight is rarely seen. I cannot stress too much that what is important is that the image is *there,* and is its own justification.

This light is in fact the central visual theme of *Alphaville*. In the opening five minutes there is little else. The film begins with the flashing light, then the headlight of a car. We see a train cross a bridge at night, its lighted windows staring blankly back at us. Then we are on a superhighway, the lamp standards rushing past and appearing to vibrate because of the motion of the car. We see Caution's car signalling for a left turn with its blinker, parking finally in front of the hotel. Caution flicks his Zippo lighter, half-illuminating his face with its dancing flame. He gets out of the car and the camera watches him through a series of glass panels, rapidly panning to follow him into the hotel lobby and in the process capturing the reflection of myriads of lights which flash across and fracture the image. After a brief stop at the hotel desk, Caution steps into the elevator and again the camera peers at him through glass. As the elevator ascends and Caution lights his Zippo, a brilliant pattern of reflected light plays vertically across the image.

These first few minutes are among the most gripping in the film, not because anything happens, but because these particular images have been arranged in this particular way. In this sequence the whole substance and strategy of *Alphaville* stand revealed. These patterns of flickering light *are* the movie; what else in it is of greater importance?

Other repeated themes appear and develop. The ascent and descent of an elevator; shots through a spiral staircase, long tracks down the bare corridors of innumerable buildings—these, too, have an odd power that makes their justification unnecessary. The very gratuitousness of many of these images is the only defense they need; because they cannot be assigned a definite purpose they hold us all the more. (I am aware that the spiral staircases and corridors

Godard's ALPHAVILLE

are part of the imagery of the labyrinth, but this does not change the fact that the images have a power apart from that theme.)

I don't mean that all these images are resistant to any explication that would tie them to the film's intellectual content. For instance, I can think of several possible reasons for the reversal of light values (the projection of "negative" film) in one sequence. But the fact that this *feels* right seems to me more important than any of my elaborate hypotheses. What I'm saying is that if I'm to enjoy the film, and help you to do so as well, what is critical is that we *see* the images rather than dissect them. It's not a critic's job to explain everything, even to himself. And in the case of *Alphaville,* any dogged analysis of Godard's poetry would be notably ironic.

However, only the most fanatical follower of Susan Sontag would refuse to discuss the film's "plot," its "content," its Meaning. These thrust themselves forward with such insistence that we must deal with them somehow, even if only by describing how Godard deals with them. The film's story can be outlined quite simply. Lemmy Caution, Secret Agent .003 from the Outerlands, arrives by Ford Galaxie in Alphaville, the computer-dominated city of the future. Armed only with his Zippo lighter, his .45 calibre automatic, and a volume of Eluard's poems, he must capture or kill Professor Von Braun (once Professor Nosferatu) and destroy Alpha 60, the computer that through remorseless logic determines every facet of men's lives. Posing as a reporter, Caution tours the city and there finds all feeling and spontaneity forbidden by the cold dictates of an ahistorical logic. He meets and falls in love with Natasha Von Braun, the scientist's daughter, and carries her off with him after teaching her to speak the word "love." Alpha 60 is destroyed when Caution gives metaphorical answers to its strictly logical questions, its circuits overloaded by the unmanageable data. Caution kills Professor Von Braun and guides Natasha through the computer's labyrinth, stumbling over the bodies of citizens left directionless by Alpha 60's demise. They escape in Caution's intergalactic Ford with Natasha awakening from her sleep and recalling how to say "I love you."

With this kind of material it's not a matter of being Against Interpretation, but of recognizing that interpretation is superfluous. The film is basically psychological rather than political; it attacks not the superstate but the modern habit of judging experience through the intellect and at the expense of feeling. But what's interesting is the way Godard handles this material—putting it in comic-book or fairy-story form and eliminating the psychological subtleties that another director might have thought important. In a sense he is admitting that his story cannot be taken seriously because it's been done all too often. Inundated as we are with this sort of thing in serious movies and novels, it's almost impossible for an artist to deal with such themes without sliding into parody. Godard's strategy is to admit this, dip consciously into parody, and thereby disarm the viewer. This approach also seems necessary because Godard wants his protagonist to be a genuine Hero, but can find no Heroes in today's world. (He had already suggested in *Contempt* that the way of the Heroes was no longer possible.) The only Heroes we have are in comic books and low-level popular culture. Lemmy Caution occupies in France a role analogous to that of Batman here. He is as completely a man of the past as Alphaville is a city of the future, and he cannot exist in our world except as pasteboard. The problem of thought and action he decisively resolves in favor of action. ("I'm too old for discussions—I shoot first.") As a man committed to the importance of memory and history he records with his camera each significant event in the present, preserving it so that it becomes an integral part of the continuity of life. This is exactly what the people of Alphaville cannot do. They see themselves as unique, alone in the universe, devoid both of history and potentiality. Because he is rooted firmly in the values of the past, Caution has the inner confidence that it takes to be a Hero, and Alphaville must fall inevitably before his attack.

Here is the weak spot in Godard's Message. He can offer as an alternative to Alphaville

nothing more than a return to the values of the past. But Alpha 60 has its point to make, too. We do live today between Past and Future, cut off from our historical roots but as yet unable to formulate the new values that we need to sustain ourselves. We're going through one of those great transformations of human consciousness that rock civilizations and change the course of history. If we live in Alphaville it's because we have found as yet no viable alternative to its intellectualism. Without the values of the past as a foundation, we seem to have nothing to guide us but our intellects. Alpha 60 will eventually be destroyed not by the values of the past, but by a new poetry, a new imagery, that when discovered will announce that we have at last found our way into the next stage of consciousness.

It is the irony of *Alphaville* that, despite his worship of the past, Godard has created out of his imagery this poetry of the future. In a sense the film *Alphaville* offers us a surer way out of the city Alphaville than do any of Lemmy Caution's platitudes. If Godard were truly committed to the past he would have filmed his movie in the style of Griffith or Chaplin; but what he gives us is the movie of the future, a poetry of film-making that in itself is the answer to Alpha 60.

This tension between two points of view—between, in essence, two Godards—is the most interesting aspect of the film. Godard's movies have always been interesting because Godard himself is interesting; because in working out his personal problems he has so often stood as surrogate for the rest of us. He is the most important of contemporary film-makers because his world is the one in which we really live; because so few who have attacked our world have at the same time so carefully limned its portrait.

Alphaville is both portrait and prescription. What Godard has given cannot yet be analyzed because we still have to find words that offer some emotional equivalent to his images. These words do not yet exist because verbal formulations are always the last to arise when new states of consciousness are formed. For this same reason the essence of *Alphaville* is not something of which I can really speak. I can describe, I can reflect, but I cannot explain. In a sense it's a film that's immune to the normal approaches of film criticism, and perhaps the best thing to do is to leave it alone. Whatever one may say about it, the crucial fact is that it exists. It is something to be seen and experienced, but only incidentally discussed. Let's leave further discussion to the people of *Alphaville*.—JOHN THOMAS.

Karel Reisz' MORGAN

MORGAN

Director: Karel Reisz. Producer: Leon Clore. Script: David Mercer, based on his own play. Photography: Larry Pizer, Gerry Turpin. Editor: Victor Proctor. Score: John Dankworth.

Morgan is so genuinely funny and inventive as to almost defy adverse criticism. It stands on David Mercer's script, based on his original British teleplay (could it happen in the doldrums of American television?) and is splendidly photographed in a way still rare in British films. Even the use of sound is adroit. Besides, while apparently a personal interior fantasy integrating social material, it manages to encompass subjects too often eschewed, such as the relationship between fantasy and reality, freedom and captivity, and the end of Marxist ideology as a meaningful guide to personal or even public action. And above all the film is about emotions and interchanges, desires and caution, and how people, whether wild or pru-

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dent, are captives of their feelings. It explores these and other themes with a subtlety long absent from the British screen—and most others.

On its obvious level, *Morgan* concerns the attempts of its protagonist to retain the wife who has just divorced him. These efforts become increasingly desperate, destructive, and absurd. And as they fail his primate fantasies blur into reality and he becomes more the gorilla. His efforts culminate when he kidnaps her for what is supposed to be an idyllic reconciliation in the beauty of Wales, but turns out to be a dreary, pathetic, desolate few days by a lake. As part of his win-back campaign, Morgan tries to wreak violence on his wife's new lover and future husband, as well as her mother. He fails, but with comic results.

While terribly funny in execution, this narrative line is not, in itself, a strong one because it is clear from the outset that Morgan's wife Leonie will not take him back. She needs him and loves him but can only suffer him in small doses. (Some marriages *are* like this and they don't last either.) As a contrast, the art dealer who tries to replace Morgan in Leonie's life, although too conventional for her restrained recklessness, is at least manageable.

This apparent narrative deficiency is turned to advantage, for in structure the film becomes a series of questions subtly resolved. Will Leonie take Morgan back again? If not, will she let him seduce her? If not, will she allow him to interrupt her relationship with the art dealer Charles and hence leave herself open to him again? If not, will she have Morgan locked up? If not, will he become so desperate that he will commit some action resulting in his seizure and incarceration by the law? It is a one-step-forward-two-steps-back situation; for each of his actions, as the film progresses, is further removed from his initial goal of winning her back. And his mode of posing the question becomes more desperate.

Morgan's travail is twofold: not only does he fail on the personal level to regain Leonie, he is also a social failure. In this he is a man of our times, judged by our values. He has talent and imagination, as his efforts to win back Leonie demonstrate, but he comes equipped with political and ideological baggage irrelevant to his life—Communism. He lacks the class-consciousness vital to make his ideology matter (even if it could matter in 1966). All he has is self-consciousness. Whereas ideology depersonalizes, he personalizes. His mother, a much simpler person, can still make this distinction: she can like Leonie as a person and ask her to come and visit, but she still detests the upper-class and, gentle and kind as she is, wants to do away with them *en masse*.

Thus Morgan can be considered a decadent worker, a traitor to his class. He has married the class enemy. He uses violence not for class but for personal purposes, and fails in any event. He defies authority more from absent-mindedness than from any ideological or class commitment (his relationship with the policeman is human and vaudevillian not ideological). His mother, loving yet concerned, periodically bemoans and compares him invidiously to his father. The latter, after all, may have caused no revolution but he talked a better one and his actions were socially designed as was his violence—or so she tells us.

Morgan is even deficient as an artist. He creates little (as Leonie disparagingly points out) and what he has created he is committed to dispose of through the art gallery controlled by his personal and class enemy.

Morgan's lack of social consciousness is reflected in his lack of concern for the exploited such as Wally and his mother. Moreover, he exploits them for his own private purposes even though to him it does not seem like exploitation. Wally drives the car for him and helps in the kidnap attempt; and Morgan returns to the care and comfort of his mother whenever he feels lonely and desperate and is rejected by Leonie.

Ideologically Morgan is irresponsible and confused. He embodies inculcation without understanding. And he lacks respect for the heroes of the revolution—otherwise he would not dance amid the graves at Highgate with his mother on his back (both literally and symbolically). He

clutches at the symbolic bric-a-brac of revolution, especially the hammer and sickle, but his revolt is a merely personal one. He is more involved in his fantasies. In this he is, sadly and comically, merely a special case of British youth. He is not really in revolt at all, he just can't help himself. So he disrupts the bourgeois world—or more accurately he disrupts the bourgeois security and complacency of certain selected individuals with whom he comes into contact. And he is a traitor to the revolution. No wonder, in his fantasies of death, all classes combine against him. Yet he is the son of the working class on whom the future of the revolution hangs.

We could, I think, dislike Morgan for his mania and his self-indulgence. But we approve him and even empathize because of his simplicity and honesty and charm and directness of purpose, and because we all like to think we have something of Morgan in us. But most of all we like him because, beneath his simplicity of emotion and need and gorilla nature, he is so thoroughly imaginative and inventive in a 1960s mechanical way. Which brings us to the comedy technique.

The film's wit is essentially visual with judicious verbal support. This relates to the way in which Morgan's tricks are depicted. We see them first in the process of preparation (the skeleton in the bed, the wiring of the house, the plunger-and-bomb mechanism placed under the bed) so that we get an idea of what he is up to and wait with suspense and anticipation for the effect. The working out is done with delectable finesse: Leonie's scream and swinging out of bed when she uncovers the skeleton; Charles' scuttling around the bedroom, incipient coitus interrupted by a countdown, hunting for the loudspeaker; and her mother teetering hysterically with the phone in hand before subsiding onto the bed only to be gently blown up, the gorilla with her. All the timing and variation and clues which set the scene but add to its lustre are silent-comedy technique revived in a rare and unusual way.

In contrast, the sudden appearance of the hammer and sickle in the rug is apparently feeble since it comes alone with insufficient preparation or aftermath. This can be excused if we look beyond humor and see it as a sudden intrusion of ideology, irrelevant to his situation (and hers) but nevertheless slightly menacing.

What I like so much about the film is that everything in it seems so real, from the sculptures in the gallery (which are good) to the custard in the café. And this in a movie tinged with the surreal. Still the people are human and, with the exception of her father, unstock. In another film Charles the art dealer could perhaps be a hero—he is certainly no stockbroker. Leonie is most human of all, from the insouciance with which she swirls chiffon round Charles' eyes as he drives (a controlled recklessness so typical of her nature) to her giggle of delight when she thinks the men are going to have a fight over her; she knows it is ridiculous and sense-less and she laughs at herself and luxuriates in the situation in an apallingly delicious female way.

This humanness is embodied in each character. As Morgan Delt (not quite dolt) David Warner is almost perfect. His slow and inexorable transition from gorilla fantasy to reality is a minor gem of movement, voice, increasingly reproachful eyes, and olfactory gestures. And even when ensconced in gorilla outfit he remains human.

The film succeeds even more in its supporting roles. There is a wonderful, slow-thinking constable by Bernard Bresslaw, whose officious voice and bemused manner merely hide incipient panic. In the early-morning car scene he provides a perfect foil for Morgan in a way unseen since the zenith of Music Hall—particularly when, in doleful optimism, he observes of an egg running in his hands: "You can have it poached then."

Best of all is Irene Handl as Morgan's mother, an indomitable working-class woman toiling in a café in the nether part of London, mouthing the platitudes of revolution with eminent assurance as if the thirties never died, and speaking of her husband in the same way. Etched from life, one can see the sentimental-

ity beneath the dudgeon. Her voice, which chides, cajoles, and soothes; the way the words come out; her mouth, perpetually half-open in response to her errant son; the stolid way she walks; her position and movement as she caresses her aching feet; and the clothes she wears, clean and crisp and dowdy, in complete indifference to the vagaries of fashion. And she always retains her dignity, whether blocking her former in-law's car, or being carried by Morgan piggy-back around Highgate cemetery. People, we must feel, are not yet expendable.

There are many admirable shots and scenes within Karel Reisz's generally scintillating and economical direction. The quick cutting of the initial episodes, apt and never jarring. The contrast between the way Morgan goes into prison, jaunty, enthusiastic and comically; and the way he emerges, sober and silent, with both scenes in long shot but conveying opposite moods. The way objects are photographed to suggest a sense of psychological clutter. The use of bars and swinging to convey the ape theme. And the way the camera sits and watches Leonie as her feelings stir.

There are, of course, causes of dissatisfaction. Too many fantasies: when Morgan sees a bulky subway ticket-taker as a hippopotamus it is very unnecessary and heavy-handed. In contrast the gag of the chimp swinging through the trees, and falling out of the frame as the alarm clock rings, is typical of the film's best effects and admirable editing, as well as showing that fantasy and reality have not yet merged. Otherwise, there are occasional intimations of other movies (a lyric quality reminiscent of Truffaut at his best). Some gratuitous techniques obtrude, especially the speeded-up chase sequence in the art-dealer's salon. And sometimes the surreal impulse falters from an excess of effort, such as the use of the heavy, brutish crane which literally overwhelms the puny fantasy element; only when we see Charles at the controls is the scene redeemed.

The film's major defect is its sometimes detachment. It occasionally observes Morgan as a clinical case—reminding me oddly of Hitchcock's attitude towards his protagonists. Thus Morgan's terror and tragedy are insufficiently communicated and the movie suffers in feeling, passion, and pain. Perhaps more should have been done to fill out the soft scenes between Leonie and Morgan. For instance, by the lake, when he says "I'm afraid," and shivers, and she comes to him, the film shies away from revealing what happens then between such people; and the depth of their need and hurt.

Does Morgan go insane at the end of the film? True, his efforts to retain Leonie become increasingly desperate. True, he becomes more and more ape-like in his wrecking of the wedding celebration, and there is his panicky difficulty in removing the ape's head. Early in the film it is the stuffed gorilla on fire; toward the end it is Morgan, dressed in gorilla suit, whose rear is in flames. And it is true that he ends up in some kind of asylum. But his actions throughout the film are perfectly rational. And in confinement gone are the fantasies and gorilla demeanor; he is assiduously cultivating his garden with a symbolic purpose. Apes don't deal in symbols. The point is, I think, more an indictment of what our society considers the kind of anti-social behavior appropriate to incarceration, and our habit of treating abnormality as we treat nuclear waste—putting it out of sight.

For this reason I have some question about the ending. In many ways it is clever, strange, and perfect. Her sensible nature has triumphed after much tribulation; she has married the art dealer. His gorilla nature has fought its fight and lost. Nonetheless, secretly and sexually (that wonderful smile she gives him as she nods —which Reisz unaccountably botches with some visual superimposition business) Morgan has triumphed too, for she is the repository of his seed. There is still hope. And he goes on with more secret work, cultivating his garden as the camera shows us that random bourgeois flower beds, when viewed from a higher perspective, have a more subversive meaning.

On the other hand, he is indeed industrious but his energy like his mother's is confined and harmless. Because his wife will have his child

(if we accept that she is telling the truth, which is not necessarily so but jibes with our wishes) he has the last laugh. Because of the last shot we leave the theater laughing, convinced that he is enjoying the fate he deserves. He is indeed a suitable case for treatment (the original English title); but he shouldn't be. Some comedies make us laugh and see the point. In *Morgan*, I have the uneasy feeling we tend to laugh the point away.—DAVID PALETZ

BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

(Prima della Rivoluzione) Written and directed by Bernardo Bertolucci. Produced by Iride Cinematografica. Distributor: Rizzoli.

Occasionally you encounter a film whose faults and virtues are so inextricably entwined that it's almost impossible to discuss. If you like the film, there's always someone to point out that the very qualities you admire are equally the source of some inadmissable gaucherie. If you try to thread your way through a labyrinth of merits and demerits toward any intelligent explanation of your reasons for liking it, you may be accused of having a crush on the leading lady. And since it's the nature of subtle-minded critics to gloss simple-minded films, you may decide to give up the whole enterprise and wait for the next Hitchcock.

But *Before the Revolution* deserves the discussion that the cagey critic would rather avoid. If it's a failure, it's a beautiful one; far more exciting than some of the easy successes we applaud and forget each year. Often incoherent, terrifyingly immature, fascinatingly beautiful, it's the second film of an extraordinarily gifted young Italian director, Bernardo Bertolucci. Filmed when Bertolucci was only 22, it has all the faults you'd expect from a very young director, and all the intensity you'd expect from youth. Before the end it falls to pieces, but how lovely the fragments!

Despite some critical opinion to the contrary, I don't think it's at all a film about the boredom and decay of the middle classes, the alienation of Western man, or anything else that will fit some critical pigeonhole. Like most films, it's "about" the people in it. Its theme is hyper-intellectualism, the tendency of many bright young people to make ideas a substitute for feelings. The action covers a period of time during which its protagonist, Fabrizio, is challenged by and fails to respond to the emotional needs of the two people closest to him. He cannot understand or comfort his friend Agostino, and learns later of the boy's suicide. Drawn into an affair with his lovely young aunt, he finds her too complex and emotionally demanding, and finally retreats into a "safe" marriage with his childhood sweetheart. Set off against this major theme is the issue of Fabrizio's involvement in the Italian Communist Party, and his eventual renunciation of the Party when he cannot square its everyday policies with his grand political ideals. In each situation Fabrizio's ideas about the world prove inadequate to his understanding of it, for understanding demands the emotional involvement he cannot give. He renounces his aunt not because he is engaged in incest, but because she is too complex for him; he gives up the Communist Party not because of lost illusions, but because his illusions will not allow him to consider the complex problems that underlie the Party's relationship to its members.

Central to the film is a short scene in which Fabrizio, confused and depressed after finding that his aunt has been to a hotel with a man she picked up, goes with a young friend to the movies. Fabrizio needs understanding, but the friend will talk only about movies—about Godard, Anna Karina, and Nicholas Ray's 360-degree pan. Just as Fabrizio failed Agostino (and, like the friend, he had no better advice than to go to a movie) and is later to fail his aunt, this friend fails him. But as he is about to leave, the friend, vaguely sensing something wrong, offers Fabrizio his own scarf to put on against the cold. It's a very human gesture, but what is crucial about it is that nowhere in the film does Fabrizio perform any equivalent act of human feeling. It's not just that he lets his friends down, but that he never realizes he has done so.

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Certainly Fabrizio is the moral center of the film. But this may well be hard to see because of the dazzling presence of Adrianna Asti as the aunt. She's so tremendous a screen presence that Fabrizio seems to fade from sight whenever she appears. But surely her enigmatic personality has been conceived as a foil to Fabrizio's simplistic formulations. You might think she's all wrought up because of the incest business, but the fact that she has a psychiatrist back in Naples suggests that her problems are rooted elsewhere than in current clitoral involvements. But why she's so disturbed doesn't matter much anyway—it's about as relevant as the whereabouts of the missing girl in *L'Avventura.* The film is not so much about her illness as Fabrizio's inability to cope with it.

It's claimed that the film is autobiographical, and if so it would seem that Bertolucci has succeeded only partially in detaching himself from his protagonist; many of the film's faults stem from his rather ambiguous attitude toward Fabrizio. Bertolucci often romanticizes his character to the point of making you believe that his illusions are to be taken seriously. Thus the scene in which Fabrizio renounces the Communist Party, which should be essentially ironic, ends up rather fuzzily realized because Bertolucci does not distance himself sufficiently from the character. And we're likely, all the way through the movie, to take Fabrizio much too seriously.

There are other faults in abundance, mostly related to Bertolucci's extremely self-conscious handling of his images. There's a monologue by Fabrizio on Agostino's virtues that dissolves from gesture to gesture, a beautiful effect, but one which destroys any illusion of reality. There's a scene in a car at a funeral which begins promisingly enough but goes nowhere, sustained finally by Miss Asti's presence alone. And the quoting from other movies (is that the Parma opera house or Marienbad?) often distracts annoyingly from the tension of a scene. Too often Bertolucci shatters his best effects with careless decisions and self-indulgence.

What's really remarkable, though, are all the scenes that do work and shouldn't. In particular I think of the sequence in which an aging aristocrat whose land is about to be expropriated bids farewell to the streams and hills of his estate. This sentimental, blatantly romantic business should collapse miserably, but doesn't. For me, at least, it is real and moving. And I can only conclude that this is because Bertolucci deeply believed in what he was saying. This is the positive side of the youthful artist—he can involve you in his vision because he is so completely committed to it himself. On those occasions when Bertolucci knows what he wants to say, and is in control of his material, the result is lovely and powerful.

Bertolucci's primary directorial influence has been Godard. His jump cuts, unlike Godard's, often seem gratuitously confusing; and he has the solid determination of the young film-maker never to hold the camera still when he can use his dolly. But all of this engenders an excitement that helps keep the film moving over its frequent rough spots. Like his master, Bertolucci tries something new in every scene; like Godard, often fails; like Godard, sometimes succeeds spectacularly. He seems to me the first of the newer directors really to understand what Godard is doing.

Unfortunately, he lacks Godard's sureness with his actors. Adrianna Asti is unfailingly fascinating as the aunt, but the Fabrizio of Francesco Barilli occasionally seems a bit too doltish. This helps overweigh the film toward emphasis upon the character of the aunt. And Bertolucci misfires again when he sets off scenes full of painfully literary dialogue against long, improvised passages. This adds to an atmosphere of artificiality that constantly threatens to break up the film. But when Miss Asti really gets going, particularly in the improvised scenes, she's something to watch.

In the end *Before the Revolution* cannot sustain its power, and we recall it as a handful of beautifully realized moments. Certainly a failure, since a controlled emotional impact is necessary to any real work of art. But there's so much in it of beauty that it cannot be dismissed. Surely Bertolucci's next film will be better—more of a piece, more coherent, less self-

indulgent. But I wonder if it will have quite the life, the intensity of *Before the Revolution.* Maturity is a wonderful thing, but there are other virtues as well.—JOHN THOMAS

ARABESQUE

Director and producer: Stanley Donen. Script: Peter Stone, based on "The Cipher," by Gordon Colter. Photography: Christopher Challis. Music: Henry Mancini. Universal.

Arabesque could be dismissed as a bad and somewhat silly movie, were it not for the fact that it is symptomatic of a distressing trend in films today. Its enthusiastic reception, from so many quarters, leads one to the disheartening conclusion that if a film cannot possibly be taken seriously by anyone, it thereby becomes exempt from criticism.

Arabesque is not camp, but it could only exist in an atmosphere which has been saturated with camp. It is the end distillation of a campy attitude, filtered down from its homosexual origins, through anxiously attendant taste-makers, until now it is just plain old Establishment Camp. *Arabesque* is situated at the juncture where Andy Warhol and *The Ladies Home Journal* meet. It affords the chance to enjoy form without content, to join in abandoning commitment or involvement.

The form which *Arabesque* takes, however, is that of the suspense thriller. And a suspense thriller without involvement is in trouble. As a spy melodrama, it stands in a tradition which includes many fine films. Stanley Donen is aware of the heritage. *Arabesque* abounds in what could euphemistically be called "references" to other films; actually, whole scenes are lifted from preceding movies. Donen throws in a snatch here from *Foreign Correspondent,* a dash there from *North by Northwest.* It is no accident that Donen has chosen to borrow the most from Hitchcock, for Hitchcock is a master of the genre. Donen is not. Hitchcock uses his control of cinema to involve the audience totally, viscerally, almost subliminally in the story—as absurd as it may prove upon later reflection. Donen is too busy displaying his cool, demonstrating his superiority to the material, dazzling us with gimmicks. The result is somewhat similar to watching an acrobat. While you certainly admire the skill involved, you can think of better ways of spending your time.

A major flaw lies with the script. That it is a trifle is inconsequential; one does not look for profundity in films such as this. But it commits the unforgivable sin of being a hoax, a hoax which is discovered in the middle of the film rather than the end—a mistaken strategy which even Hitchcock could not bring off (in *Stagefright*). It is offensive to discover that one has been tricked, that one is the victim of false clues, enticingly dangled, only to be abandoned once they have served their purpose of misleading. One needs a final wrap-up, a moment of revelation when everything falls suddenly into place.

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In addition to its inconsistencies of plot, the script contains some of the most foolish dialogue ever to grace the screen. Much of it is superfluous; Donen will be telling the story adequately in visual terms, when, unaccountably, Sophia Loren launches into an explanation of what is happening. Granted, an explanation is often in order. When not commenting on the action, Sophia Loren is engaged in light banter with Gregory Peck—banter with all the airy froth of Los Angeles smog. Peck, whose very face is a visual metaphor for virtue and integrity, appears forlorn and helpless throughout the film, as if he is not quite sure how he got into this mess. It is a question to ponder.

It must be conceded that in many respects *Arabesque* is a tour de force of film-making. There are spectacular effects, stunning moments. When given a dose of a "truth" drug (of all things) Peck takes a psychedelic film "trip" which is quickly acquiring a reputation among the hippies. But at its best, *Arabesque* is good only in the sense that commercials are the best things on television. No matter how good a commercial is, and they are often very imaginative, its purpose is at heart to sell a product. It can have no substantive value of its own. And no matter how impressive the arsenal of devices Donen has at his disposal, they remain devices without a purpose.—DIANA GOULD

R. M. HODGENS*

Entertainments

Blindfold. Doctor Rock Hudson, commuting between Manhattan and Base X blindfolded in order to treat a mad scientist, is beset by villains and by showgirl Claudia Cardinale, his secret patient's sister. Frightening? Funny? Neither. When the villains penetrate Base X in order to kidnap the scientist and peddle him abroad, hero and heroine penetrate it, too, and save him for the Feds, who had kidnapped him for his own good. It is very clever of them to know who's who and where they're going, and it is also very fast driving in their Undiedummies truck. They elude the police and get to Hoboken by climbing in back and posing as Undiedummies themselves. As Undiedummies, they are almost convincing. The worst villain (Guy Stockwell) is more interestingly characterized. He stutters under stress. Near the end, he finds himself in quicksand, flopping and stuttering. It is almost frightening, and one wonders if it is supposed to be funny. These things require an almost inhuman precision, and like most humans co-adapter and director Philip Dunne is not up to it. As Doctor Hudson gravely remarks, "The mind is a very delicate instrument; you can't operate on it with a meat axe." Joseph MacDonald's color photography is pretty enough, especially in Central Park.

The Chase is a revisitation of the *High Noon* theme; but scriptwriter Lillian Hellman locates the Decline of the West rather further along, by putting it into Texas and hence involving the race problem too. Marlon Brando is enjoyable as the laconic sheriff who is thought to be in the local boss's pocket; trying to save an escaped local con, he gets beaten into a make-up man's dream during a Walpurgisnacht which includes a parody of the Oswald murder, the burning of a Negro man's junkyard, and the accidental killing of the boss's neurotic son. The film never manages to go anywhere, though it is well managed by director Arthur Penn; it is too full of blood and fire to be merely entertaining, yet it lacks the intelligence, observation, and grit necessary for a serious movie. The script has various gaping holes: its central action turns on the extremely unlikely event of a Negro man entering the room of a white girl while she is out (and her cracker father is in the bar downstairs), and it

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A Fine Madness. Of course, the poet (Sean Connery) is not supposed to be mad, just fine. And of course the world is supposed to persecute him, but he is not a convincing poet, not even when trying to provoke the persecution. To a secretary who wants to conquer space because "that's *our* universe," he says, "Watch your step, pouty-mouth; stars are fragile stuff." To a psychoanalyst (Patrick O'Neill), "You protect what *is;* I see what *can be,*" or something of the sort. Somehow, he goads a women's club into attacking him, though one would think that audiences are jaded with insult these days. Meanwhile, he tries to avoid alimony, quarrels with his second wife (Joanne Woodward), who think's he's blocked, and makes out, most notably with the psychoanalyst's wife (Jean Seberg). This leads to police brutality and "psychosurgery" which "is not the old style of lobotomy." The operation is not a success; the patient survives. *A Fine Madness* is an uneasy jumble of earnestness and would-be way-out comedy—a disappointment from director Irvin Kirshner. It seems to be well done, on the whole, but what is it? Elliot Baker adapted his own novel.

The Glass Bottom Boat. Rod Taylor discovers anti-gravity and can not imagine what to do with it beyond simulating gravity, but that is not the problem, and neither is Arthur Godfrey's glass bottom boat. The problem is Doris Day. The posters are misleading. Miss Day spends very little time as a mermaid or as a Mata Hari. It is just as well: she is at her best at her usual, bouncing about, coy and indignant, as the victim of what they call a witch hunt, which threatens her romance. Frank Tashlin directed this one. The minor characters—bumbling authorities and spies, mostly—are sometimes very good, and the slapstick catastrophe is funny.

The Naked Prey is "Cornel Wilde as Man . . . ," and the preface introduces us to Africa a century ago, a time when "man, lacking the will [?] to understand man, became as the beasts. . . ." A tribe disgruntled over a lack of trinkets captures a safari and atrociously disposes of everyone except Wilde, whom they set loose to hunt down. I suppose he starts naked, but obviously they left him with pink shorts. Needless to say, their naked prey turns out to be most dangerous game. The bulk of the film is the three-day hunt through green and gray forest, with bloody diversions by slave-raiders and other wildlife. One can not be sure how the unhappy Tarzan escapes, but presumably he runs faster. People keep saying that there used to be a lot of movies like this—simple action, not too sloppy, for no more than ninety-four minutes. I don't remember. If there were a lot of them now, *The Naked Prey* would not be worth watching. But, as things are, it may be. The script is by Clint Johnston and Don Peters, and Wilde co-produced and directed.

The Ten Commandments, back again, "uncut, intact" except for the usual damage, three hours and thirty-nine minutes about Moses from the time he is hidden in the Nile until he sees the Jordan, mostly hard to believe even if you believe it. Producer-director Cecil B. De Mille's faults were widely, tediously celebrated, and they are here, but the film has brilliant moments as well. It may be true that no one ought to be admitted unless accompanied by an Egyptologist, on account of the glamor and the anti-ancient-Egyptian bias, which is unseemly even though Moses may not have been Egyptian. But these things do not matter in the long, long run. De Mille announces in his preface that his story is about "whether men are to be ruled by God's law or by a dictator, such as Rameses," and so it is, at length: the thrones of Egypt against Mount Sinai and the idol against the tablets of the law—a parable of De Mille's ideal of freedom. After intermission the basic conflicts emerge and work well, in spite of the difficulty of God as a character. It is a Queen, Nefretiri (Anne Baxter), who hardens Pharaoh's (Yul Brynner's) heart. But then, she is God's instrument, and one still wonders why. And what about Pharaoh? But it is this royal couple which provides the most impressive explosion of drama, as opposed to spectacle. For hours they have been extravagant presences suggesting merely mean pride and sexuality. When Prince Moses (Charlton Heston, who is all right) returns from exile, they come alive—

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A Fine Madness. Of course, the poet (Sean Connery) is not supposed to be mad, just fine. And of course the world is supposed to persecute him, but he is not a convincing poet, not even when trying to provoke the persecution. To a secretary who wants to conquer space because "that's *our* universe," he says, "Watch your step, pouty-mouth; stars are fragile stuff." To a psychoanalyst (Patrick O'Neill), "You protect what *is;* I see what *can be,*" or something of the sort. Somehow, he goads a women's club into attacking him, though one would think that audiences are jaded with insult these days. Meanwhile, he tries to avoid alimony, quarrels with his second wife (Joanne Woodward), who think's he's blocked, and makes out, most notably with the psychoanalyst's wife (Jean Seberg). This leads to police brutality and "psychosurgery" which "is not the old style of lobotomy." The operation is not a success; the patient survives. *A Fine Madness* is an uneasy jumble of earnestness and would-be way-out comedy—a disappointment from director Irvin Kirshner. It seems to be well done, on the whole, but what is it? Elliot Baker adapted his own novel.

The Glass Bottom Boat. Rod Taylor discovers anti-gravity and can not imagine what to do with it beyond simulating gravity, but that is not the problem, and neither is Arthur Godfrey's glass bottom boat. The problem is Doris Day. The posters are misleading. Miss Day spends very little time as a mermaid or as a Mata Hari. It is just as well: she is at her best at her usual, bouncing about, coy and indignant, as the victim of what they call a witch hunt, which threatens her romance. Frank Tashlin directed this one. The minor characters—bumbling authorities and spies, mostly—are sometimes very good, and the slapstick catastrophe is funny.

The Naked Prey is "Cornel Wilde as Man . . . ," and the preface introduces us to Africa a century ago, a time when "man, lacking the will [?] to understand man, became as the beasts. . . ." A tribe disgruntled over a lack of trinkets captures a safari and atrociously disposes of everyone except Wilde, whom they set loose to hunt down. I suppose he starts naked, but obviously they left him with pink shorts. Needless to say, their naked prey turns out to be most dangerous game. The bulk of the film is the three-day hunt through green and gray forest, with bloody diversions by slave-raiders and other wildlife. One can not be sure how the unhappy Tarzan escapes, but presumably he runs faster. People keep saying that there used to be a lot of movies like this—simple action, not too sloppy, for no more than ninety-four minutes. I don't remember. If there were a lot of them now, *The Naked Prey* would not be worth watching. But, as things are, it may be. The script is by Clint Johnston and Don Peters, and Wilde co-produced and directed.

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Books

KEATON

By Rudi Blesh. (New York: Macmillan, 1966. $8.95)

We didn't discover what we had in Poe until the French told us, and though they go on telling us we tend to remain unconvinced. We hear degenerate, often ludicrously degenerate, English verse while they thrill to the first Martian bard, a being Baudelaire and Mallarmé confected out of their imperfect command of English and their patchy understanding of Anglo-American literary tradition. The French connoisseurship of Keaton, equally fanatical, is less easily explained away. The silent film, after all, contains no language barriers; and when we find Jean-Pierre Coursodon in *Keaton et Cie* (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1964) calling him "one of the greatest *metteurs-en-scène* in the history of cinema," we wonder why such a possibility has not been at least entertained in this country. "The more we run and rerun his films," M. Coursodon goes on, "the more we are persuaded of his genius, perhaps one of the most incontestable in all cinema. Indifferent to fashion, immune from the ravages of time, his work grows continually with the years and keeps, like his face, a marble countenance."

Then why isn't his name up there with those of Griffith and Eisenstein? One can think of several reasons. (1) There is the over-estimation of Chaplin, solicited by his all-too-human *persona* and reinforced by the sort-of-Marxist coloration of so many Anglo-American film historians; Chaplin's encounters with the power structure—greedy monopolists and their kept cops—suggest to the man who is interested in film as a means of propaganda that a "positive" (i.e., revolutionary) solution to the tramp's difficulties is in sight. (2) His anticipations of Beckett and Ionesco do him little good among folk who don't really dig Beckett and Ionesco. Last year on an eastern campus noted for its devotion to the avant-garde a graduate course in Beckett drew four registrants. (3) Comedy isn't taken seriously unless (see above, Chaplin) it has "social implications." So theorists of cinema tend to bypass the genre altogether. (4) The films, though prints of all of them survive, are difficult to see. This is the familiar, generic film-problem compounded by copyright difficulties. So it's easier to accept the valuations of historians with ideological axes to grind. And (5), Buster's TV appearances, late in life, were not such as to inspire curiosity about his classic *oeuvre*. Imprisoned in a medium which used him as a bit performer or a re-enactor of stock sequences, he was able to give no idea of the almost metaphysical power

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of the films in which he was not merely the performer but, from beginning to end, the presiding creative intelligence.

The man in whose honor M. Coursodon quotes Mallarmé's tribute to Poe, "Calme bloc ici-bas chu d'un désastre obscur," with the remark that it might have been written for him ("Keaton, comme Poe, est d'ailleurs. Est-il vraiment des nôtres?") has finally been the subject of a decent biography by a pertinacious interviewer and appreciative watcher of every one of the films. There's an annotated list of these (124 items), a fine array of illustrations (more than 100, perhaps half of them stills from the films), much careful and zestful paraphrase of such intricate wonders as the plot of *Sherlock Jr.*, (which crowded into a mere 4½ reels three interdependent plots like nesting boxes) and enough biographical detail to help us make sense of the whole thing.

Certain matters grow clear; the first is that we mistake Buster completely in thinking of him as a performer. In the simpler days when one man could be writer-producer-director-star he was all of those things, and the character he projected was inseparable from the situations and plots in which he appeared, so much so that almost alone among his colleagues he made the transition from shorts to features with no loss of internal logic. Blesh, who calls the final chase "as inevitable in silent comedy's stylized baroque as counterpoint in Bach," shows us in more detail than any previous commentator how majestically the 7-reelers are built, so as to defy any attempt to excerpt 2-reel segments.

The films, moreover, were less products for marketing than complex ventures in autotherapy. His relations with the past, with his wife, and with his father were sometimes abreacted to the extent of laying a film in the American past and casting his actual wife and actual father in supporting roles. His personal breakdown commenced when he was no longer able to make films, a newly organized industry having begun to treat him not as a creator but as an employee. The artistic frustration cannot be overestimated; but the frustration that broke Buster Keaton was more than artistic.

Then there is the question of sound, which about 1930 ended so many cinema careers. The mechanism by which it terminated an era awaits definitive enquiry. Blesh suggests that the crisis in Keaton's case was simply one of control: an expensive medium required extensive financing, which entailed boards of directors and jobs for brothers-in-law as artistic supervisors. (Keaton did his classic work, 1921–1927, as an independent producer). He does not mention the sheer problem of cost per minute, which inhibited improvisation, and the necessity for controlling microphone placement, which rendered already complex shooting procedures virtually impossible. (His descriptions of the controlled chaos out of which some of Buster's sequences grew make hilarious reading; but imagine, superimposed on the chaos, a phalanx of sound technicians, and unionized at that.) One may add, moreover, that a voiceless world, like the world behind Alice's mirror, serves to imprison Buster as in a dream, where all deeds, all inflections, are kinetic. To rethink his comedy in a universe where people spoke would have exacted a transposition comparable to making a senator out of a fencer.

These analytic deficiencies are minor; the book has the virtue of providing the analyst with data, and data with the ring of reliability. True, it is imperfectly documented, and unambitiously conceived. Blesh does not quote, for instance, such French analysts as Coursodon, Martin, Erebe, and Lebel; he quotes the likes of Paul Gallico and Walter Kerr, and without telling us where to find what he is quoting. But the book's solid substratum is a long sequence of interviews, many of them directly quoted, with Buster himself, his mother, his wife, his brother, sister, sons, and professional associates. Documented or not, it has the authenticity of memory, many memories, and though Buster has now taken away with him forever what memories Blesh and other interviewers did not elicit and record, the substantial record in this volume suffices to give us the key to as strange a body of films as the cinematic imagination has achieved.—HUGH KENNER

HITCHCOCK'S FILMS

By Rob:n Wood. (New York: Barnes, 1965)

It does not take a reader long to confirm a suspicion that the author of *Hitchcock's Films,* British critic Robin Wood, wishes himself identified with the *politique des auteurs* as pursued by *Cahiers du Cinéma* in France and by *Movie* and *Motion* in his native England. In his thirty-six page introduction, Wood staunchly establishes his solidarity with the hitchcocko-hawksiens by defending Hawks's *Rio Bravo,* digresses into a defensive attack on "the characteristic 'Establishment' line" (as followed by Penelope Houston and *Sight and Sound*), and tells us finally that he will concern his study with the five most recent Hitchock films, as they represent "an unbroken chain of masterpieces and the highest reach of his art to date." The British films are dismissed entirely because they are "overshadowed by (Hitchcock's) recent development," yet *Marnie* is the subject of a labored, 29-page essay. Wood adumbrates the merits of the director's early Hollywood work, then proceeds to the meat of his book. Besides *Marnie* ("one of Hitchcock's richest, most fully achieved and mature masterpieces"), there are analytical essays on *Vertigo, North by Northwest, Psyche,* and *The Birds.* These are preceded by studies of *Strangers on a Train* and *Rear Window,* important, we are told, "in relation to Hitchcock's oeuvre as a whole."

Wood spends a great deal of space indulging in the sort of "interpretive excesses" for which he sometimes condemns his colleagues—Jean Douchet, Claude Chabrol, and Erich Rohmer, among others. Phonograph records (in Miriam's shop in *Strangers on a Train*) are said to symbolize a "vicious circle" of existence; a model ship in the office of Gavin Elster (in *Vertigo*) suggests "escape," and the Presidential faces on Mt. Rushmore are to be viewed as "guardians of order" over a chaotic world.

Far more disconcerting, however, is Wood's refusal to examine the question of the director's personality, particularly that aspect of Hitchcock's canon that *has* been consistent and meaningful—his unique sense of humor. Like it or not, Hitchcock's pitilessly cynical attitude toward modern man has exercised such force of direction in his work that to disregard it in any study of his films is quite unreasonable. And it is strangely out of character for an exponent of the auteur theory. This sin of omission seems to have been perpetrated through the author's interest in defending Hitchcock's films as serious moral statements. Thus, in *Strangers on a Train,* Bruno Anthony's mother represents "an extension of the chaos world," no longer to be simply enjoyed as the pottering old flibbertigibbet she obviously was meant to be. The peculiar assortment of oddballs, ninnies, and gargoyles Hitchcock assembled to attract Jeffries's voyeuristic interest in *Rear Window* are here reduced to "variations on the man-woman relationship." And Mrs. Bundy, the myopic ornithologist in *The Birds,* is not a preposterous old Lesbian, but a dramatic means of voicing the audience's possible conclusion that the supernatural attack is but an absurd nightmare. In answer to Wood's opening question ("Why should we take Hitchcock seriously?"), I should like to know why we have to take him nothing but seriously. . . .

When Wood advances his thesis, however, his book is often fascinating. He builds a strong case for the theory that Hitchcock's films reveal a "therapeutic" theme, whereby "a character is cured of some weakness or obsession by indulging in it and living through the consequences." With sometimes captivating (and unusually detailed) exposition, Wood proceeds to demonstrate how Hitchcock extends the "therapy" to the spectator. In watching *Rear Window,* for example, we actually do tend to identify with Jeffries through Hitchcock's use of a standard filmic convention—the subjective shot, which imprisons both the protagonist and the audience within the confines of a single room, from which all of the action is viewed. As Jeffries spies on his neighbors, we find that we are indeed "spying with him, sharing his fascinated compulsive 'Peeping-Tom-ism.'" And the long tracking shots in *Psycho* do serve to make us "see things we are afraid to see." When Lila

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goes into the Bates menage, her slow, determined exploration is rendered in subjective dolly shots which build almost unbearable suspense by putting us in her shoes. As Wood points out, we dread her entrance to the house; but, at the same time, we greatly desire it—if only to satisfy our morbid curiosity—because we want to be frightened, we want to see another murder. In such observations, the author has at least excelled in defining the nature, the exact nature, of the suspense in most of Hitchcock's films. Wood's conclusion seems to be that the director's approach is that of a twentieth-century moralist and that the suspense itself serves as our instructor, arousing within us as it does conflicting reactions to the predicaments of Hitchcock's protagonists.
—JAMES MICHAEL MARTIN

IMMORTALS OF THE SCREEN

By Ray Stuart. (Los Angeles: Sherbourne Press, 1966. $7.50)

Hollywood picture books are breaking out in the market like hives. This one uses the familiar format: studio photos, publicity stills from the films, and biographical information. It includes no one who became a star since 1950. Stuart "shudders to think that he has overlooked some Very Important Person." But he left out one "immortal" whom he mentions often in the text: Gloria Swanson. His publishers may have balked when Stuart was halfway through; there are 84 immortals from the first half of the alphabet and only 17 from the second half.—EARL BODIEN

FILM STUDY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

(Edited by David C. Stewart. Washington: American Council on Education, 1966. $2.75)

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goes into the Bates menage, her slow, determined exploration is rendered in subjective dolly shots which build almost unbearable suspense by putting us in her shoes. As Wood points out, we dread her entrance to the house; but, at the same time, we greatly desire it—if only to satisfy our morbid curiosity—because we want to be frightened, we want to see another murder. In such observations, the author has at least excelled in defining the nature, the exact nature, of the suspense in most of Hitchcock's films. Wood's conclusion seems to be that the director's approach is that of a twentieth-century moralist and that the suspense itself serves as our instructor, arousing within us as it does conflicting reactions to the predicaments of Hitchcock's protagonists.

—JAMES MICHAEL MARTIN

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Hollywood picture books are breaking out in the market like hives. This one uses the familiar format: studio photos, publicity stills from the films, and biographical information. It includes no one who became a star since 1950. Stuart "shudders to think that he has overlooked some Very Important Person." But he left out one "immortal" whom he mentions often in the text: Gloria Swanson. His publishers may have balked when Stuart was halfway through; there are 84 immortals from the first half of the alphabet and only 17 from the second half.—EARL BODIEN

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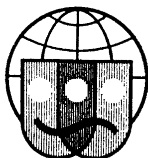

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