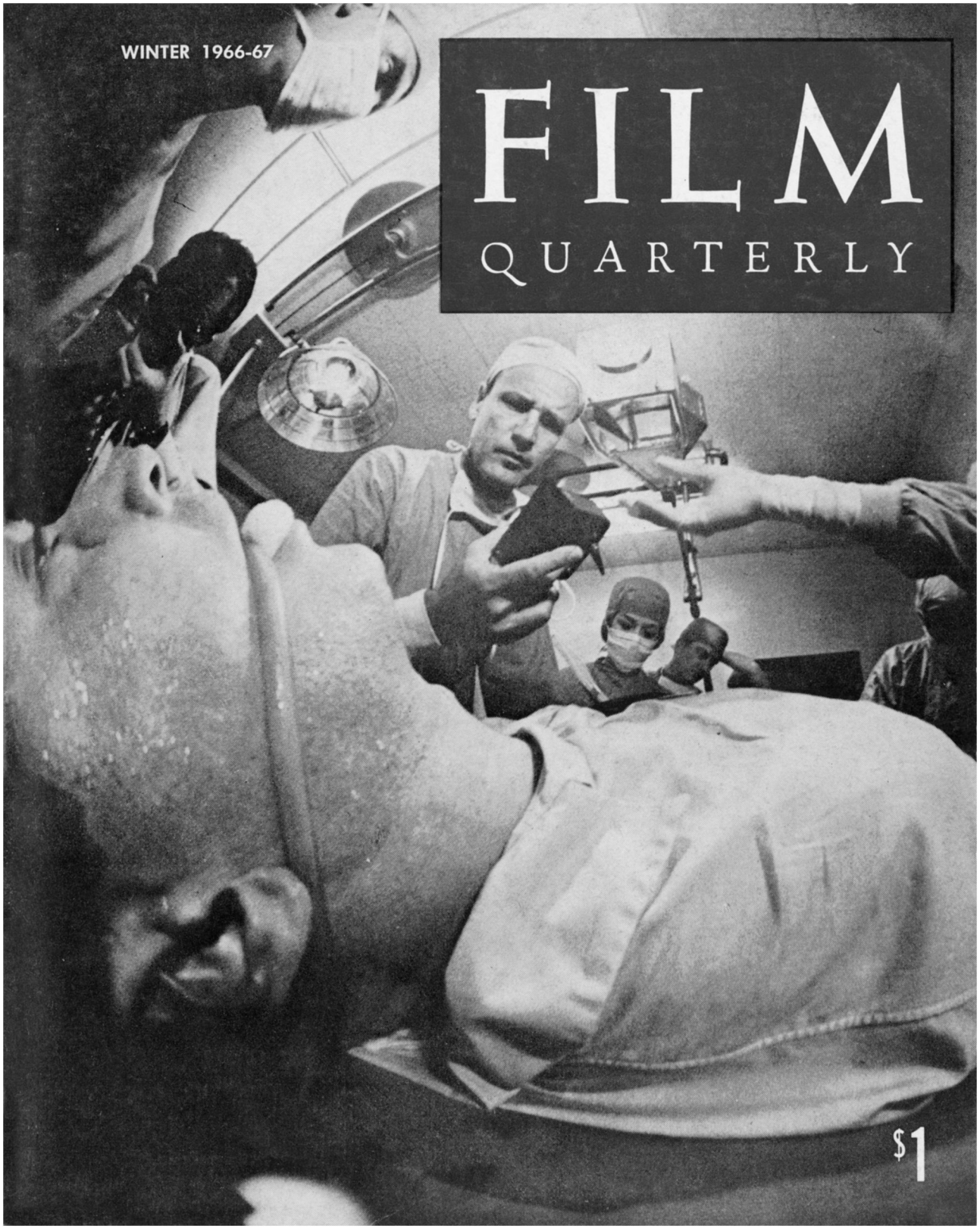
WINTER 1966-67

FILM QUARTERLY



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COVER: From John Frankenheimer's *Seconds*.

Editor's Notebook

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the film from festival showings); and many people who went to the film expecting titillating bedroom scenes had it forcibly brought home that what some consider "pornographic" may not even be sexy. It is even possible that this object lesson in the silliness of censorship helped, in the election that followed, to defeat the "anti-smut" Proposition 16. And the film itself, some weeks later, is still running—at painfully inflated prices—at a local theater.

CANYON CINEMA CO-OP

In order to provide a west-coast center for the distribution of films by independent film-makers, a new cooperative distribution office has been set up under the above name; its headquarters will be at 58 Verona Place, San Francisco 94107. A catalogue is in preparation, and interested parties are invited to request a copy. Meanwhile, the *Canyon Cinema News*, an indescribable monthly newsletter from the underground film world, continues publication under Editor Emory Menefee; subscriptions are $2.00 to 263 Colgate Avenue, Berkeley, California 94708.

CORRECTION

In the review in our last issue, we listed the distributor of Bertolucci's *Before the Revolution* incorrectly; it should be New Yorker Films, 2409 Broadway, New York 10024.

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ALAN CASTY

The Films of Robert Rossen

Rossen's career—ended by his death at 57 early this year—was never, it seems to me, seen for what it was. Generally successful commercially, except for several years of blacklisting in the fifties, his work was never recognized as a unified artistic achievement—one that rather strikingly parallels the growth of the art of the film itself. It is a body of work that reflects a consistent, yet changing and deepening, personal point of view, and one that reflects, also, a willingness to grow, change and even dare in extending the technical means used to embody that point of view. In both these respects, it parallels the dominant direction of the film today in going beyond the conventions of social realism that have long been the touchstone for the serious American motion picture.

In all of his major works Rossen was concerned with the search of a young man for something which he does not recognize as himself, his identity. He is a character of a certain natural inner force (for which *charisma*, despite its over-use, is still a good word), but he cannot fully identify or control this energy, skill, or potential, this source of grace and power. It is significant that in answer to a survey conducted by *Show* magazine Rossen replied that his favorite Shakespeare play was *Macbeth*. In it he said he found a "dramatization of the ambiguity of the human condition . . . man reaching for the symbols of his identity, rather than the reality, destroying yet finding himself in the tragic process." For Rossen's young men, these illusory symbols of the self are those of power, status, wealth, violence, domination, love turned inside out into violation. When he most realized their plight, these men have been Americans—rootless or dispossessed socially—with a special élan and no way or place to fulfill it within the attractions and forces of their society. Within the society's corruption, the élan turns aggressive, perverse, destructive.

Rossen's affinity for these young men most probably stems from his own personal relationship to what he felt was the corruption of his society. "Real life is ugly," he told *The New York Sun* in 1947, "but we can't make good pictures until we're ready to tell about it." He spent his career telling about it, yet managed that career with a dynamic and aggressive expertness that enabled him, like many of his heroes, to climb from a dispossessed social position (the East Side of New York) to a position of prominence and power in his field. His reaction to his society also took a political form, and again parallels the seeking of some of his heroes. The time of his youth—he was to testify in 1953—"was a period of great cynicism, disillusionment; the system . . . had failed. . . ." "Looking for a new horizon, a new kind of society, something [he] could believe in and become a part of," he turned to communism. "It offered," he said, "every possible kind of thing to you at that time which could fulfill your sense of idealism," offered the greatest possibility of "anything that tends toward the realization of the inner man." Later he was to face the corruption of that vision, to discover "that the idealism that you were looking for, the fight for the ideas that you want, are just not in the Communist Party." But he was to discover as well how other forces in the society —as made manifest in the House Un-American Activities Committee and the Hollywood blacklist—were to threaten, and temporarily block, the fulfillment of his career and present him with a final and difficult moral dilemma.

Rossen's themes, then, rose from personal convictions and experiences. In his first depictions of them as a director, he was working within the realistic tradition established by the gangster and problem films of the thirties. The perspectives were the simplistic social and economic classifications of most liberal art; the

characters were solidly defined within the boundaries of those classifications and responded in clear stages to precisely established stimuli, restricting, in turn, the responses of the audiences within the limits of the stereotypes. The technique was that of the dramatized documentary: harsh settings and gloomy blacks and grays, a consistent tone or mood, the cataloguing of small details of job, class, time, milieu for the surface verisimilitude that was to be a kind of guarantee of the oriented reconstruction of the whole. After a straight gangster film, *Johnny O'Clock*, Rossen's first major effort within these conventions was *Body and Soul* (1947).

With a screenplay by Abraham Polansky (who subsequently directed *Force of Evil* and was also subsequently blacklisted), *Body and Soul* sets the reasons for the distortion and perversion of the natural impulse for self-fulfillment into the conventional pattern of leftwing social criticism. But although its intellectual definitions of the problem are still confined to these patterns, the visual treatment of the material gives to the film a richer emotional development than that experienced in most films of this type.

Charley (played of course by John Garfield) has that special élan (the artist who loves him says he has the "fearful symmetry" of Blake's Tiger), but he knows only one purpose to put it to: "I just want to be a success." The business of boxing is his only way up from the slums, but in boxing he encounters the very force of economic corruption that had trapped him to begin with. It turns him into what his best friend Shorty calls "a money-machine" and, until a rather unconvincing reversal at the end, causes him to destroy all of his personal relationships, his honesty, and another boxer, a Negro. This economic allegory is explicitly summarized in a good deal of the dialogue, personified in the stereotyped figure of the gambler-promoter and other characters, and dramatized by the plot.

Typical of the thematic dialogue are such statements as "You'll give away your right arm if you sign," "It's a business, what do you expect?", "People don't count," "He's money. People want money so bad they make it stink and they make you stink!" The visual counterparts of these are such shots as a montage of Charley spending money after he becomes champ, a close-up of a large wad of money when he agrees to take a dive.

Roberts, the gambler-promoter, is the typical simplified personification of capitalism of this genre. He is given no personality, character, or life besides his complete dedication to making money. We can also infer, I suppose, that he enjoys power for its sake, but nothing specific is developed to demonstrate this. For him "People don't count." Only money does, and he will do anything to get it. Peg is the leading antagonist and counterpull to the materialist-capitalist gambler. She is creative, aesthetic, personal; she is also moral and strong. Her demands are clear but firm; when they are not met, she merely departs and waits. Thus, she, too, functions as a stereotype, with no complexity of motivation or character. Shorty, similarly, represents fidelity and truth, personal relationships; the mother represents the strength and moral purity of the poor; the other girl is the objectifying and objectified follower of easy money.

The plot develops from Charley's rejection of the positive value figures and his surrender to the evil of the gambler and the system he represents because of his own misguided greed, his illusory symbols of identity. In all this there are strong echoes of the drama of the thirties, as there are in his final rebellion against the system. For Charley the cost of success in the ring (and at the bank) is high. He must acquiesce in the elimination of his friend Shorty from the business that is himself (as well as the less important elimination of his first manager), an elimination that eventually causes Shorty's accidental death as well. He must become the unwitting cause of the permanent injury and eventual death of the Negro champion who should not be fighting because of a blood clot (again money forces the champion's managers to sacrifice him). He must break with his own mother and with Peg, who has offered him the

alternative of love. Instead of Peg, he temporarily wins the money-hungry seductress who, when Charley was fighting the Negro champion Ben, had been seen yelling, "Kill him, Kill him!" Finally, for money, he must accept the offer to take a dive. Still, Charley is never completely depersonalized. He is sorry about Shorty, takes on Ben as part of his entourage, goes back to Peg (and his mother) when he is in trouble, and—supposedly because of the confrontation with Peg and his mother and the death of Ben—finally refuses to take the dive and wins the fight. The proletarian sentimentalism of the ending can be justified theoretically by Charley's rediscovery of the true sources of his pride and courage, but it lacks dramatic demonstration. It is further blurred by a sudden shift of symbolism. For boxing, which has been a correlative throughout of the brutality of capitalism, is now supposed to be a viable personal activity in which one can find fulfillment by the way he conducts himself.

This shift and fulfillment are heroically projected in visual terms by the tour de force photography of the fight, which combines an immediacy and fluidity of camera work (James Wong Howe reputedly shot the scenes while on roller skates) with decisive, exclamatory editing (especially in the use of close-ups) and a steady rhythmic progression towards the crescendo of the final knockout. This sequence has always been highly regarded, but it seems to me that the real visual successes of the film are other scenes in which Charley is captured as something more than a symbolic counter within the patterns of the economic allegory. After the crowded victory celebration that ends in Shorty's death, Charley and Peg are shot alone, from behind and from a low angle, Charley seen dwarfed and boy-like in his heavy, rich overcoat. They walk to the steps of Peg's brownstone, Charley weighted down by his loose, unbuttoned coat. Peg climbs the steps, leaving Charley behind, and delivers her ultimatum. "I can't stop now," he says and she leaves him, the camera drawing back again and leaving him alone at the base of the steps. Later, when Charley is forced by his recognition of his old neighborhood's pride in him to tell his mother and Peg that the fight is fixed, a complexity of interrelationships between them is suggested more by the pattern of response shots than by the words of the argument that ensues: a bust shot of the mother's first response, then back to Charley's face; across him from the side to the two of them, back to him; over them, still seated, to him, standing; a first close-up of Peg, a tight close-up of Charley;

Broderick Crawford campaigning in ALL THE KING'S MEN

past him to her, getting up; past him, more tightly, to her in close-up; past her to Charley as she slaps him.

Rossen continued within the same patterns of social realism in his next film, *All the King's Men* (1949), which he wrote (from the Robert Penn Warren novel), directed, and produced. It won the greatest critical acclaim of any of his films and received some thirty awards from a variety of sources. In it his techniques are similar to and probably influenced by those of the Italian neorealists, and especially Roberto Rossellini; Rossen shoots the film entirely on location with the available light in all kinds of weather conditions, uses many non-actors, catches his performers unawares and spontaneously, and generally employs documentary camera and cutting methods throughout. There is an advance of thematic complexity in the film, but a corresponding loss of symmetry and unified emotional effect. Here the Rossen hero is split into two—the rootless intellectual Jack Burden and the dynamic activist Willie Stark—and here the destructive forces within the men are given more development than in *Body and Soul* as they merge with the distorting pressures of the society's alternatives. It is the intellectual Burden who makes the moral discovery that is typical of so many of Rossen's endings; the social activist Willie is destroyed. Still, it is the social side of the film that is most effective; the intricate set of personal relationships that are to parallel the political corruption are left shadowy and fragmented, never fully integrated into the social context. In fact, Rossen himself reported that when he had to cut approximately an hour from the film, it was the personal relationships that bore the brunt of the cutting.

The sharpest focus is kept on Willie as a public figure, dramatizing the various forms of his power and dominance, and their corruption. The innate power of the redneck farm boy finds its home and use only in the world of political and economic power. His strength is no match for the social forms which shape it, and so it loses its connection to the love of people, the idealism, that earlier hedged it in. It turns into selfish and destructive greed for more and more of the material and emotional fruits of power itself, as is captured in an excitingly edited mosaic of illustrative scenes: Willie at a campaign barbecue; Willie discovering the source and force of his own magnetism while haranguing an audience at a fairgrounds meeting; Willie cynically posing with his estranged family for publicity photos, the powerful expensive cars he loves parked in front of the old farmhouse; legislative brawling and political deals; a torchlight parade heightening the emotional fervor of the mob, who become more than the victims of the demagogue—become, in part, accomplices in their own captivity.

This mutual culpability of the strong and the weak, the leader and the led, is climaxed by the excellent sequence of the proceedings of Willie's impeachment by the senate: the herds of rural folk unloaded from their buses, standing docile before the capitol, contained by the power of the leather-jacketed highway patrol, Willie's personal army; cheering on cue, blank-faced; blared at by Willie's message over the loudspeaker ("Stay where you are; don't go away! Stay where you are!") while the camera catches, etched on the capitol wall: THE PEOPLE'S WILL IS THE LAW OF THE STATE.

Here, at a time when Rossen (having been named as a Communist in 1947) was struggling to maintain his career, when (according to the congressional testimony of Richard Collins) he had had to write a private letter to Harry Cohn, president of Columbia Pictures, attesting he was not a Communist, he produced a significant demonstration of how the personal loss of self is made public and political, how personal corruption both breeds and is bred by the corruption of society.

In *The Brave Bulls* (1951), the patterns that emerge are much the same. Bullfighting this time is the potentially vital and fulfilling activity. "It's what I do," Luis Bello, the matador, explains. "Without it, I am nothing." For Bello, bullfighting is shown to mean both money and personal pride, both of which he, as a poor peasant, had been deprived of by the social system. But its potential is drained and dis-

torted by the forces of society—selfish parasites, the fickle, emotional crowds, the commercializing corruption of the promoters—and by unclearly defined weaknesses in the man. He loses his will and courage, becomes as afraid as those to whom (as he says) he sells a brave feeling and a feeling of pride. But, like Charley, he rediscovers them in a climactic fight, which takes place before the simple country people at a village fiesta, representing his return to the true sources of his spirit. The specific causes of his last display of character are as vaguely demonstrated as were those in Charley's case, but the total emotional effect of the symbolic nobility of the moment of truth is less inconsistent than in the case of boxing, and has been fortified especially by a beautiful sequence at a bull ranch in the country.

I might interject here that even in many of Rossen's earlier screen-writing jobs we can see the same patterns of socio-economic causation and the same constellations of illusory symbols of the self: money, power, violence, selfishness, and cruelty in personal relationships and in sex, failure of love. There are the rape and then the violence of the southern mob in *They Won't Forget* (1937), the troubled young man of the slums in *Dust Be My Destiny* (1939), the sadistic tyranny at sea (with fascistic overtones) in *The Sea Wolf* (1941), economic corruption and terrorization on the docks in *Out of the Fog* (1941), Nazi brutality in *Edge of Darkness* (1943), the personal grace and comradeship in the face of war in *A Walk in the Sun* (1945), the twisting of love by personal sickness and greed in *The Strange Loves of Martha Ivers* (1945).

Following the release of *The Brave Bulls*, Rossen was faced with his own moment of truth. At new HUAC hearings early in 1951, several witnesses named him as a Communist, and Columbia moved to break his production contract with them. The blacklist threatened. To avoid a subpoena Rossen went to Mexico for several months, but returned in June to testify. He stated that he was not a member of the Communist Party and was in no way sympathetic to its aims. "It opposes freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and it basically is against the dignity of the human individual." Nonetheless, he refused to testify about his past activities or about anyone else. He was obviously trying to steer a precarious middle way, but it did not satisfy the Committee or the industry.

Two years of forced inactivity followed. In May, 1953, Rossen testified again, this time in full detail about his own Party membership, his gradual and deepening disillusionment, and his final break in 1947. He also verified, from lists furnished by the Committee, the names of those he knew as Party members. His motives were undoubtedly complex, and have been the subject of debate and disagreement among others in the industry. His own definition of them was that he had previously refused to testify because "I didn't want to give any names, and that is what I conceived to be a moral position." But now, he said, "I didn't think, after two years of thinking, that any one individual can indulge himself in the luxury of individual morality or pit it against what I feel today very strongly is the security and safety of this nation." It was, he said, a difficult decision for him to make; in making it he provided an unusual personal dramatization of the moral dilemmas of many of his films.

In the next several years he worked on two personal productions that marked a turn in his work and two other projects *(Mambo* and *Island in the Sun)* that were merely jobs. In 1956 he released *Alexander the Great,* a historical and technicolored epic that (unlike anything he had done previously) was hopefully intended as a commercial blockbuster, but was nonetheless still intended as a further depiction of the young man of power, energy, and will and the symbols to which he applies them. On the political level Alexander seeks by his conquests to fulfill the righteous political destiny of his nation, and one can see, in the destruction he spreads, Rossen's comment on the political power struggles of the modern world. On the personal level Alexander is portrayed as driven by his lust for glory (a word too frequently repeated by many of the

THEY CAME TO CORDURA

characters in the film) and, at a deeper level, by his intense, obsessive rivalry with his father. Before he dies, he realizes the emptiness of his triumphs and prays for peace and brotherhood. More meaningful than most films of this type, *Alexander* is, finally, overcome by its own psychological and political simplifications and by the weight of its own conventional spectacles. There are, however, a number of effective visual embodiments of the brutalities of men of power and their wars: the executions, at frequent intervals, of "traitors," the burning of villages, the bizarre drunken dance of King Philip (Alexander's father) among the corpses of the fallen.

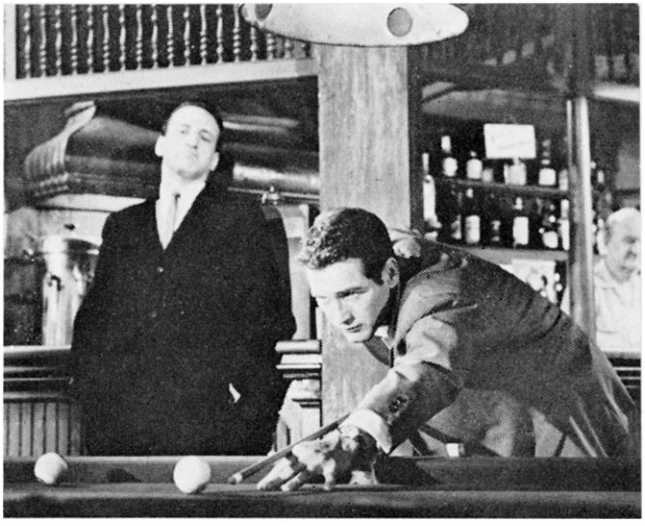
Similarly, Rossen used the conventions of the western epic in *They Came to Cordura* (1959) to examine a man's search for his self in terms of strength and courage of character. A cavalry officer, a demonstrated coward to the world and to himself, is ironically chosen to lead a group of heroes through the Mexican badlands. On the journey he discovers the false basis of the courage of the others and the true sources of his own. More clever than insightful in its neat reversals, it was nonetheless a better movie than it was given credit for.

But it wasn't until *The Hustler* (1961) that Rossen achieved a full breakthrough in technique, not by applying extraneous conventions to his material, but by extending the range and limits of social realism. In it the surface terms are much the same as in *Body and Soul,* but the significance of the terms has changed and so has their treatment. Rossen has pushed beyond the usual classifications of American films, the usual neatly patterned boundaries for our responses, the pat socio-economic allegory of his earlier films. Certainly the picture is still about the corrupting influences of money, but even on that level it has a greater complexity. We no longer have the empty symbol of the corruption of capitalism in the gambler-promoter. For as George C. Scott captures the complexity of his satanic power and human weaknesses, the gambler's professional lust for money is only a part of a syndrome of illusory symbols of identity: lust for power in its own right, power over another human being as an object of one's ego; sexual lust on the same terms of domination and destruction—sadistic and perverse, rising from sexual insecurity and ending in sexual failure. In the same way, Eddie, the hustler, is a more complete version of Rossen's young seeker. His desire for money and status within his "art" is even recognized by him as destructive of other impulses toward identity he feels within himself. The feelings of love surprise his defenses, but in the hemmed-in, trapped tightness of the girl's small apartment, the possibilities of love are overrun by the distortions of aggression (the counterpart of his need to be the top man of the world of the pool hall). Only in one scene in the open air, in which Rossen uses the wide screen to set up the strikingly contrasting sense of the openness of possibilities of tenderness and creativity, can Eddie verbalize his sense of his skill as more than a tool of conquest—as, rather, a creative and fulfilling artistry—and his sense of love as more than a battle for victory of the self. But Eddie is not strong enough to carry out these possibilities. The girl—physically crippled, emotionally warped—is not yet destroyed, not yet without love. She is insightful enough to know what is happening—"We are all crippled," she says—but too weak, too wounded herself, to forestall it.

The film, then, is not merely the realistic depiction of the milieu and tricks of the trade of the pool hall and pool shark. It does not merely depict a battle between the old pool player

and the young—within the reflex convention of old doctor and young, old gangster and young, old lawyer and young, old cowboy and young. It depicts, rather, the struggle between the gambler and the girl for the unformed soul and the unshaped energies of the pool-playing young American, the wanderer, skilled but isolated, without purpose, mission or connection. The triangle of conflict is much the same as that of *Body and Soul*, but this time made more complex, more meaningful, more fully human.

The sequence that forms the climax of this struggle for and final destruction of the possibilities of love is one of the most effective extended metaphors I can recall seeing in an American film. Derby Week at Louisville—gambling, money-making and spending, and their attendant pleasures—is the background for the final power struggle. The girl's isolation and inevitable doom is captured strikingly (again taking full advantage of the wide screen) in a long, dollying shot that follows her uneven, unnoticed path down a stairway and through a lobby and bar crowded mainly with men who pay no attention to her, until she stops at a doorway at the screen's right and is eyed, briefly but completely, by an objectifying glance of disinterested lust.



THE HUSTLER

A bright, hot, cloistered downstairs billiards room (an expensive, sophisticated hell) is the final battlefield. The hustler's broken thumbs have healed, but not his spirit. He needs more than money now from the gambler; he needs an almost sexual reflection of fulfillment from the gambler's taunting eyes, an OK that will prove his manhood even as he is destroying it, even as he turns from the girl and thus seals her destruction. The game's "sucker" is obviously a homosexual, and no mean pool player himself. His excitement builds with the budding sweat on their faces as he struggles expertly and daringly before succumbing, with obvious masochistic pleasure in his inevitable submission before the hustler and the power of men. But who is the "sucker," finally, who the half-man who submits as it appears he might (and in Eddie's case does) win? Eddie

I liked Bob Rossen very much, and knew him quite well; in fact we collaborated for a time on an adaptation of something of mine which he was to direct and produce—but which got lost in his trouble with the House Committee. I should like to do something of the sort you ask, but I am now too deeply involved in another piece of work to shift gears. But I should like to put myself on record about his film of *All the King's Men*. I think that it is an extraordinarily good movie, with his very special touch. I can praise it, because it seems to me that when a movie is made from a novel the novel is merely raw material, the movie is a new creation, and the novelist can properly attract neither praise or blame for it. The movie, as a matter of fact, does not "mean" what I think my book meant. It is Bob's movie. On this point I may tell a tale. When the editing of the film was being done, Bob, out of courtesy, invited me in. He ran off several different endings, then asked me which I liked best. I said the second, or third, or whatever it was, but added that none of the endings had a meaning like my novel—this said in the friendliest way. And Bob replied: "Son, when you are dealing with American movies you can forget, when you get to the end, anything like what you call irony—then it's cops and robbers, cowboys and Indians." I look forward to seeing your issue.

—Very sincerely yours,
ROBERT PENN WARREN

can only flee from this twisted triumph, and return too late to prevent the gambler's final twisted triumph over the girl, who in a tormented act of "crippled" self-destruction has submitted to him and then killed herself.

The subsequent resolution of the film is not the equal of its climactic sequence. Although it is certainly likely that Eddie would have learned something from the girl's death, the details of his regeneration (much like those of Rossen's boxer and bull fighter) do not convince. The dialogue is weak, the motivation sticky, but most important the vehicle used to dramatize his new awareness damages the tenor of the statement. We know that what is important is the *way* that he is playing pool now, the *way* he is winning and why; but still what we have is the final sports-movie triumph, and it is just too distracting. Possibly such things as fights and pool games can best be employed as negative symbols of imperfect humanity; the realistic data and the concern for who wins seem to get in the way of would-be spiritual phoenixes.

There is no phoenix in *Lilith* (1964), Rossen's last, most pessimistic, and most technically daring depiction of the quest for the grail of identity and love. The film may have its flaws, but it is far more worthy than was allowed by American critics who tried to force it into containers of their own choosing. French critics saw it otherwise. In the annual poll of over fifty critics conducted by *Cahiers du Cinéma, Lilith* was sixth in the final composite listing of the best films of 1965. Its appreciation by the French is also a good indication of the direction of Rossen's technical development. For in seeking to convey a more complex and ambiguous sense of motive, character, and existence, he has followed the lead of the existentially oriented European directors, particularly the French. Still, I would claim that what he does in *Lilith* is not a complete substitution or a fashionable imitation, but an extension of his own developing approach to film realism, his concern for producing the strongest kind of impact from the reality of the film images and yet evoking with them more than just a perfect representation of the way something looks in real life, a one-for-one correspondence. In *Lilith* he has in part maintained his forceful basic realism and in part blurred it to create a visual metaphor for the blurring of reality that is at the core of the thematic concerns of the film. This blurring is more than a matter of half-light or of mists, or even of ambiguous images such as webs and bars and water, or catatonic postures that look like death. It is even more importantly a matter of structure and movement. The visual continuity is constantly dislocated, elliptical. Scenes begin and end abruptly, the usual establishing shots often excised. Cuts between and within scenes are often rapid, jarring to our sense of perspective and pattern. Time relationships between scenes are left undefined; even plot continuity is often oblique. What happens between scenes, for example, is often as important as what happens in them, and yet it is not completely explained away with back-tracking exposition. One constantly has to readjust, only to have the pattern shattered again. The net result is a dislocation of easy patterns of reality, of easy judgments of character and motivation.

Despite the title, the central character of the film is Vincent, another of Rossen's lonely seekers with a disturbed power that is even felt by the patients of the asylum he comes to work at. He has come with an unexamined desire to "help people directly," and his lunging, errant course is framed by two walks he makes through the asylum—his arrival and then the last retracing of his steps through the various states of madness of the place, "mad" now himself, until he stops his flight and asks, finally, for help. Through both of these walks, the screens and bars of the institution are used ambiguously: he sees others through them, trapped behind them and by themselves; we see him trapped behind them and, finally, by his own kind of madness.

Rossen establishes the contrast between the petty emptiness of the surrounding American small town and the mysterious beauty of the house of the mad by a contrast in photographic

tone: the hard realism of secondhand stores, darkly dreary houses, crowds at a fair, the cluttered cheapness of the home of an empty marriage, as opposed to the softened landscapes of the asylum. With recurrent images of water (certainly no great innovation in themselves) Rossen does effectively suggest the emotional turmoil, sexual passion, and twisted power which form the basic complex of states of consciousness in the film. The great attraction of Lilith's rapture and beauty, Lilith as love and joy, is captured in misty scenes of calm water and particularly in the scene of her wading in it. Yet even here, there is the narcissism of her looking at herself in the water and the foreboding of the obscuring mist. The relationship of Lilith's sexual passion to a destructive power is captured in the scenes of the hard-running falls, scenes which are used in plot development as well as in symbolic suggestion (her daring of the boy who eventually kills himself). Later, it is the placing of a doll face down in the water of an aquarium that is the first indication that, within the enigmatic mask of his face, Vincent has crossed irrevocably into uncontrollable, destructive emotionality.

Jean Seberg in LILITH

If Vincent has emerged confused and potentially warped from the stereotypes of the typical American setting, his last, brief return to it, to the loveless "normality" of his former girl's home, consolidates his own doom. Vaguely seeking some kind of help from her, he finds her emotionally as tawdry and dishevelled as her surroundings, as lost as he is; disappointed, frightened, he can offer her no sympathy, but coldly spurns her offering of herself.

This offering of her body and his refusal is part of the central syndrome of the film. The crippled love and sex of *The Hustler* are here separated from the desire for money and power that usually have produced their destructive distortions in Rossen films. The American background is there, but the forces of destruction are this time more personal, and thus more universal. The American boy-man here does not, cannot know himself and his deepest promptings. What he thinks he is doing is never categorically defined into separate stages of needing or helping or using. To him the rapture of the Lilith of the calm water is a symbol of fulfillment, and yet he knows, and is also attracted to, the passion of the Lilith of the torrents. This driven, demanding rapture and loving of Lilith cannot be pure; it is inextricably bound up with destructiveness and domination, breaks through the limits of reality into regions of delusion. And it is also present in Vincent. Whatever she may do to him or force him to do, is potentially within him. In both, the desire for the rapture of love has been warped. In a scene that maintains the confusion of innocence and seduction by focusing on the mixture of precocious, intuitive knowledge and incomprehension in the face of the boy, Vincent watches Lilith's provocation of a young boy and then declares his love for her.

He follows her to her tryst with her female lover (may even have intentionally allowed them to consummate it) and then vents his aroused lust upon her on the same straw. In a scene that is typical of Rossen's forcing the viewer to catch up with and pierce the meaning of what is going on, Vincent helps the lovers feign attendance at a movie as a camouflage for another tryst, and again is depicted with intensified desire afterwards. Finally, out of the welter of his uncontrollable passions, he deceives the young man whom Lilith is going to torment him with next, the young man who trusts him, and produces the boy's suicide. Unable to bear what he has done, he turns to Lilith for assurance of her complicity and succeeds only in driving her over the ambiguous no man's land of love and hate into the death of catatonic isolation.

This scheme of reversal was prefigured in *They Came to Cordura*, but in the difference between the two is the distance Rossen had come. In *Cordura* the coward becomes the realistically brave, the courageous weak. He can choose this bravery and arrive at sanity (Cordura). In *Lilith* the normal, sympathetic helper becomes the abnormal, destructive seeker of help. But this time, the patness of the previous reversal is broken. His normality, his motives are not so certain and precise. He cannot heroically choose his course; and the abnormal become even more so. The nature of love is left enigmatic, a welter of irreconcilable opposites; it is not finally classified for our neat, bounded response as was the nature of courage, or the nature of economic corruption. Why we do what we do as we seek to define ourselves is left an awful mystery—a rarity indeed for an American film and particularly an American film on the "problem" of mental illness. It was indicative of the usual short-sighted views of Rossen's career that for this last important effort, all he got from American critics was a patronizing pat on the head or a kick in the pants to send him back to his pugs and pool sharks.

RICHARD WHITEHALL

The Heroes Are Tired

Until late 1939 my home town had but one movie house, a squat, ugly, hard-seated place that seemed to have been varnished, inside and out, in gravy browning. Even then, in the late thirties, it was antiquated, with an inadequate sound system probably hurriedly installed in 1930 and never inspected after. Some of the films might just as well have been in Urdu for all that came over the speaker. Like so many of its type, fleapits, it lingered on into the early fifties when the deathblow of television ended what must have been an increasingly unprofitable operation.

This was England but it could just as well have been small-town America, except that we got all those English hick comedies with vaudeville comedians which never made it across the Atlantic. Audience demands were probably much the same: so long as it moved, no one worried or got too critical. Thus westerns and slapstick filled out the programs, and in that happy darkness I came to love the movies.

Ours must have been last-run in the area for, by the time they reached us, they were practically reissues. Although Gene Autry was western box-office star number one, with Roy

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Rogers coming up fast, the great centaurs who galloped through my youth were the old indestructibles of an earlier generation, Buck Jones on Silver King, Ken Maynard on Tarzan. The slim-hipped no-assed cowboy was still a thing of the future. The Maynards, Ken and Kermit, Hoot Gibson, Buck Jones, were built like blacksmiths, iron men who didn't bruise easy.

Autry twangling away on his guitar, Rogers carrying his fancy shirting unsoiled through a minimum of action seemed, when I finally caught up with them, poor substitutes for the slambang of the older stars. Some still carried on with a minimum of fuss—The Three Mesquiteers, Charles Starrett, John Wayne, Johnny Mack Brown—but mostly there seemed to be rhythm on the range. The legacies of W. S. Hart and Tom Mix had all but been spent and the genre seemed to be in its declining years. By the time Rex Allen appeared, not only singing but yodelling, the western had reached its lowest ebb.

Easy to cast Autry and Rogers as the villains of the genre, not so easy to define wherein lay their vast appeal. Joseph Kane, who directed the early starring films of both, believes the amalgamation of musical and western tapped that vast Southern audience which has kept "Grand Ole Opry" a standard for years. Autry who, in the beginning, regarded his films purely as vehicles for his songs, was popular Country and Western years before that became the vogue thing in music, and Republic later carefully built Roy Rogers on this same audience appeal. Kane, who directed both Three Mesquiteers and John Wayne series during the thirties, before going on to become Republic's leading producer-director of westerns in the late forties and fifties, regards his Autry and Rogers films as musicals rather than westerns.

These musical fantasies in a western setting, often built around popular song titles, were designed to appeal to small-town family audiences rather than to the dyed-in-the-wool western fan. Other producers, less astute than Republic, merely turned out a hybrid musical-western which, through its lack of action, soon alienated its audience. Thus, apart from Autry and Rogers who both knew a successful formula when they saw one, none of the other singing cowboys made a lasting impression and even in the late thirties, when Autry and Rogers were still building a following, the average musical-western was beginning to meet so much resistance that at least one series was eventually released with its musical interludes cut out.

Kane told me that when he began directing the Autry's in 1935 his budgets were around $15,000 per picture but, by the time he relinquished the series, this had increased to $100,000. This was far more than an independent studio could afford to spend on a series designed for the small-town and rural communities where the western series pictures had their main acceptance and, indeed, I remember seeing one of the mid-forties Roy Rogers' at what was then—maybe it still is—the largest movie theater in Britain, Green's Playhouse in Glasgow.

Thus, although the singing cowboy seems to dominate the western in the late thirties and early forties, there is a lot of illusion mixed up in it. Even Autry and Rogers, when their popular appeal was on the wane, tried to get back into the straight western bracket (Rogers had earlier played a straight role, not too well, in the 1940 *Dark Command,* a Quantrill story). Autry's *Cow Town* (1950) was a forerunner of the fifties "barbed wire" westerns and told, with semidocumentary overtones, of the coming of barbed wire and the end of free range. Rogers' *Pals of the Golden West* (1953), played straighter than usual, dealt with an attempt to smuggle cattle infected with foot-and-mouth disease across the Mexican border. These were a long way from *Sioux City Sue* (1947), the oddball singing western of them all, in which Autry was a cattleman taken to Hollywood to provide the accompaniment to a series of animated cartoons. But by the fifties it was too late. There was only television left. Autry and Rogers were among the first defectors from the large screen to the small where the Rogers TV films were amongst the shoddiest

ever ground out for that medium.

In Robert C. Roman's review (*Film Quarterly,* Winter 1963-64) of that indispensable book (for its facts, not its opinions) *The Western* by Everson and Fenin, the authors are faulted for devoting too much space to the films of people like Ken Maynard and Buck Jones at the expense of a longer analysis of *Stagecoach, Red River,* and *Track of the Cat.* The book is at its weakest when its authors try to do just that (they treat *The Oklahoma Kid* as a serious contribution to the genre, which is more than Cagney and Bogart were doing) but its greatest flaw is that it passes over the last fifteen years, the richest and most expressive in the western's history, almost as epilogue. Be that as it may, for much of its history the western has existed almost solely through its stars, galloping through a certain pre-sold number of subjects per season much in the way the TV western does today.

The cowboy, whether in dime novel or movie, has always been the hero of the inarticulate, for in his world of moral simplicities all solutions were drastically simple. There was much death but no pain in the pre-Freudian western; a quick right to the jaw or a slug of lead through the heart solved everything. There was a careful avoidance of any sort of attitude towards society. No wonder, as Hans Habe pointed out in *Anatomy of Hatred,* the particular mystique of the old west has such a strong appeal to the American political right. Simplistically, here are all the elements of a contemporary right-wing mythology (the Germans had to mess around with the *Niebelungenleid)* in which men of noble intent do what they must do for the good of their souls and the salvation of the community.

The western is the folk-hero of our time and, as such, has been almost immune to criticism. So much so that Shane, for instance, that archtype western figure of tradition, came out so idealized he could almost have been a dry run for George Stevens' Christus figure. More truly than Shane, though, the classical western hero of the fifties was in Budd Boetticher's *Buchanan Rides Alone,* riding into town under the main titles and, after becoming involved in the township's dispute, riding out again under the end title. Here was the western figure of mythology; Boetticher refused to inflate his material in the way Stevens did in *Shane,* or Zinnemann in *High Noon,* or Wyler in *The Big Country*—the three most over-elaborated westerns of the fifties. (He and his films remain little known; he now lives in Mexico, and sometimes lectures on films to the new generation at the University.)

This sense of noble destiny, the inviolate nature of his own code of honor which the westerner will be called upon to defend, is slowly being replaced by a sense of tragic destiny. The small town cleaned up represents just that much of a shrinkage in the untamed land of the frontier, and the westerner has acquired enough historical perspective to understand, and even to accept, this. "Times are changing, but there'll be enough towns to last my lifetime," the Henry Fonda character has to say in *Warlock,* a film full of strange tortured relationships based on the Wyatt Earp–Doc Holiday friendship; the westerner has become explicit about his position as a man without a future. This is principally a development of the fifties, although W. S. Hart had begun to accept the inevitable historical process in his later films. "Boys! It's the last of the west!" Hart had exclaimed as, surrounded by his riders, he stood on a hill and watched the ranchers moving their herds out of the Cherokee Strip preparatory to the great land race sequence in *Tumbleweeds* (1925), a work filled with a magnificent romantic nostalgia for the vanishing freedom. "Man and beast, both blissfully unaware their reign is over," is, indeed, the very first subtitle in the film.

For years the western was short, tense, economical, pared down to essentials as it presented its moral fables in terms of the action, the fights, the chases, the final showdown in the dust and heat of noon on main street. The world divided automatically into good and bad, and no man who rode a white horse could be a villain. Even then, although he refused to philosophize about it, a hero had to make his

Randolph Scott in BUCHANAN RIDES ALONE

decisions within a rigid code of honor. These things were expected, and the western concerned itself with how it would be done, but at the beginning of the fifties the "how" changed to "why," and a saddle-weary genre was revitalized.

In a *corrida de toros*, so the aficionados tell us (and I don't know that I altogether believe them) is played out the whole tragic drama of humanity, its moments of pride, of cruelty, of grace, of domination and of death, a symbolic ritual of the strength and weakness, the nobility and corruption of man; and much the same thing may be said of the modern western. Perhaps this is the *corrida* of the non-Latin with the violence more and more becoming a philosophic comment. Almost by accident the western has lately stumbled upon one of the fundamental problems of modern society: To what extent can the individual maintain his independence and, if he can, what is the price he must pay? The archtype western hero of the sixties is thus a very different figure from the archtype western hero of the thirties.

In his celebrated essay "The Westerner," written twelve years ago, Robert Warshow saluted the unchanging virtues of the western hero in a world where he is "the last gentleman, and the movies which over and over again tell his story are probably the last art form in which the concept of honor retains its strength." From Warshow's study one would hardly gather its author was chronicling a westerner already in transition. "There is little cruelty in western movies, and little sentimentality," he could write, but by 1954 that was no longer true. The Victorian sentimentality of Ford (and why should we deny to Ford the right to Dickensian attitudes now generally allowed to Griffith) had been given free play in such films as *The Three Godfathers,* while cruelty had certainly seeped into most westerns by that time. The violence which had for so long been stylized into "Bang, bang, you're dead" had become more brutal and punishing. The days when hero and heavy could slug it out leaving nary a mark behind seemed already dead. By this time many westerns had departed the old traditions of painless violence. Take *Ramrod* (1947), for instance, where the action was still patterned to the old formulas but where an attempt had been made to turn stereotypes into characters.

Produced by Harry Sherman, responsible for years of Hopalong Cassidy's, *Ramrod* was that old cattlemen-versus-sheepherders theme. It shows how violence begets violence until both sides are soiled in the struggle. Neither is the

violence picturesque (one man loses his sight), and the brutalizing effect of continued violence is shown or at least suggested (the heroine is coarsened by it). The law, for once not venal or contemptible, stresses justice and integrity but the sheriff, caught between the warring factions, is finally shot down and, when at last he lies in the dust, is seen to be "just a tired old man." Joel McCrea, amiable and likable hero (a reformed drunkard) is as gritty and purposeful as he's always been, but the weight of guilt and bitterness and betrayal weigh heavily on him, and he ends the film in complete disillusion.

Warshow recognized that "the outlines of the western movie have become less smooth, its background more drab. The sun still beats upon the streets, but the camera is likely now to take advantage of the illumination to seek out more closely the shabbiness of building and furniture, the loose worn hang of the clothing, the wrinkles and dirt of the faces." But he seems not to have realized that such a basic shift of emphasis must inevitably alter the whole conception of the westerner himself, so that such heroes as The Virginian, whom Warshow could salute as the archtype westerner, came to be no longer acceptable in these more realistic surroundings.

The Virginian, indeed, had already begun to look archaic and faintly ridiculous when Joel McCrea had impersonated him nine years before Warshow's essay was published, in what the main titles of the fourth (1945) version described as "Owen Wister's American classic." That this version was badly directed and, apart from the playing of McCrea and Barbara Britton, generally much inferior to Victor Fleming's 1930 version, is beside the point. By 1945 The Virginian's unquestioning acceptance of the old codes of honor, hanging his best friend (regretfully) when that friend transgressed into cattle rustling, still possessed a certain quiet charm; but it looked particularly guileless when placed against *The Renegades,* made the same year, where a somewhat similar friendship, this time between a young doctor and a weak-willed young outlaw who tries but is unable to reform, was treated rather less sentimentally.

"Killing your own kin comes hard, no matter who they are," the young outlaw had remarked in *The Renegades* after refusing to turn a gun on his father and brother. Twelve years later, the pendlum had swung so far that ex-Virginian Gary Cooper could gun down every surviving member of his outlaw family and still be presented heroically as a *Man of the West* (1958). That same year Cooper, in *The Hanging Tree,* could play a black-clad doctor feared and hated by superstitious frontiersmen and, in some quasireligious symbolism at the end, almost lynched, in a way that only a few years earlier would have been the sole prerogative of the villain. (By a similar act of metamorphosis the villain of the original *Virginian,* Trampas, has been transformed into one of the multi-heroes of the TV series.)

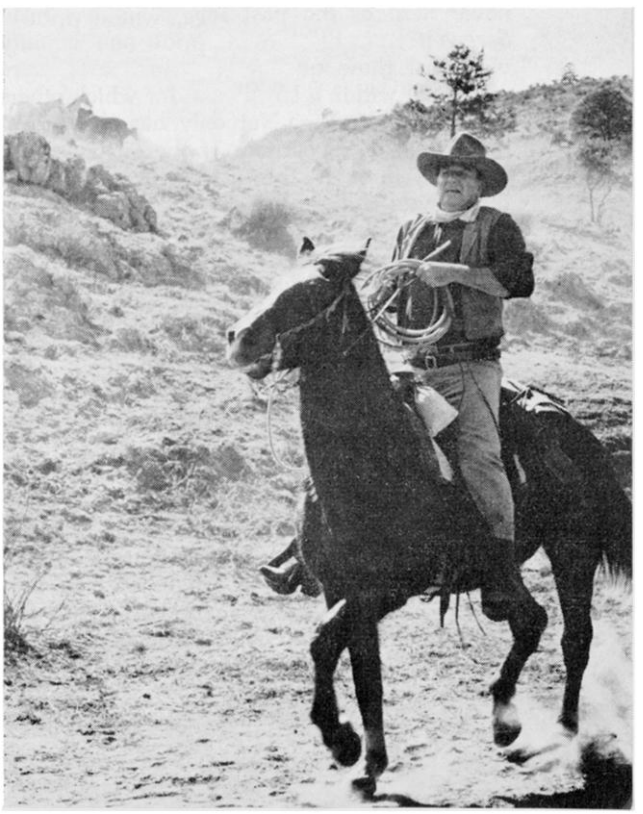
Man of the West is but one of a series of first-rate westerns directed by Anthony Mann through the fifties in which layers of meaning are peeled away from the theme. "I want to kill every last one of those Tobins, and that makes me just like they are," says Cooper, the reformed outlaw whose past catches up with him. ("There's a point where you either grow up and become a human being or you rot," he says to the girl trying to explain his rejection of a life of brutality and violence; and his particular theme, of a man achieving his true stature, is basic to most of Mann's westerns.) But this is much more than a drama of retribution or retrogression. Civilization itself is shown as being the thinnest of veneers, always in danger of breaking down. In one scene of great savagery, a fight between Cooper and Jack Lord, this thin veneer crumbles as completely as it does in *Lord of the Flies,* but it is emphasized too in the animal cries of a dying deaf-mute (Royal Dano) and in the whole climax of the film, set in a ghost town abandoned by all but a terrified Mexican woman and her husband.

The ghost town and the brutalized band of outlaws led by mad old Dock Tobin (Lee J. Cobb) are reminders of earlier days that were

already history, and Cooper turns his back on them without regret—returning to the settled community, the law and order, the values to which he has chosen to conform. (His action, at the end of *High Noon,* of dropping his badge into the dust, is a rejection of these same community virtues—which didn't leave Cooper's westerner much to hold onto.) This conflict between old and new and the abilities of men to adapt to changed conditions is the real theme of *Man of the West* just as it has been at the heart of a number of other westerns of the fifties and sixties. Sometimes, as in Peckinpah's *Ride the High Country* (1962) it has been used with subtlety, discretion, and great psychological insight. In others, as in John Farrow's *Ride, Vaquero* (1952) it was just symbolical overlay, superficial and unconvincing, with Anthony Quinn put up as spokesman for the old ways—and doing it so well he swamps the movie with his nostalgias—while Howard Keel represents the new.

As the western townships became more drab the heroes became more world-weary. Increasing age which had defeated W. S. Hart in an earlier day (and Hart's romancing of his leading ladies probably looks less grotesque in an age which can accept Wayne battling Stewart for Vera Miles in *Liberty Valance* than it did when the century was younger) has now become something of a badge of authority. In the TV westerns youth still has its fling, but the movie heroes are an aging aggregate of men with lines like the contours on a relief map etched across their faces: faces weathered and lived in, faces with memories rather than hopes. Hemingway once said that life only had meaning when death was waiting in the wings, and on these men grey hair is a symbol of mortality. These are men who have survived in a hostile land. The totemic face of John Wayne is more convincingly in the center of the western myth in *The Sons of Katie Elder* than it ever was in the good old uncomplicated days when bad men were trying to dispose of him by placing poisoned needles in his saddle—as they did in *The Man from Utah,* a 1935 quickie. Wayne, indeed, has become the most distinctive figure thrown up by the western movie since W. S. Hart. No one comes through a batwing door with more authority, no one else handles his side-arms as if he really meant to chip a piece out of someone. Even more than Gary Cooper he has toughened into a composite of the western hero.

There was more to Hart than the wooden absoluteness of his virtue, which is all Warshow will allow him. There was fidelity to detail and dedication to truth, even if it were truth as he saw it rather than it actually was, and Wayne has this same absolute rightness in the things he does. As an actor he works within a fairly narrow range but, like Cary Grant, he can do to perfection the things he does well, whether it be putting on Nathan Brittles' spectacles in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* or blazing magnificently into the hatred that consumes John Elder after his brother has been shot down in *The Sons of Katie Elder.* Within the character he can play for comedy *(The Comancheros, McLintock),* obsession *(The Searchers),* or hero-



John Wayne in THE SONS OF KATIE ELDER

ism *(The Alamo)* without losing the essential quality of the myth he is creating.

That Hemingway remark has, of course, nothing to do with men dying in their beds, but is directed at men courting danger and death, and it now applies to the westerner as much as to the Hemingway hero. In the days of *The Virginian* the westerner was invulnerable, but now the hero is as mortal as his enemies, closer to the wounded hero of Hemingway than the virtuous hero of Owen Wister; he is more *Hud* than *Shane*. Pain and death have now become part of his heritage and in one movie at least, *The Left-Handed Gun,* death was presented as awful and agonizing rather than swift and merciful—which may be why so many western buffs dislike Arthur Penn's film so strongly.

The western hero, unaided by the supernatural, must now know for what he is prepared to die and his struggle has become, not as it used to be, against exterior forces of lawlessness, but more and more against some deficiency or blemish in himself. The most truly noble hero of the past few years has been *Sergeant Rutledge,* whose pride and nobility were just those qualities, because they were contained within a black skin, for which others would destroy him. Not only has this meant the virtual disappearance of the virtuous hero (several, through the fifties, even fathered illegitimate children—in *Passion* and *Return to Warbow),* it has also meant the virtual elimination of the old-style heavy. Is Glenn Ford the villain of *3.10 to Yuma,* or Anthony Quinn of *Last Train from Gun Hill?* Both oppose the hero, but only by a long stretch of the imagination could they be classified as villains. The final irony is contained in *Mail Order Bride* (1963) where the so-called villain, mainly due to faulty casting, is a much more sympathetic figure than the hero, and the final shootdown becomes not an act of vengeance or retribution but merely one of petulance.

Certainly this change of emphasis has led to some pretty peculiar experiments in psychology, and the Freudians have been in full cry across the prairie. All sorts of phallic symbolisms have been inserted, and even more have been found there by amateur psychiatrists, so many indeed that the westerner almost qualifies for some private Pompeiian museum of his own. (Yes, I know "Dad" Longworth's mashing of Rio's trigger finger in *One-Eyed Jacks* was a castration symbol, but when the same thing happens to *The Man from Laramie* it's the means whereby the central character becomes something more than the extension of a gun.) As an anthology of psychological clichés *Showdown at Boot Hill* (1958) is in a class of its own. Fluent direction by Gene Fowler, Jr., and good performances, notably by Charles Bronson, couldn't nullify scripting deficiencies which shared so many nervous tics between the characters it finally became self-defeating. The heroine is frigid because her mother runs the local dancehall/whorehouse. (A frigid heroine seems to have been a late-fifties innovation; there was another one in *Gunfight at Dodge City,* made the same year.) The hero had become a bounty hunter because, as a short man, this is the only way he can get to dominate others. Even the small-part players were all replete with psychological blocks and traumas.

So the heroes, not only of *Showdown at Boot Hill* but of many westerns, nurse their wounds, fragmented men. The shining, unconvincing goodness of Shane, the Spirit of the West, so wraith-like as to be almost metaphysical, has given way increasingly to men who feed off their hatreds. Alan Ladd, the golden westerner of *Shane,* turned into the half-mad if smiling murderer of *One Foot in Hell* (1959), another western with a superfluity of psychological quirks. But the passing of Sir Galahad is not to be regretted; he had begun to stagnate in his interminable myth. Now the westerner is of the company of tragic heroes; to him a defeat has come to count as a defeat only if it brings with it a loss of self-respect. Joel McCrea spoke for this new band of western heroes when he said, in *Ride the High Country,* "I want to enter my own house justified."

WESTERNS

The western, as has so often been pointed out, is the coming together of a mythology with its best means of expression, for this is still the most persuasive of the modern myths. It is not, and never has been a world of historical accuracy but rather one of romantic fantasy. And yet, even at its most fantastical, this world still has its roots, paradoxically, in historical fact. Few incidents in western movies are so bizarre their counterparts cannot be found in history, and yet this is clearly as much a world of epic myth as Icelandic saga, *Beowolf, chanson de geste,* or Arthurian romance. For as long as there has been a frontier there has been a myth of the frontier; even in their own day, frontiersmen became legend and the subject of song and story—Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett and, in the great expansionist epoch of the nineteenth century, a great range of heroes as invincible and imperishable as those of Nordic saga. Not only men but categories of men—the Indian fighter, the lawman, the cowboy, the cavalryman, the outlaw—were assimilated into the legend of the west.

"This is the west, when the legend conflicts with the facts, print the legend," the newspaperman (Edmond O'Brien) ruled in *Liberty Valance.* He echoed the advice Major Frank North had given William Cody when the latter was organizing his Wild West Show: "To make it go you want a show of illusion, not realism." From the very beginning the heroes were romanticized, seen as larger than life. Thus that magnificent lament for Davy Crockett when news came through of his heroic stand at the Alamo. "There's a great rejoicin' among the bears of Kaintuck, and the alligators of the Mississippi rolls up their shinin' ribs to the sun, and has grown so fat and lazy they will hardly move out of the way for a steamboat. The rattlesnakes come out of thar holes and frolic within ten feet of the clearings, and the foxes goes to sleep in the goosepens. It is bekos the rifle of Crockett is silent forever, and the print of his mocassins is found no more in our woods."

A few films have tried to penetrate the legend and touch on historical truth but the legend, I fear, has been too strong for them. Delmer Daves' *Cowboy* (1956) was a not unsuccessful attempt to strip the glamor from life on the cattle trail between Texas and Kansas, and show a cowboy's life in something like the harsh reality, but in the end its aim was less sure than a work like Hawks' *Red River* (1947) which works within the legend rather than against it.

Glenn Ford and Jack Lemmon in Daves' COWBOY

The two most dedicated attempts to get at the truth were almost schizophrenic in their uses and avoidance of the myth. Old photographs of the pioneers, ineffably stiff in their nineteenth-century suitings and attitudes, frozen into perpetual melancholy by the camera lens, are a long way from today's idealization of them. Few western movie heroes have attempted even a rough approximation of them (Henry Fonda and Gregory Peck did it, even down to the buffalo moustaches, in *My Darling Clementine* and *The Gunfighter* respectively). That TV compilation of old photographs *The Real West* (1961) came surprisingly close to making this vanished world live again, but in using Gary Cooper as narrator, sometimes stiffly on-camera, many of the points it was trying to make were nullified. Cooper was too inextricably a figure from the familiar fantasy world. Similarly Elmo William's *Cowboy* (1952), a too-little-known documentary on the

daily life of a cowboy, lushed up its soundtrack with romantic cowboy ballads that worked strongly for the myth the visuals were trying to dissipate.

The legend is too strong for its detractors, the epic myth has become too much part of the universal heritage—for this fragment of history no longer belongs exclusively to Americans but has become a universal lexicon. Ever since William Cody found that his ideas for a staged reconstruction of the old west could not be contained within the proscenium arches of his day, the western has been impatient of limitations, and has demanded limitless vistas of its creators. Undoubtedly one of the factors in the revitalization of the western has been the introduction of the wide screen. Always the genre has been trying to break from standard screen ratios. As early as 1926 when John Ford's *The Iron Horse* was shown in New York the final reel was magnified to four times ordinary size by the Lorenzo del Riccio (Magnascope) process. In 1930 *Billy the Kid* had been shot in Realife (widescreen) and *The Big Trail* designed for presentation on the Grandeur (enlarged) screen.

For various reasons none of these technical experiments caught on until CinemaScope became the greatest innovation since sound. CinemaScope liberated the western almost entirely from the sound stage. The amount of back projection and faked exteriors in pre-CinemaScope films is now depressing to look at, and has dated such films as *The Ox-Bow Incident* pretty badly. The only recent western noticeably studio-bound was, surprisingly, Ford's *Liberty Valance,* which even went in for interior-exteriors. It enabled the director to better relate man to nature, to set him harmoniously in the landscape and to indicate the shaping forces of environment. Boetticher, still the most underrated of great American directors, was particularly adept at this, but Delmer Daves' *The Last Wagon* (1956) is another superb example.

Looking back to the beginning, the major credit for the shaping of the western must be given to William Cody, the forerunner of all the western stars, the first one concientiously to live his legend for the public, gaudily exploiting the myth that men like Ned Buntline had built about him. "He brought the western frontier and the Indians to the sidewalks of New York. . . . [he brought] the spirit of the west, freedom, adventure, and fair play," says the off-screen commentator in Wellman's *Buffalo Bill* (1942), a souped-up biography which pays lip service to the legend but turns a blind eye on truth. Yet Cody, more than any man, established and defined the tradition and the scale of a western presentation the cinema was eventually to take over. The program of almost any one of Cody's shows reads like a synopsis for a big-scale western movie. Just as the Richard Talmadge train robbery in *How the West Was Won* was *The Great Train Robbery* refurbished to a high peak of excitement, so that whole underrated Cinerama western was, in part, a sixties version of a Cody spectacle.

There had been other wild west shows before Cody organized his Rough Riders of the World (both P. T. Barnum and Wild Bill Hickok had experimented and failed) and, in his own day, he had plenty of rivals. Don Russell in *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960) estimates that between forty and fifty other western shows were on the road during the existence of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. It was from one of his principal rivals, the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Wild West Show, that both Tom Mix and Buck Jones (as well as Mabel Normand) came to the silent cinema. A few nostalgic reconstructions of these shows have been made *(Annie Oakley, Incendiary Blonde, Annie Get Your Gun)* and the abovementioned good, if wildly inaccurate, screen biography of Cody, Wellman's *Buffalo Bill.* Unjustly overshadowed by *The Ox-Bow Incident, Buffalo Bill* has stood the test of time rather better than the more renowned work. Its fine battle sequence by Otto Brower was lifted complete into several later Fox westerns, and the film contains many of the elements

which were to bring *Broken Arrow* such great popular success eight years later—a sympathetic look at Indian culture and customs and, in Anthony Quinn's Yellow Hand, the creation of a brave and honorable man.

The so-called "adult western" is usually dated from *Broken Arrow* (1950) but this is more a matter of convenience than of history. There are a number of pre-*Broken Arrow* westerns, which, in restrospect, seem to belong more to the next decade than to their own time: *Along Came Jones* (1944), *Canyon Passage* (1946), *Ramrod* (1948), *Four Faces West* (1948), *The Man from Colorado* (1949). Even *The Outlaw* and *Duel in the Sun,* whatever one may think of their qualities as westerns, have been insufficiently appreciated as attempts to break with formula—though in their direction madness eventually lay, in the final shoot-out between two girls in Allan Dwan's *The Woman They Almost Lynched* (1951) and in low-grade quickies such as *Jesse James' Women, Five Bold Women,* and the like.

Broken Arrow, like most pioneering, has suffered in that its innovations were soon turned into commonplaces by the movies that came after, of which *Apache* and *Run of the Arrow* were by far the best. A subject originally offered to and turned down by John Ford (who, it is reported, objected to the love story which is central to this theme of understanding between white and Indian) the movie now seems lyrical but fairly undramatic. One can only wonder, though, what would have happened to the "adult western" had Ford accepted this assignment. Identified for so long with the cavalry, he seems to have adopted the old cavalryman's notion that all Indians must be regarded as "hostiles." *Cheyenne Autumn,* that most magnificent of nullities, never once looks at its Indians as human beings, but sees them only as splendid picturesques—just as, earlier, there had been a curious withholding of sympathy from what was potentially the most interesting and sympathetic character in *My Darling Clementine,* Doc Holliday's part-Indian girl, played by Linda Darnell.

Even more pointed is the curious division of sympathies in *Two Rode Together* (1961). One of Ford's lesser westerns, lacking the sweep and power of *The Searchers* (1956) to which it bears a close family resemblance, *Two Rode Together* is the semi-comic story of a mission to rescue some white settlers captured by Indians. The heroine (Linda Cristal), forced to live as a squaw and then shunned by the respectable ladies of the frontier because of it —a character similar to the one played by Bibi Anderson in the recent *Duel at Diablo*—is treated with understanding and compassion. So is the small role of an older woman, believed dead, who prefers to remain with the Indians rather than have her family know of what she regards as her degradation. But a white youth, raised as an Indian until forcibly returned to his white parents, is shown only as an inarticulate, practically sub-human, savage. In the end, in one of the strangest solutions in the whole of the genre, the boy knifes his mother; the other settlers, suspecting he'll never make it as an all-American boy, promptly lynch him.

Ford's conceptions of the Indian are in the older traditions of the western, but *Broken Arrow* was by no means the beginning of a new tradition, although widely saluted as such when it first appeared. There had been sporadic outbreaks of pro-Indian movies both in the mid-twenties and the mid-thirties, but *Broken Arrow* was the first one to win wide public acceptance—so much so that Jeff Chandler played Cochise again through *The Battle of Apache Pass* (1951) before dying, unbilled as I remember, in the opening sequence of *Taza,*

BROKEN ARROW

REPRISAL

Son of Cochise (1954). Until *Broken Arrow* the Indian case has usually gone by default, and the Indian hadn't been very happy about it. As early as March, 1911, an Indian delegation had gone to Washington to protest to President Taft against the false portrayal of Indian life and character in the movies and to ask for Congressional investigation and regulation. After *Broken Arrow* the Indian was rehabilitated with a vengeance, and the most unlikely movie stars put on war paint.

George Sherman, a prolific and undistinguished director who has done occasional good work when the runes were in his favor, seemed to specialize for a while in pro-Indian subjects, directing one of the better ones (*Battle of Powder River,* 1951), one of the worst (*Chief Crazy Horse,* 1955), and one of the most interesting if least known in the entire cycle (*Reprisal,* 1956). This last was a taut, well-made, if comparatively minor western built around the dilemma of a young, part-Indian rancher, who was attempting to pass as white. Probably the most consistently anti-white statement ever to come out of a major studio, *Reprisal* shows all the white characters, with the exception of the sheriff, as prejudiced or venal or worse. In its final two minutes the movie attempts a complete *volte face,* but I don't know who would be fooled by this, and the apology is in any case too superficial to blot out or to atone for what has gone before.

The Indian has been a troubling presence in many western movies since *Broken Arrow.* In *Arrowhead* (1953) the conflict between red man and white was reduced to its simplest terms, confronting a red-hating Indian scout (Charlton Heston), once the adopted son of an Apache medicine man, with Toriano (Jack Palance), the Apache chief who returns from studying in the east consumed with anti-white hatred. One nonsensical sequence had Heston forcing Palance, at gun point, to become his blood brother. The script was based on the life of Al Seiber, an Indian scout killed in 1907, but this looked like wildest fiction. Otherwise the irrational nature of racial prejudice was starkly presented, with Katy Jurado giving one of her most vivid performances as a Mexican girl spying for the Apaches, dying with a curse on her lips.

From this generic off-shoot were to come two of the most interesting westerns of the early sixties, *Flaming Star* (1960) and *Invitation to a Gunfighter* (1964), exploring the dilemma of a man born between cultures and unsure where his allegiance lay. This wasn't a new subject even when *The Savage* tackled it in 1952, where Sidney Boehm's imaginative screenplay is directed for very little by George Marshall, that veteran director whose westerns are usually worth looking at. I even remember, as a boy, following Buck Jones religiously through the innumerable episodes of *White*

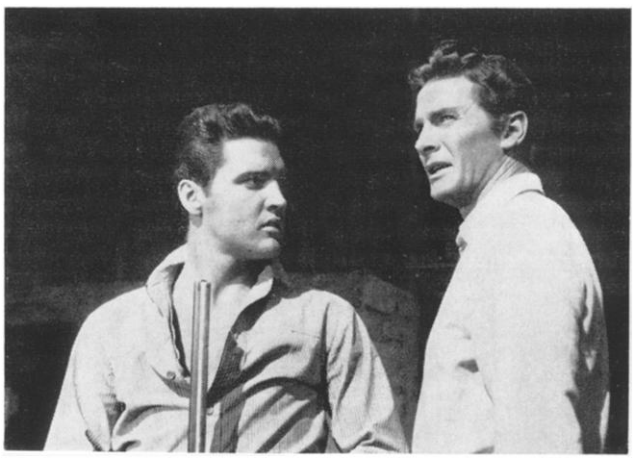
Eagle, a serial in which he played the title role, subject to all kinds of humiliations because of his blood, until the happy ending of the final chapter when it turned out he was really white after all.

Flaming Star and *Invitation to a Gunfighter* were more subtle than that, and neither jibs at a tragic ending. The former, directed by Don Seigal, is a minor masterpiece, although the casting of Elvis Presley in the central role made most of the critics look down their noses at the movie. That he was too raw an actor completely to explore the nuances of his complex role, mattered, in the final analysis, surprisingly little, since the character of the half-Indian half-white boy never really comes to grips with his own situation, but is buffetted from one heritage to the other before rejecting both. Huston's *The Unforgiven* (1960) lacked *Flaming Star's* sense of balance and, apart from the sequence in the sandstorm, its directional bravura. The problem of Audrey Hepburn's loyalties, divided between Kiowas and her adopted white family, was pushed from center, where it should have been, to periphery, where it simply refused to work. In allowing the Indians no views at all the film diminished its scale, and its solution—Audrey happily shooting down her Indian kin—was weird to say the least.

Invitation to a Gunfighter is as complex as *Flaming Star* if rather less successful. At times it's as ballsed-up as any other Stanley Kramer production, and its rather obvious symbolism is alien to the previous work of its director, Richard Wilson. (His 1955 *Man with a Gun* had much the same approach and atmosphere as Peckinpah's *Ride the High Country,* and shared the same scenarist, N. B. Stone, Jr.) The central figure is a Creole gunfighter, Jules Gaspard d'Estaing, known as Jewel (Yul Brynner), retained by the local banker to rid a small southwestern town of the one man who fought for the Confederacy. Half-way through, Jewel is revealed as part-Negro, son of a slave mother, his aim nothing less than the destruction of all the forces of hypocrisy and greed in the world.

A powerful and fascinating variation, adapted from a TV play in the *Playhouse 90* series, the film's total commercial failure seems to have discouraged any further experiments along these lines. Instead there's been a sudden rash of comic westerns. Producers want to have it both ways—to use the traditions of the western and to mock them in the same breath. *Along Came Jones,* with its inventive Nunnally Johnson script, did it rather better all those years ago, but the success of *Cat Ballou,* carried along on a few good jokes and the marvellous comic disintegration of Lee Marvin, has set a new and one hopes short-lived fashion. Even *Stagecoach* comes out funny in its remake. If you can't join 'em, knock 'em. *Cat Ballou,* it is worth remembering, was hawked around for years as a straight western with no takers, until someone had the bright idea of making a burlesque out of it.

The western defiantly setting out to be different *(Cat Ballou, Johnny Guitar, Rancho Notorius)* may be, and often has been, an agreeable side-dish, but nothing more. The best explorations have kept within the firmly established traditions. A basic reliance on traditional structures has, far from hampering a director, given him a framework within which to work yet, at the same time, allowing the widest possible scope for individualist interpretation. Within this framework it is even possible to show how a man can be trapped in the myth without really losing part of the myth in the process. "You don't stand up to glory," sobs the pansy Easterner when he finds Billy the Kid in *The Left-Handed Gun* (1958—another



FLAMING STAR

TV adaptation) a very different being from the knight-errant of the dime novels. Similarly, in *The True Story of Jesse James* (1956) the myth was shown as a straight-jacket around its central character ("Jesse James is the shooting spokesman for everyone whose life is quietly desperate").

The most fruitful theme, put to increasing use in the late fifties and early sixties, has been a preoccupation with the place of man in a society which can find little constructive use for his most heroic qualities: *The Magnificent Seven, The Misfits, Lonely Are the Brave, Ride the High Country,* the final sequence of *How the West Was Won.*

With its five-part structure and its panorama of 50 years of frontier history, MGM's Cinerama spectacle was rather more than just that. In its big-screen version at least (and anyone who's only seen the movie in its 35mm reduction prints hasn't really seen it) *How the West Was Won* is the last true work of epic proportions the cinema has given us—as well as being the most commercially successful western ever made.

The first half dealt with man against nature, the pioneers carving a place for themselves in the wilderness. The second dealt with the growth of a civic conscience and the welding of the pioneers into communities. The historical background, admixture of fact and fiction, was suggested by the work of the historian Frederick Jackson Turner who, late in the nineteenth century, first pointed out how deeply American character and institutions have been developed on the frontier. The film's chief weakness is the lack of epic character to go with epic theme; a succession of well-known faces often seem lost in the surge of events, though this is probably true to history; only Zeb Rawlings (George Peppard) grows in stature as the film develops.

From the opening of John Ford's Civil War sequence, through George Marshall's on the railroad (for me, at least, the most satisfying section of the film), to the last moments of Henry Hathaway's on the outlaws, Zeb's character is linked, almost symbolically, to the theme. The eager young innocent, hot for action and the glories of war (and finding precious few in the Civil War) comes of age with the frontier, mirroring the coming of law and respectability, of the community supplanting the individual. As a lieutenant of cavalry he helps open the new lands for the railroads and the settlers they bring. As a marshal he battles the riff-raff of the rough shantytowns to make the streets safe for those who would build their homes here. Finally he is made to realize that the old days are vanished forever; that in this vast new world the values of that old one which many of the settlers have come west to escape will be imposed. Bureaucracy is taking over. "There's law here now, Zeb. Law. With its writs and decrees. We abide by our circuit judge." Civilization has come, and the frontier is wild no more.

But a few isolated pockets of resistance still remained, and one of these figured in *Ride the High Country.* Peckinpah's film is not only a celebration of the myth, it is also a requiem. Its heroes are tired, aging men with little to look forward to in a world which has not only forgotten them but is forgetting what they stood for. (The casting of Joel McCrea and Randolph Scott in extensions of their usual screen roles was a stroke almost of genius.) The conflict is grounded in character rather than gunpower. Young Heck Longtree, whose allegiance slowly swings from Westrun to Judd, is an echo of their own past to the two older men. And in its final moments the film achieves that rare eloquence of total simplicity as Judd who, after all the defeats of his life, can finally enter his own house justified, is left to die ("I want to go it alone") and Westrun speaks three simple words of farewell over his dying friend, "See you later."

The way of the future seems to be Peckinpah's: the realistic approach and the concentration on character. Currently he is out of favor in Hollywood, but *Ride the High Country* is not only one of the masterpieces of the genre, it seems, as it goes further into history, to stand taller and taller as a signpost to the future of the western.

Film Reviews

SECONDS

Director: John Frankenheimer. Script: Lewis John Carlino, based on the novel by David Ely. Photography: James Wong Howe. Paramount.

"Be born again, start all over, a second chance, that's what we all want, isn't it?"

John Frankenheimer's fiendish, subversive new movie *Seconds,* a happy relief from the tedium of *Seven Days in May* and *The Train,* answers the question with surprising freshness.

Arthur Hamilton is a middle-aged, affluent Scarsdale banker, vaguely dissatisfied with the enervation of his life, who accepts the offer of "rebirth" from a big, secret Company that specializes in cadaver procurement, plastic surgery, and manufacture of new identities for tired businessmen. The fine opening scenes of the film, in Grand Central, on a commuter train, at Hamilton's suburban home, skillfully employ unnaturally dark sets and distorted camera angles to convey the nightmare, the oppression of Hamilton's everyday life.

With the nightmare swiftly established, the telephone invitation to rebirth from a "dead" friend has an understandably magical allure. But almost immediately the imagery begins to work against our expectations. Hamilton goes to the address which has been given to him, but instead of the Seconds Company finds a sordid tailor shop run by a parched old man in a sweaty undershirt; he sends Hamilton to a meat market, from where he is driven to the Company. Hamilton's approach to a Second Chance suddenly looks shockingly unromantic —huddled in the back of the Used Cow truck, in butcher coat and cap. There is an excellent, unsettling comic moment when the butcher who has just loaded Hamilton into the truck remembers that he is holding Hamilton's hat, and awkwardly hands it to him. Hamilton's helpless "Thank you" is a very funny, grotesque suggestion of his mortification.

The scenes at the Company continue to develop the images of perversion and humiliation. Hamilton's drug-induced dream of raping a girl is masterfully rendered by Frankenheimer and cinematographer James Wong Howe. Filmed from different perspectives, that alter quickly and unexpectedly—Hamilton is getting closer to the girl in one shot, further away in the next, kissing her in the next, still approaching her in the next—the sequence compellingly represents the terrifying disorientation and the shame that accompany Hamilton's rebirth. Goaded by blackmail, Hamilton agrees to the Company's conditions and goes onto the operating table; after extensive plastic surgery—Rock Hudson plays his second self—and some career therapy, he is whisked off to Malibu, with the opportunity to establish himself as the painter he always wanted to be.

To this point the film moves with breathtaking assurance, and it's a good place to say a little more about where it's going. Some reviewers have complained that Hamilton, in both identities, is drawn only superficially. This isn't really a relevant objection when you realize that the movie never aims at psychological realism. *Seconds* is a kind of allegorical fantasy; I know that sounds deadly, but Frankenheimer and writer Lewis John Carlino have constructed an outlandish little fable that has taken in a lot of people, even Pauline Kael, who wrote that the movie means to "condemn an ugly, empty life." I've begun to suggest why I think that's wrong—we're misled for a while by those contorted opening scenes, and Frankenheimer meant us to be, but the sequences in the market and the Company indicate that the real nightmare is not Hamilton's "ugly, empty life," but this hellish business that exploits his vague dissatisfactions. The film isn't condemning the pettiness of Hamilton's suburban charade so much as the insubstantial and vicious *dream* of a second chance, that dream that strikes such deep and destructive mythic chords in the American experience. Carlino and Frankenheimer want Hamilton's character to be skeletal, undefined. The point is that this man, banker or painter, has no vital identity; vague,

compulsive dreaming, not Scarsdale, depersonalizes and dehumanizes him, and the Company works as an effective emblem of that pernicious dream. (It would take a lot of cultural analysis to understand what makes this gossamer daydream of a fresh start peculiarly American, but it's a crucial aspect of the modern American literary hero, from Babbitt to Gatsby to Willy Loman and Blanche Dubois. *Seconds* is an intriguing contribution to that literature.)

Hamilton's new life as an artist at Malibu is a savage parody of freedom and fulfillment. It is interesting that Frankenheimer gives the beach scenes an artificial brightness that makes a beautiful complement to the oppressive darkness of the opening scenes in Grand Central and Hamilton's study. Both stances are distortions—the unnatural white of the Malibu home is as horrible as the unnatural black of Scarsdale. I'd say Frankenheimer quite ingeniously cast Rock Hudson as the new Hamilton. Pauline Kael writes in protest, "It *is* a horror picture: imagine having a second chance at life and coming back as Rock Hudson!" Well, that's the point—Hudson is meant to suggest all of the hollow youthfulness and handsomeness that we wish for ourselves in our wispiest daydreams.

The most brilliant conception in the script is the character of the Old Man who owns the Company, a grand and searing parody of the American Sage (Mark Twain? Robert Frost? Lyndon Johnson?)—that homespun, folksy father-figure who clutters our legend and perverts our hopes. The marvelous scene in which he convinces Hamilton to sign his life away—literally, as it turns out—shrewdly manipulates the rhetoric of the preternaturally "wise," self-made American folk hero: "Excuse an old fool pryin', son [Hamilton is over 50 years old!], but what's it all mean?" "Be born again, start all over, a second chance, that's what we all want, isn't it?" "There never was a struggle in the soul of a good man that wasn't hard; that's what my papa told me. . . ." The Old Man knows his customer—that is, he knows the weaknesses of us all; when he says: "So this is what comes of the dreams of youth," he plays mercilessly on Hamilton's nostalgia, on that curiously American tendency to moon over the fact that our childish daydreams never came true. At the end of the scene, he reduces Hamilton to a child again—he rather obscenely strokes Hamilton's cheek as Hamilton tells the old fox that he trusts him. Will Geer plays the scene beautifully; it's impossible to imagine the part without his performance.

John Thomas ("The Smile on the Face of the Tiger," *FQ*, Winter 1965–66) has described the pattern of a Frankenheimer movie: "A protagonist, persecuted by powerful authority figures connected with his parents, finds that he has lost his freedom because his real personality has gone unrecognized. Unable to communicate his true nature to the authorities, he rebels at last to assert a personal freedom." The pattern is given some wry twists in *Seconds*. I think Thomas is right that oppressive parent-figures are important in Frankenheimer's films, and perhaps that helps to explain why the Old Man works so effectively in *Seconds*. We wouldn't at first think of this Old Man as having much in common with Angela Lansbury's man-eating Mom in *All Fall Down* or *The Manchurian Candidate*, but his assumed gentleness masks persecution as ruthless as that of Raymond Shaw's mother in *The Manchurian Candidate*. The Old Man is not a specifically realized character like the Lansbury mothers; he is a sharp cartoon version of the symbolic father of us all. It is he, with his grotesque travesty of wisdom, who extinguishes personal freedom in Seconds clientele.

So pervasive is the myth and so trenchantly drawn the caricature that it is easy to be deceived into sympathizing with the Old Man, especially late in the film, when he condoles with Hamilton about the failure of his Malibu life. "I thought you'd find your dream come true," he muses; Hamilton tells him he never had a dream, and the Old Man says that must have been the problem. *Newsweek's* Joseph Morganstern attacks the film for the vacuity of this message, without sensing the blistering irony. Unlike Raymond Shaw and other Frankenheimer heroes, Hamilton's rebellion at the

end of the film is only partial. He sees what is wrong with the dreamy new life that has been manufactured for him at Malibu, and he refuses to remain there; in an even stronger gesture, he frustrates the Company by refusing to recommend a new customer. But he doesn't go the whole way—he is still seduced by the Old Man (the head of the Company, after all) and his rhetoric of the "dream come true." He accepts the old man's comfort without realizing that it is merely sanctimonious rationalization for the last step in his little adventure—he is wheeled to surgery to be murdered on the operating table, the newest addition to the Company's cadaver section. Raymond Shaw committed suicide after freeing himself from his mother, but Arthur Hamilton goes to his death still vaguely believing in his ruthless, symbolic Father. The film's final shot is, presumably, Hamilton's last thought—a vaguely defined lyric vision of a man on a beach, a little girl on his shoulders. It's hard to know exactly how Frankenheimer intended this; perhaps it's a sentimental intrusion, but it works in the film as a hideous final joke. We can't help noticing the pathetic irrelevance of this dreamy idyll to Hamilton's real situation of the moment. It says quite plainly that the beautiful American daydream is extinction.

That this film has crucial relevance today is apparent in something like Hubert Humphrey's memoir of *his* father (*The Atlantic,* November 1966): "Undoubtedly, he was a romantic, and when friends would josh him about his talk about world politics, the good society, and learning, he would say, 'Before the fact is the dream.'" It's a pervasive legend, all right; the Old Man of *Seconds* is designed to explode the piety of Humphrey's apple-pie rhetoric and expose the way in which self-expression is maimed by subservience to that crackerjack American father and his dream, whether on a personal, social, or vaguely metaphysical level. Remembering Humphrey's words, it's a pretty courageous film.

Seconds insists, perhaps with a little too much piety of a different sort, that the only way of fighting the pressures of materialist society is through accommodation to the squalid, domestic realities that Hamilton chooses to run from. This moral is made clear in the rather heavy scene in which Hamilton, now Rock Hudson, returns to Scarsdale to ask his wife just what he did wrong. In spite of the contrivance, Frances Reid plays it very delicately, and her protest against her husband's silence comes across with surprising poignancy. The articulate lesson is that silent dreaminess impedes the only possible fulfillment—the homely self-awareness and groping affection that come from working at those depressingly everyday relationships which only *seem* confining. In an effort at revitalizing his stale marriage, the film implies, Arthur Hamilton might at least have approached a satisfaction that no Rock Hudson mask could offer. Maybe this is a simple-minded alternative to the second-chance dream, or maybe it's a mature alternative; but in any case, it works only as assertion in *Seconds.*

There are other problems with the film, most of them arising from its treatment of Hamilton's second life. Although he is not as skillful an actor as John Randolph, who plays the middle-aged Hamilton, Hudson is adequate. And visually, as I've noted, the Malibu scenes are evocative. But dramatically they don't come off. One big problem is Salome Jens, who plays Nora, the free spirit with whom Hamilton falls in love. Since it turns out later that Nora is only an employee of the Seconds Company, loosed very deliberately to help Hamilton adjust, Miss Jens perhaps felt that she ought to overdo the free-spirit bit in her early scenes so that the surprise revelation would make more sense. But the twist would have been more disturbing if Nora had convinced and attracted us as well as Hamilton. And even considered as parody, the performance is grating. Miss Jens, who's obviously talented, works very hard to make sure we know that she isn't just another Hollywood actress—lots of brooding looks and inscrutable smiles and quiveringly intense readings. She tries her damndest to turn this into an art film, but the movie is able to resist her. Luckily her

part is relatively small. Frankenheimer has provided her with one effective moment, that has no relationship to her acting ability—the startling shot of her hair wildly blowing as she drives in an open convertible, an image that connects very subtly and disquietingly with the dishevelled hair of the girl whom Hamilton "rapes" in his garish dream.

The wine festival scene—perhaps a parody of Sexual Freedom?—which represents the breakdown of Hamilton's inhibitions, is very bad. Frankenheimer edits the scene frantically, to give an air of dizzy spontaneity, yet making sure that we don't see even a snitch of bare breast or genitals. I lost track of what was going on, in my wonder at the elaborate artistry (it is artistry, of an ugly sort) of self-imposed censorship. The cocktail party scene, at the climax of which Hamilton learns that the other guests are also "reborns," doesn't work well either, because it looks so much like other movie cocktail parties. Frankenheimer's notion of a wild party, as he showed in *All Fall Down*, is all Hollywood snicker.

Despite these weaknesses, I think *Seconds* is one of the most intelligently controlled American movies of the last few years. What finally makes it less exciting than *The Manchurian Candidate* is its solemn tone. Frankenheimer has a vigorous, blistering comic sense that too seldom finds expression in *Seconds*. There are a few fine comic moments, some of which I've mentioned, like the meat-market scene, or the dialogues with the Old Man. A few others are worth noting: the Company administrator's savory suggestions of possible deaths for Hamilton, followed by his disclaimer of mock-embarrassment, "But I think these are a little too gross for you"; the scene in which Hamilton's face is wrapped in a plaster mold and he whimpers like a wounded animal as the surgeon enthusiastically tells him, "In a few weeks you'll be prancing around like a stud bull"; or the sudden appearance of the unctuous minister at the end, who proudly proclaims that he is qualified to administer last rites in any of the three major religions, since he's been ordained in all three. This is black comedy at its most abrasive, and I wish Frankenheimer had risked offending us more often. *The Manchurian Candidate* had a wild, nihilistic energy that grew from its comic irrelevancies as well as its melodrama. *Seconds*, for all of its grimness and relentless Seriousness, is finally a less explosive, less profound experience. It's a challenging movie, but it isn't a great one.

One word of caution: The titles are played against Saul Bass' design of monstrous distortions of eyes, noses, mouths, ears—a crude vulgarization of all that the movie examines with subtlety and intelligence. It would be smart to arrive two minutes late.

—STEPHEN FARBER.

ACCATTONE

Director: Pier Paulo Pasolini. Producer: Alfredo Bini. Script: Pasolini. Photography: Tonino delli Colli. Music: Johann Sebastian Bach. Brandon.

Until this year, Pier Paolo Pasolini was known in this country almost solely as the director of *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*. Last September, the New York Film Festival introduced two other features by Pasolini: his most recent, *The Hawks and the Sparrows;* and his earliest, *Accattone* (1961). For all their merits, I do not consider either film as good as *The Gospel,* and I believe the reason can be traced to the way in which both these films have been deliberately based upon the conflicting premises of two irreconcilable ideologies, as *The Gospel* is not. As a result, Pasolini in both cases has had recourse to artifices in order to force a synthesis of the two viewpoints—whether their contradiction is implicit, as in *Accattone,* or explicit, as in *The Hawks and the Sparrows.*

I propose here to examine *Accattone* as an artificial construction which relies for much of its effect on an apparent affinity with a historical tradition—neorealism—to which it does not really belong. The film is set in the slums of Rome. Accattone ("Beggar") is a Roman proletarian who refuses to work for a living and has hence chosen procuring as the alternative to starvation. His first girl, Maddalena, is jailed

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for falsely denouncing some of Accattone's friends as her assaulters (she is afraid to name the real culprits, four Neapolitans who assaulted her to avenge her former pimp Ciccio, now imprisoned since Maddalena denounced him to the police). Accattone seduces another girl to replace her.

Accattone seems to have its roots in neorealism, not only in its proletarianism, but formally—in its use of nonprofessional actors and actual locations, and in its episodic structure. Actually, however, the film is constructed in function of a primarily, even exclusively, didactic goal, just as much as *The Hawks and the Sparrows,* whose form is explicitly conditioned by a comic didactic principle. Perhaps the narrative structure of *Accattone* can best be examined by comparing it with an example of neorealist narrative as it was conceived in the forties by Cesare Zavattini.

A neorealist film on the order of *Bicycle Thief* is constructed as a nondramatic, open narrative which allows the total significance of every particular "event" or moment to emerge objectively, in its own terms; *Accattone,* by comparison, displays a rigorous and at times stylized composition which, specifically, tends to confer an exemplary status on its hero. Hence a crucial difference in the function of the "episodic structure" which, at first sight, appears common to both films. The episodes of *Bicycle Thief* are based on a principle of contingence, of renewed possibility—a style made possible largely because all the action of the film takes place within about two days. Whereas the succession of episodes of *Accattone* depends not directly on chronology, nor really on any concept of time, but rather on a tragic—or better, religious—irreversibility which unfolds with each episode in Accattone's story. The episodes, like the stages of a saint's life, thus serve an exemplary purpose: in religious terms, they recount the successive stages of Accattone's spiritual isolation and demoralization, and his final struggle for salvation.

As a didactic film in the sense which I shall discuss below (I use the term without pejorative intent, merely to indicate a particular use

ACCATONE

of the medium), *Accattone* gives us insight into a historical and formal phenomenon which André Bazin was first to trace: the transformation of Italian neorealism from an integral aesthetic into a convention of style. Pasolini's film contains elements of two ordinarily separate cases of this transformation. In the first case, it is accomplished in order to accommodate a religious or neohumanist perspective, as in *Accattone,* Fellini's *Vitelloni, Cabiria,* and so on, or Zavattini and de Sica's *Umberto D.* In the second case, within the perspective of Marxism, differences in a director's vision of reality have caused a change in his conception of his material, as well as in his conception of the public for whom the film is intended. The director may then choose to depict a reality in a didactic exposition, as for example de Seta depicts the peasants' relations to each other and to the society which exploits their rivalry in *Bandits of Orgosolo.* Or, on a more complex level, the director may use the central figure of an alienated proletarian to obtain a unify-

ing perspective upon the displaced proletarian and subproletarian strata of an industrial society, as Antonioni did in *Il Grido*. In the latter case, the film-maker need only exploit a didactic tendency already present in the works of some of the great directors of neorealism: witness *La Terra Trema* by Visconti.

I have suggested that the conception of Accattone and of his situation is basically contradictory. The religious—specifically Catholic—aspect of the story constitutes one pole of its contradiction; I shall return to it below. The Marxist conception constitutes the opposite pole.

From this perspective, Pasolini seeks to create a working-class character who has become aware that the life of his class is determined by forces they do not control. He therefore creates a pimp, who despises labor, and is in turn despised by the community of workers. Accattone's situation becomes the image of an autodestructive form of false consciousness having its own typical mode of expression: irony. Perhaps the most authentic aspect of Accattone as an exemplary character—well brought out by the actor, Franco Citti—is that Pasolini has characterized him with precisely this double-edged irony: directed toward others, it appears as sarcasm; directed toward himself, as self-hatred. Powerful visual images contribute to this characterization—for example, the close-up of Accattone's face in the sequence in which Accattone, drunk, breaks away from a boat-party as if to jump from a nearby bridge, but instead runs down to the beach and, as his friends watch, rubs his face in the wet sand: when he looks up at the others, we see his two eyes, at once defiant and humiliated, looking through a mask of glittering sand.

Pasolini sets Accattone off from his friends and surroundings by means of various stylistic devices. Indeed, an isolating intent is one of the general characteristics of the film's pictorialism. Almost any episode offers an example of framing tending to isolate its subject. For example, when Accattone finally fights with his brother-in-law, he does so from an impulse which contains at least as much self-contempt as aggressivity, and the wrestling becomes an image of the complex interrelation of Accattone and the class life which he hates but cannot transcend. Accordingly, to emphasize the significance of the struggle, we see a shot of the two men grappling in a tight, tense knot in the center of the frame, isolated from the onlookers by a white expanse of ground. Similarly, Pasolini isolates Accattone in the street when he robs his infant son of a medal to get money. (Generally, this is a pictorial effect which Pasolini—significantly—seems to prefer in all his films: *Accattone, Gospel,* and *Hawks* all take place in open suburban fields, with city or villages in the background.)

The creation of an isolated character, however, especially if his situation is conceived as exemplary of a certain condition, entails the sacrifice of concreteness, to be replaced, perhaps, by a more superficial, visual "realism." And—again in comparison with a film like *Bicycle Thief*—one can argue, I think, that Pasolini is artistically not capable of creating his hero fully and concretely, in terms of the material conditions which determine his everyday life: that he isolates him intellectually just as he does aesthetically. Actual social conditions play only a nominal part in Pasolini's film. We are not made to see, as we are in *Bicycle Thief,* how having a job, or not having a job, determine the nature and extent of the worker's universe and of the relations which are possible in it. True, Ricci's marginal existence in *Bicycle Thief* is different from that of Accattone; Accattone has *chosen* not to work. Yet Accattone's choice to live as a parasite, precisely because it represents a philosophical position, is not really explored, but remains abstract, an almost intellectual option made long before the film begins. In reality, of course, the option is Pasolini's—the result of a partial effort to transcend artistically the class barrier separating him and his subject. Accattone's ironic relation to reality functions both as expression of his own false consciousness and as stylistic condition creating a *persona:* it enables Pasolini to create a proletarian hero whose ironic relation to his social condition at once

conceals and reproduces, in a different form, his creator's necessarily alien view of proletarian conditions.

Perhaps the function of the character Accattone as *persona* serves to explain a certain stylization of narrative which is frequent in this film (and in Pasolini's other films as well). Many episodes are introduced, not by a general shot establishing characters and location, but by a detail-shot presenting only one or a few of the characters who will be involved in the action. (This is typical of the scene in which Accattone swims across the Tiber on a bet, or the several café scenes among him and his friends.) For example, the episode in which Accattone is detained in the police station as an assault suspect is introduced by a shot of Accattone alone in the center of the room, seated attentively and aggressively, *looking* at something or someone we have yet to see. After this, the rest of the scene is filled in, so to speak, by the succeeding shots—policemen standing near the door against the opposite wall, and so on—and the dialogue begins, establishing tensions. By the time the scene, dramatically speaking, has begun, with interplay between Accattone and the others, our perspective on it has thus been associated with that of Accattone, so that we experience the scene in Accattone's terms. Such a narrative composition accomplishes a didactic function by forcing our viewpoint, and our attitude, to coincide as much as possible with that of Pasolini's hero.

Yet the goal of the film is precisely to introduce another perspective upon its subject, one which transcends Accattone's immediate awareness. And it is at this point that a reconciliation, or at least an option, between the two viewpoints in the film—that of Accattone who is constantly defining his own situation, subjectively, by his presence and actions, and that of the author who is consciously defining Accattone's situation in other terms—must become possible.

In order to portray Accattone's conflict in a religious perspective, Pasolini has capitalized on the irrational character of Accattone's reaction against determination. Alongside the succession of the historical stages of consciousness leading to the formation of critical reason (consciousness in harmony with reality; self-consciousness estranged from reality, i.e., false consciousness; rational critical relation to reality, i.e., class consciousness), Pasolini posits Catholic "equivalents" to the first two: state of grace, fall from grace. This alignment—although the two value-systems are essentially different and do not share the same terms—constitutes the aesthetic hypothesis of the film. And it fails as such precisely insofar as it is intended to create a common terminology for both, a common ground for their reconciliation. For, even accepting Pasolini's scheme, there remains—need I remark—no Catholic "equivalent" to the stage of class consciousness. Precisely, however, Pasolini avoids confronting the final irreconcilability of the two value-systems by confining his film to a study in mere false consciousness—the stage at which he can invoke both sets of values side by side. (This also explains the relative success of *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*. Having to deal solely with the awakening of spiritual solidarity among the oppressed, Pasolini need work solely in terms of a single value-system.)

Thus Accattone's individual reaction against determination is not appreciable except insofar as it *also* takes the form of a drama of personal salvation. The possibility of Accattone's spiritual redemption from his present condition (which, obviously, implies the possibility of a different valuation of the phenomenon of false consciousness—it is autodestructive *and yet* by other standards it is a victory) is introduced by the character Stella, the girl whom Accattone seduces merely to replace Maddalena but who becomes the object of his unformed feelings (the beginnings of love). Accattone finally seeks to renounce his old life for her sake; it is while stealing food to keep Stella and himself from starving that Accattone and his friends are stopped by the police.

Since Accattone's state of consciousness necessarily is and remains uncritical (or precritical, viewed historically), Pasolini must con-

trive to impose the religious perspective upon his conflict, from "outside." The presence of Stella, and the mechanics of melodrama (the final arrest, which seals Accattone's fate—I shall discuss melodrama below) are two contrivances for this purpose. A third resort—the most facile—is to exploit the mechanics of cinema itself: to create, for example, a counterpoint between image and soundtrack, particularly at those moments when Accattone either rejects the life of his class as he conceives it, or is drawn inarticulately to a higher spiritual ideal. Hence the use, for example, of passages from the *St. Matthew Passion* underscoring both his fights with police or family and his encounters with Stella—as well as the visual insistence upon the presence of a church in the background of one of the latter scenes.

One might still accept the didactic imposition of a different value-system, artificial as it is, if Pasolini had been content to let the Catholic-humanist perspective stand as a merely alternative optic, a scheme by which the auto-destructive phase of estranged consciousness can still be seen as valid on its "own" terms even though futile when viewed historically; all the more, if Pasolini had been willing to establish concretely some definite relation between the Catholic and Marxist perspectives, beyond merely suggesting their peaceful co-existence. It is certainly possible to consider the religious stages of consciousness as historical precedents to the stage of critical reason, on condition that critical reason then rejects the Christian solution to the condition of estrangement. And one can argue that this historical relation is at least implied in the conception of the film (as it is implied, for other reasons, in that of *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, and as it becomes the explicit subject of *The Hawk and the Sparrow*). But precisely, it is that final condition—rejection of the validity of individual salvation—which is excluded by Pasolini's treatment of his "case" of false consciousness in *Accattone*. Pasolini seeks to create nothing less than a synthesis of the two perspectives; and one must question, I think, whether this synthesis is or could ever be successful, even as aesthetic hypothesis.

Certainly the concluding episodes of *Accattone* reveal an increasingly arbitrary manipulation of perspective. Presumably fearing that his material will still not carry the weight of a second valuation, Pasolini inserts stylistic devices and mannerisms, and symbolic sequences, to help us elucidate it. The most obvious mannersim occurs in the sequence preceding Accattone's arrest. A plainclothesman has been sent to observe Accattone. Pasolini cuts no less than five times to a very close shot of the cop's eyes as they follow Accattone in the street. I take this as a device to force "another" momentary perspective: Accattone seen as criminal. Furthermore, in order to show that an awareness of the possible change in his life is stirring in the unconscious regions of Accattone's mind—as distinguished from his consciousness—Pasolini resorts to including a nightmare in which Accattone beholds his own funeral procession but is excluded from attending the burial. In a significantly similar way, Accattone's real death at the end of the film is a contrivance intended to carry a double meaning. He dies in a motorbike accident while fleeing from the police—a "fated" accident reminiscent of American romantic melodrama, and indeed serving an analogous function here. Accattone's death becomes the only possible source of his redemption, since his feeling for Stella cannot be positively realized as love. (This feeling is depicted ambiguously throughout, suggesting its polyvalence: finally, we know only that, after one abortive attempt at prostitution, Accattone consoles her and has refused to exploit her further—out of a "love" consisting of guilt, of an awakening spirituality, and so forth.) His death itself is the consequence of his foredoomed attempt to free Stella and himself from their material condition.

Thus Accattone's efforts to leave the cycle of exploitation, deprivation, and betrayal which constitutes his condition have necessarily been futile and have even destroyed him; yet we are to understand that, redeemed by his love for Stella, he has, at least possibly, transcended his condition spiritually.

Clearly, Pasolini has constructed a thesis film: for the uncritical consciousness, spiritual salvation can be a reality even as material alteration is an impossibility. I doubt if such a thesis could have been embodied in any artistic structure except the didactic one whose basic contradictions I have suggested here. Certainly in *Accattone*, Pasolini has not succeeded in synthesizing his two sets of values, but only maintained them as a pair of tautologies: salvation is a possibility to the religious, and revolution a possibility to the class-conscious.

—RANDALL CONRAD

SHAKESPEARE WALLAH

Director: James Ivory. Producer: Ismail Merchant. Script: Ivory and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. Score: Satyajit Ray.

James Ivory's *Shakespeare Wallah*—"wallah" is a Hindi word meaning "peddler"—stands out among English-language films of recent years primarily because it attempts to make a statement about real people in a real social situation. "Real people in a real social situation"—the phrase sounds naive: don't all works of art, or works that aspire to art, do that? Well, no. While novelists continue to present, or to try to present, recognizable persons and to show them in a recognizable society, English and American film-makers long ago abandoned this pursuit. The Hollywood films of the 30's and 40's, despite an occasional *Grapes of Wrath* or *Modern Times*, created a fantasy world of glamor girls and playboys with hearts of gold, of mobsters and molls who met their just deserts. Those particular fantasies have given way to others, no less fantastic—we now have secret agents with genitals of cast iron, singing nannies, and whitewashed Negroes *à la Lilies of the Field* and *A Patch of Blue* (yes, and *Nothing But a Man*). Hollywood's spoofs of spoofs of spoofs are so remote from any reality to satirize that they don't any longer pretend to be *about* anything. As for the recent British films—and let me say that I *enjoyed* the Beatles movies, and *Darling* and all the rest—they don't pretend that their characters are anything but "suitable cases for treatment"; which is fine, but not everybody is mad (or mod) any more than everybody is a secret agent; and the fashion for the bizarre becomes stale as quickly as any other fashion.

Now in a sense *Shakespeare Wallah* itself is "about" the Hollywood fantasy—or rather, about the fantasy as it was displayed in Hollywood in the 30's and 40's, and as it now exists in transplanted form in countries such as India, where the film takes place. Mandjula (Madhur Jaffrey) is the epitome of everybody's stereotype of the movie star, with her languors and moods, her arrogance, and her pursuing fans. Sanju (Shashi Kapoor), the lover whom Lizzie, the young heroine, shares with Mandjula, is everybody's stereotype of the playboy hanger-on of the film world: terrifically handsome, rich, and idle (though he nurtures vague ambitions of making a film about "the rhythms of life"), he drives a white convertible, and sits in a canvas director's chair during "takes" of Mandjula's current movie. With this grossly self-indulgent, narcissistic movie-star world, Ivory contrasts the humble and rather grubby world of Lizzie and her parents, leaders of a troupe of British Shakespearean actors touring India, playing to ever-dwindling audiences. The theatrical world, however, is "sacred," as Mrs. Buckingham, Lizzie's mother, points out in speaking of the actors' dressing-rooms. In this regard, too, it differs from the world of the movie-star, which is "profane" in being public at all times. (How rarely has a movie shown respect for any but the more glittery aspects of the theater!)

The world of the Buckingham family is their reality; the impoverished Indian prince for whom they perform in the opening scenes of the film says, "Sooner or later, we must all come to terms with reality." The phrase could be the motto of the film. Reality consists of different things for each character; but each character's reality is tinged with sadness or nostalgia—all, that is, except that of the film star and her lover, because they don't live in any sort of reality at all. The prince's reality is the decay of his

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Now in a sense *Shakespeare Wallah* itself is "about" the Hollywood fantasy—or rather, about the fantasy as it was displayed in Hollywood in the 30's and 40's, and as it now exists in transplanted form in countries such as India, where the film takes place. Mandjula (Madhur Jaffrey) is the epitome of everybody's stereotype of the movie star, with her languors and moods, her arrogance, and her pursuing fans. Sanju (Shashi Kapoor), the lover whom Lizzie, the young heroine, shares with Mandjula, is everybody's stereotype of the playboy hanger-on of the film world: terrifically handsome, rich, and idle (though he nurtures vague ambitions of making a film about "the rhythms of life"), he drives a white convertible, and sits in a canvas director's chair during "takes" of Mandjula's current movie. With this grossly self-indulgent, narcissistic movie-star world, Ivory contrasts the humble and rather grubby world of Lizzie and her parents, leaders of a troupe of British Shakespearean actors touring India, playing to ever-dwindling audiences. The theatrical world, however, is "sacred," as Mrs. Buckingham, Lizzie's mother, points out in speaking of the actors' dressing-rooms. In this regard, too, it differs from the world of the movie-star, which is "profane" in being public at all times. (How rarely has a movie shown respect for any but the more glittery aspects of the theater!)

The world of the Buckingham family is their reality; the impoverished Indian prince for whom they perform in the opening scenes of the film says, "Sooner or later, we must all come to terms with reality." The phrase could be the motto of the film. Reality consists of different things for each character; but each character's reality is tinged with sadness or nostalgia—all, that is, except that of the film star and her lover, because they don't live in any sort of reality at all. The prince's reality is the decay of his

SHAKESPEARE WALLAH

fortune: one of his palaces has been converted into office space, and he is thinking of making a hotel of one of the others. The old actor Bobby's reality is a deserted ballroom and an empty wine-rack. Mr. and Mrs. Buckingham's reality is the fact that people have come to prefer movies to Shakespeare, and that the school which used to hire them for four or five performances is now too busy with cricket matches. What Lizzie comes to terms with is the reality that her lover Sanju is too weak to accept her sacrifice of herself and her whole way of life. But in each realization lies some solution or at least a way of finding peace: the Buckinghams will go on to do "scenes from Shakespeare," and Lizzie will discover a new world in England. The decay of traditions and the failure of hopes, on which the film comments without any fashionable nastiness or cynicism, is implicit in all of the film's action. But in accepting this decay as reality, however painful, lies a sort of existential triumph for each of the characters.

As remarkable as the theme of the film and its treatment is the quality of the acting. Geoffrey Kendal, his wife Laura Liddell, and their daughter Felicity Kendal play the members of the Buckingham family with a conviction which may in part be derived from the fact that they do in fact act out their own experiences. (I am told, incidentally, that the actress who plays the boarding-house proprietress is the Kendals' oldest daughter, and that Shashi Kapoor is her husband.) Aside from this literal authenticity, however, they have a skill and freshness all too rarely seen. Moreover, as Sanju says, they don't "look like" actors; that is, none of them is abnormally pretty, handsome, or distinguished looking—and how comforting it is once in a while to see a character who is a little too fat or too short, or who wears the wrong hair-style. Since this is a film about *character* rather than about *action* (very little "happens" in the movie), it is appropriate that the characters be memorable, even in their appearance.

James Ivory's feel for mood and atmosphere is another beauty of the film. Numerous scenes lingered in my memory: Lizzie and Bobby's dance in the deserted ballroom (*sans*, thank God, an imagined orchestral accompaniment); the theater balcony where Lizzie and Sanju carry on their very convincing necking scene; the grounds of Sanju's uncle's palace, dotted with mosquito-netting tents; and especially the rainy and misty landscapes around the boarding house where much of the action takes place.

Which is not to say that *Shakespeare Wallah* is perfect: its flaws are many and easily enumerated. Most obvious is the arbitrary abruptness of the cutting, which often leaves the spectator guessing the time or the place of the action. As the cutting increases in rapidity and abruptness towards the end of the film, the corresponding time sequence becomes more and more obscure; thus, for instance, one is surprised to find, after a large number of shifts in place and point of view, that it is still the same day. (I found this confusion diminished at a second viewing; but a director cannot expect each member of his audience to see his film twice.)

The second flaw in the film is an occasional lapse into sentimentality. This becomes embarrassing in such scenes as that of the lovers kissing during their walk. To have the fog close in around them and then part *once* to reveal them kissing would be bad enough; but *twice*? The dissolve during the love scene in Lizzie's hotel room is a similar, though less intrusive cliché; and her fantasy at the end of the film, in which, as she stands at the rail

of the ship, she imagines Sanju kissing her at the piano (a scene which has not appeared previously in the film) is unnecessary. Miss Kendal is a sufficiently good actress to portray without flashbacks the fact that she thinks of Sanju at that moment.

Once these weaknesses have been enumerated, however, *Shakespeare Wallah* remains one of the most moving and delightful films that has appeared here in some time. It is the second Ivory-Merchant collaboration (their first, *The Householder*, I have not had a chance to see). The script is by Ivory and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, an American writer married to an Indian, and a frequent contributor to the *New Yorker*. Their third film, to be shot in New York, is *Horizontal and Vertical*, from the Lillian Ross stories in, once more, the *New Yorker*. May they prosper.—HARRIET POLT.

LE BONHEUR

Director: Agnès Varda. Scenario: Agnès Varda. Photography: Jean Rabier and Claude Beausoleil. Music: W. A. Mozart. Columbia.

After perhaps some initial confusion, a viewer might most profitably view Agnes Varda's *Le Bonheur* as a pastoral, in the old, even Renaissance sense of the word. Imbued with a simple gravity, nymph and shepherd enact a gracious courtship (here a self-refreshing marriage), which is yet miraculously attuned with nature. It is a genre convention as little current today as the implied vanity and death theme in Varda's earlier *Cléo de 5 à 7*. But it has the advantage of suspending the apparent implausibility of the wife's suicide in a mythic mold that would be totally unexplained in the usual narrative, or psychological context. Set in a modern Paris suburb, replete with high-rise housing projects, the picture quite magically evokes an ancient pantheism, a vegetable efflorescence, alien to tragedy. More than that, it is a celebration of all sensory pleasure, unaffected in what it depicts, yet subtle and willful in how it depicts it.

Part of the fascination here emerges in an improvised artifice that takes a bit of catching on for its comprehension. Unlike *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* by her husband Jacques Demy, Varda's *Le Bonheur* does not announce itself as anything so hyper-stylized as operetta. The tale of a young carpenter, his wife, and the post-office girl he meets and loves—without surcease of desire or affection for the one, or guilt with the other—spins out in homely fragments. But their naturalism dissipates in the unfailing sweetness of the people involved. And though the animal bliss which is the picture's theme is leavened by domestic chores and workshop labors, none of them are connectable with care. More equivocally, while the characters often behave in accord with their ordinary stations in life—by most standards they're a rather dull lot—they sometimes unwittingly slip into a richer and more humane consciousness, as in the tersely poetic style of the husband. But this is not an oversight or pretension of the director. In her view, naiveté of utterance does not conflict with fineness of perception or capacity of response: a fact which complicates the film rather than its characters. The consistency which she imposes upon them is that of a fictional grace, running intermittently parallel rather than coincident with social morality.

That is why, when the husband misguidedly informs his wife of his affair (he can't stand lying), it is through a transcendant uxoriousness that he does so. Not being quite up to this, the wife drowns herself. That he is tremendously saddened, but neither crushed, nor prevented by his responsibility for her death from carrying on life with his mistress shortly thereafter, has raised many eyebrows. The torment he may have experienced between these two changes in his life is largely effaced. But this is surely to underline an earthly cycle of which one catches scattered glimpses; the beginning and ending of the film, the picnic in summer and autumn, delicately reiterate it. To obey that cycle which appears here almost in sonata form, is to exist considerably above, and yet below what are considered the normal

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claims of togetherness.

Far more insistently than the "plot," does the form of the film embody this issue. There is a Saturday night dance scene, for instance, which, in its movements, easily and inevitably enacts the psychological ritual of the pastoral. The camera oscillates from left to right of a dividing tree, and back again, complicating its lateral view of couples constantly changing partners (especially the husband, with wife and mistress) by regular shifts from near to far focus. Such a pan shot acts, not so much to convey the rhythms and gestures of bodies, as it does a larger dance of life. With a remarkable liquidity and impartiality, the lens switches depth of field and less noticeably, light and dark. Though obviously drawing attention to itself, it is an effect far more musical than gratuitous. One sees a charming spatial ping-pong, punctuated by the bouncing motions of dancers, and the in-and-out of optical definition: all very gay, and impersonal.

It would be hard to recall an optical mobility put as consistently as in this film to the service of a color lyricism. Every interchange between foreground and background instigates some small chromatic alteration, and it is precisely this kind of short, mercurial shift that most links the film with Impressionist painting. That which is sensuously most vivifying occurs *between* the various recognitions of objects in set tableaux, and not as virtues of their immediate textures, no matter how frequently beautiful in isolation. Consonant with this movement (never extreme or frenetic in itself) is the sense one often gets of looking through translucent screens—wild wheat fronds, fall leaves, or the contrasting frosted and clear glass in a telephone booth. Matter falls plausibly away, or is pierced all the more tellingly because it provides only a porous obstacle to the gaze.

Such all-over tactile aliveness is a reflex of a broader approach to color, as well. Between certain shots, for instance, Varda will flood the screen with a quick, unitary color chord that fades a trifle slowly at the dissolve. Such is the scarlet introduction to a group of shots, spotted with russets, and ending with a ruddy sunset. Immediately afterwards, a May green rinses out the red, and acts as a prelude for a new sequence. It is an explosion, then gradual fading or decaying of color, reminiscent of Bonnard (whose birthplace, Fontenay-aux-Roses, with agreeable coincidence, is the film's scene.) Then too, there are various color accents made by passing trucks, or someone's sweater, that hover, or so it seems, between the composed and accidental. Never do they blanch a scene with obvious symbolism, as in Antonioni's *Red Desert,* or shamelessly decorate it, as in *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg.* With Varda, color can be used expressively, as in the contrast between the comfortable warm tones in the love scenes of husband and wife, and the cool, whiter ones of those of the husband and his mistress. And the many floral bouquets that flounce through countless shots are a kind of leitmotiv of the whole picture. But as a rule, color is a more or less tangible rhythmic element that inflects people's lives, sometimes by nothing more than variously delightful flesh-tinting patterns. For this chromatic pavanne, we are indebted to a cameraman with the too-much name of Claude Beausoleil.

Yet it would be a mistake to view the differing filmic devices as cohering only in a scrutiny of the surface of things. Content accrues as much through expressive constriction of time as it does through the molding of space. On one hand, those color blocks I mentioned can linger on to condition succeeding scenes, proxy-like afterimages whose aura is almost mental. On the other hand, there are unexpected, almost subliminal jumps in continuity that convey snippets of a character's state of mind. A flirtatious young woman suddenly images herself playfully entwined with the man whose invitation for a stroll she has just accepted. Crouched over the drowned body of his wife, the husband pathetically "sees" her white arm going underwater. These touches are all the more poignant because seemingly involuntary. There has occurred a switch from external recording to a picturing of feeling—without characterization, or even severe dislocation. And this device is not a flashback so much as it is

a fantasy inset, related to the differentiated consciousness pioneered more radically by Resnais in *Marienbad* and *Muriel.* Varda gives us little footnotes, or rather hypotheses about future and past—all the more radiant because frustratingly brief.

Yet here she will not go so far as her confrères in providing whole alternate constructions to an increasingly fragmented line. With Godard or Resnais, both quite influential on Varda in the recent past, inversion and false parallelism of incidents are not merely tokens of conceptual stress, but confessions of ambivalence that have found their way towards a quite widespread recreation of film form. Character and memory, as a result, precipitate into an opaque, troubling new compound. In the mixing of tenses, from which their characters suffer, history becomes an organism so confused as to weigh down emotion and stifle communication. By contrast, the people in *Le Bonheur* experience no crisis of identification whatsoever, but exist just as characteristically *outside* history. It is an eirenic vision Varda purveys, in which forgetfulness merges with regeneration. By siphoning off conflict into her lyric envelope, she is not so much interested in eliciting one's sympathy, as she is in offering a provisional resolution to the psychological questions raised earlier in the cinema around her. For if these characters feel gratification, and find happiness, it is largely in the context of a fairy tale. It is significant that she owes a debt to Truffaut here, especially the Truffaut who, in the warmth of his sensuous responses, was carrying on a tradition initiated by Jean Renoir. It is not by accident that Renoir's *Picnic on the Grass* is caught quite early on a television set in Varda's film. "What is the origin of organic life?" asks one of Renoir's young women. And then, slightly later, off to the side, as it were, one hears the professor say: "Happiness may be submitting to the order of nature." Less earthy than Renoir, Varda with her rococco symmetries is also more disconcerting. In place of an older humanism, she gives a mechanistic view, undecoded, yet lovely.

—MAX KOZLOFF.

NIGHT GAMES

(Nattlek) Director: Mai Zetterling. Script: Mai Zetterling and David Hughes. Photography: Rune Ericson. Music: Jan Johanson and George Riedel.

Mai Zetterling, the director of *Night Games,* first came to notice here as the cigar-stand girl in *Torment* (1946)—the Alf Sjöberg film which was one of the first foreign pictures to become well known in this country after World War II. *Torment* was an intense, expressionistic work, with dramatic lighting and camerawork derived from the German cinema; it told a highly emotional tale of a young student, victimized by a sadistic teacher who turned out to have subjugated the girl as his mistress.

Although it lacks the shadows and visual shocks of the earlier film, the strenuous visual style of *Night Games* is definitely in the same tradition; and it is based on a similarly Freudian set of relationships. The film has been attacked as pornographic, but the attacks have not convinced anybody who actually saw it; indeed the manner in which eroticism is handled by Miss Zetterling would be enough to make anybody think twice about the joys of sex. For the concern of *Night Games* is with a certain kind of depravity (an unnatural mother's unnatural affection for her son) and with its unfortunate consequences. The scenes which have caused objections *are* in fact shocking; that is why they are necessary to the film. Depravities which are not shocking, or which are presented in a way to lessen their shock

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The line of the film is, of course, impeccably moral: a man on the verge of marriage is unable to escape the sexual thrall his mother and her raucously decadent life threw over him in his youth. After taking his fiancée (who resembles the mother) to the family castle, he goes through a crisis, dynamites the castle, and escapes into emotional freedom with the girl. Miss Zetterling is saved from the undue patness of this scheme by her own baroque imagination and by a remarkable performance from Ingrid Thulin—whose harsh, unsettling role is as fascinating and threatening an evocation of the bitch-mother as has ever appeared on the screen. The intensity of her relation with her son Jan is gradually sketched in the series of flashbacks which occupies much of the film—flashbacks introduced, in the great old castle's halls and rooms, with a kind of sleight-of-time like Bergman's in *Wild Strawberries:* the man of the present walks into a bare unused room, but we see him come as a child into the ornately furnished room of the past. We gradually learn the details of the mother's defiant sexuality—and the despair that was its complement; we learn also of the counterforce, the boy's aunt, whose curious day games have their own sinister witchcraft streak, but keep alive in Jan the strength he finally calls on to destroy the castle. (Unfortunately, he doesn't blow up its decadent habitués with it.) His escape, however, is not easy. His mother's witchery is captured in a number of powerful scenes: their silent complicity after Jan feigns paralysis to a doctor; the shocking switch from seductive to punishing mother when she realizes the boy is masturbating (after she has stroked him); her burial in absentia in the castle dungeon well. The drunken party Jan gives before he decides to blow up the castle is an echo of his mother's still-birth party. Dispiritedly orgiastic, it makes him physically sick; but the purge, we are given to understand by a last scene in the simple whiteness of the snow, works.

Miss Zetterling deserves to be taken seriously. *Night Games* is filmed in an intense mood that is currently out of fashion—her style is anything but cool. She operates with an imagery that is something like earlier Bergman, something like Fellini; and her invention, though it is not so rich and strange as theirs, is stronger than that of most contemporary directors—*Night Games* has an obsessive visual quality to match the psychology of its hero.

—Ernest Callenbach

LAST YEAR AT ISTANBUL

(L'Immortelle) Script and direction: Alain Robbe-Grillet. Photography: Maurice Barry. Score: Georges Delerue, Tashin Kavalcioglu. Cocinor.

Alain Robbe-Grillet's second film, *L'Immortelle,* directed at Istanbul by the novelist-scenarist himself, has not at this writing been released for showing in the United States. Even in France the film has appeared only briefly and sporadically, and this may explain why no great export efforts have been made on its behalf. The world-wide queues that stood waiting to see *Last Year at Marienbad* have not materialized for the new cinematic work. Yet *L'Immortelle,* far from constituting a failure, is in a number of ways more fascinating and more "robbegrilletian" than *Last Year at Marienbad,* into which Alain Resnais, who directed it, introduced baroque camera effects, deliberately over-exposed "white" scenes whereby film-surface manipulation was used to convey emotional states or chronological irreality, and, at the climax, a troubling ambiguity (the heroine's apparent acceptance of the hero's advances, as she repeatedly opens her arms to him) instead of the near-rape called for in Robbe-Grillet's original scenario.

It was possible to discern in *Marienbad* not only many fictional techniques of Robbe-Grillet's novels that had recognizable analogies with film construction, but also other procedures adapted from his fiction which in the

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It was possible to discern in *Marienbad* not only many fictional techniques of Robbe-Grillet's novels that had recognizable analogies with film construction, but also other procedures adapted from his fiction which in the

light of the film now revealed their cinematic affinities. It becomes even more evident, with *L'Immortelle,* that in Robbe-Grillet's works we are dealing with *fictional structures* that in both novels and films are characterized by multiple ambiguities, circular and spiral plot movements which double back upon earlier scenes, objectified subjectivities (projections of desires and fears) and, above all, memory repetitions of earlier scenes that are re-introduced, deformed, and rearranged in space and time by the psychological processes of doubt, jealousy, fear, and erotic passion.

Mention of plot in Robbe-Grillet's novels or films always provokes controversy. Is there, in the ordinary sense, a plot? If so, does it function as conventional "story line," or is it, as certain critics claim, only a derisory rejection or parody of plot? Certainly, *La Maison de Rendez-vous,* Robbe-Grillet's recent "entertainment" (to borrow Graham Greene's term) in the form of a pseudo-James Bond adventure novel, contains a strong dose of parody and black humor (cannibalism, even!). But to see this use of plot in the earlier works, such as *The Erasers, The Voyeur, Jealousy,* and *Marienbad* would require a certain critical perversity. On the contrary, everything tends to prove that Robbe-Grillet took the "plots" of these works quite seriously. And nothing in *L'Immortelle* suggests that its story line was in any way meant to be viewed as a parody, disregarded, or downgraded in importance. One has only to read the author's own preface to the script to verify the fundamental seriousness of his attitude towards it.

The Robbe-Grillet plot, however, cannot exist without a special structure, on which its meaning and its effectiveness depend. The kind of story form that excited Robbe-Grillet's earliest interest was sometimes found in second-rate novels; he has said, for example, that he admired James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* because it was structured around a false repetition—two apparently identical auto crashes with ironically different consequences. A near-circle of plot is thus transformed into a spiral, as in Robbe-Grillet's own

L'IMMORTELLE

novels, *The Erasers* and *The Voyeur,* and even in the film *Marienbad* with its final hints of circularity. *L'Immortelle,* as the ensuing analysis will show, sounds even stronger overtones of Cain's *Postman.*

The film begins, in a fashion superficially similar to that of certain movies and television films whose initial shots form a rapid "teaser" sequence or montage of short passages from what follows, with a sort of thematic prelude of twenty or more scenes which will in fact recur, some more than once. Against the noise of a screeching car crash, we see the Bosporus road near Istanbul at night, the roadway swept by the headlights of a speeding auto. A beautiful young woman (played by Françoise Brion) appears then in various postures against varied backgrounds: in a Turkish cemetery, on fortress ramparts, against the rail of a steamer, or peering cautiously from behind *jalousies* or Venetian blinds. This introductory sequence or series ends with the protagonist (who, unlike the hero of *Marienbad,* does not speak or narrate "off" on the disembodied sound track), designated in the script as N, peering out from behind the same blinds—an obvious reminiscence of the novel *Jealousy.* It would no doubt be possible to linearize the chronology of the prelude shots by placing the real start of the temporal system of the film at this point, with the protagonist recalling the scenes already shown, as well as some of those which follow. Whether on the plane of present or past—the distinction becomes blurred and almost irrelevant—a conventional "beginning" of plot then develops: N, a professor who has just

arrived in Istanbul, loses his way while sightseeing near the city, meets L (who will be called Leïla, Lia, Lâle, etc.) near the Bosporus, inquires directions from her, and is driven back to his apartment in her white convertible, leaving behind an ominous-looking Turk in dark glasses (L is apparently European), flanked by two enormous dogs. This third man, M (as he is designated in the scenario, suggesting "mari" or husband), completes an alphabetical triangle like that of X-A-M in *Marienbad.* Its phonetic resonances (L, *"elle,"* M, "celui qu'elle *aime,"* N, "celui pour qui elle n'a enfin peut-être que de la *haine")* have given rise to critical speculations. It must be noted however that Robbe-Grillet states in his preface that the letter N indicates that this character plays a role in the film "comparable to that of a *narrator* in a novel."

Once N and L have met, the story proceeds through sequences of encounter to scenes of courtship by N. A long scene at N's apartment, with L arriving late, is followed by scenes of rendezvous in cafes, on the Bosporus steamer, in the Turkish cemetery, on the ramparts, etc. L appears and disappears, never revealing her name or abode. In the background lurks the man in dark glasses, with his dogs. L laughingly pretends to write down her address, throwing away the paper; when N returns to find it, it is blank. Progressively more erotic scenes occur, until at last L seems to yield to N, though fearfully. Episodes take place in a bazaar, a mosque, a subterranean docking point for canoes, on a beach. At each episode, an element of fear on the part of L is introduced: the distant barking of a dog (one of M's?), the spying glance of a vendor or a fisherman outside N's apartment, the ambiguous conduct of a merchant in the bazaar or a guide outside the mosque. About one third of the way through the film, L fails to appear at a rendezvous with N in the Turkish cemetery, and disappears from N's life. Obsessed by desire and jealousy, N sets out to find her, questioning those he thinks may know her (who send him on curious false paths), searching the streets near which he had left her on previous occasions, returning to their various meeting places.

In this section of *L'Immortelle,* substantial repetitions occur, as N, re-examining past scenes for clues to L's identity or true attitude towards him, re-lives sequences already shown. Since these sequences are presented as if occurring in the present, and not in subjective or flash-back style, it is as if the story were unfolding a second time, but with meaningful differences in the behavior of the characters, especially L.

At last, in a return to the nominal present tense, N comes upon L at night, in a public square, standing beside M and his dogs. She reluctantly allows herself to be drawn away by N, whom she then persuades to accompany her in her open car, where they may talk. They drive faster and faster along the Bosporus road (a scene already prepared for in the thematic prelude). L's attempts at explanation of her conduct become wildly confused. Suddenly, a large, ferocious-looking dog (obviously one of M's) looms in the headlights; the car swerves and crashes into a tree, killing L immediately. When the police arrive, N denies more than a casual acquaintance with L, and is allowed to return to his apartment. One of his hands now wears a bandage, and in the ensuing scenes the presence or absence of this bandage provides a chronological marker (though sometimes an intentionally misleading one) identifying the present, or post-accident, phase of N's actions.

For now the final part of the film goes back to the first two for many of its materials, with resulting second- or even third-power repetitions and distortions (complicated, as noted, by the bandaged or unbandaged hand). N, in an inquest of posthumous jealousy, repeats his rounds of investigation, uncovering this time dark suggestions of illegal white-slave traffic, drug addiction, sequestration, flagellation, and the like (themes exploited in Robbe-Grillet's newest novel, *La Maison de Rendez-vous).* Coming upon what seems to be L's white convertible in a junkyard and used-car lot, he buys it. At night, headlights glaring, he speeds down the same Bosporus road. In an hallucination, he hears L's voice speaking to him, urging him

to go further, faster. . . . Again, suddenly, an enormous dog looms in the road ahead (M's second beast). The car swerves, crashing into a wall, and N dies of a broken neck, just as L had in the first accident. Two shots taken, as it were, in the fading consciousness of the dying N show the silently laughing, "immortal" countenance of L in a kind of mocking, erotic epiphany.

Throughout the film, the "objective" reality of the story, as well as that of the real city of Istanbul, is continuously transformed into an imaginary universe. This metamorphosis begins at the first level, that of realistic perception (since in Robbe-Grillet's view there can be no "zero degree" of reality, everything exterior being perceived by a consciousness that operates at once imaginatively), and continues upwards, or inwards, until the "real" universe is progressively deformed and altered. As Robbe-Grillet states in his preface, from the moment that reality enters someone's head, it becomes imaginary, "which means that the heroine will strike a frozen attitude at times, like that of a wax statue in the Musée Grévin . . . as the city, contaminated in the hero's mind by a mixture of Pierre Loti, the Baedeker guide, and *A Thousand and One Nights* will change from the tourist's postcard to the 'symbolism' of iron grills and chains. . . ."

One misunderstood consequence of Robbe-Grillet's use of a "narrator," the protagonist N whom we see before us in third-person style but who does not narrate vocally, is that the hero, played by Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, seems to play his part stiffly, awkwardly, as if detached or alienated from what occurs around him, even during highly charged erotic scenes with L. Correctly interpreted, however, this style is seen to be perfectly adapted to its purpose, which is to block audience projection *directly into* N, as would tend to occur with a normal third-person hero, and to turn the spectator's affective projections *outwards from* N, towards L, for example. But, since this is precisely the direction of N's own feelings, we are led away from N only, paradoxically, in order that we may be placed at the center of his psyche; his "emptiness" (created by the neutral acting style of Doniol-Valcroze) becomes the hole or space in his psyche into which we fit. Readers of Robbe-Grillet's prose fiction will recognize, here, a close similarity between the narrative mode of *L'Immortelle* and the *je-néant* or "absent I" technique of the novel *Jealousy*.

Robbe-Grillet's art, both literary and cinematic, is an art of articulation, of transitions and linkings. It is possible that the example of the movies played a part in the origins of these *liaisons*. For decades, film scenes have been linked formally by identical or similar objects, sounds, cause-and-effect sequences, and the like. Yet from the outset the innovator of the *nouveau roman* has imposed on these procedures his individual style, involving not only formal series, whose pictorial nature suggests traditional cinematic analogy and montage (the recurrent figure-of-eight-shaped objects in *The Voyeur*, for example) but also, and especially, associative transitions whose emotional meaning is sensed rather than understood logically, and which operate within the spectator not through analytic decipherment, but by giving form to and channelling subconscious desires and fears. Robbe-Grillet thus induces his reader or spectator not only to assume the point of view of his protagonist, but, in a sense, to become the central consciousness of the work.

A typical example of the transformation of reality by associative emotional deformation is a scene in which N's hand is seen searching a bureau drawer as if to seek a clue to L's identity. Suddenly, N's hand encounters a black lace garter. The film virtually reels into an agonized *stretto* of erotic shots of L, drawn from earlier episodes, and now flashing past with the rapidity of thought itself. The open drawer again appears on the screen, but instead of the ordinary objects previously seen there—Turkish bank notes, postcards, letters, and other innocent odds-and-ends—we now find a murderous-looking curved knife, an ugly iron ring resembling part of a pair of handcuffs, and many gum erasers (always an erotic fetish in Robbe-Grillet). Since all this is filmed "ob-

jectively," without soft-focus blurring or other clues to a subjective vision, the effect is tremendous. As N's hand clenches, in a strangling gesture, the spectator takes upon himself, without the intervention of words an in intensively cinematic fashion, the full force of the sado-erotic jealousy that tortures and obsesses N.

L'Immortelle should be seen more than once, if one wishes to penetrate the subtlety of its construction, not only in the linkings, but also in the variations of scenes. Was L's conversation with a bazaar merchant only commonplace shopping (as it seems the first time shown), or was there a connivance, a message exchanged, a warning to L that M was nearby (as implied in a reprise of the same scene)? Did L exchange with a woman guest, in N's apartment, casual greetings, as it first seemed, or did she hold with a confidante or associate some urgent colloquy on a secret, dubious project?

Finally, chronology (rarely if ever linear in Robbe-Grillet) is, in *L'Immortelle,* characteristically distorted. The very plan of the work requires the re-introducing of past scenes without clear temporal indices. Ordering of events is largely associative and mental. At times, Robbe-Grillet conveys the essentially imaginary quality of the "reality" of the film by employing camera techniques involving apparent chronological impossibilities. Thus, a panoramic shot at N's apartment shows L talking (casually, as mentioned above) to another woman, then moves on to other guests, then penetrates into a different room where L and her friend are talking animatedly, even heatedly. The flowing, continuous nature of N's anguished preoccupation with L's identity and relations with others is thus conveyed. Similarly, we see on another occasion N and L emerging into the Bosporus from an inlet, in a canoe. The point of view is located on board a passing steamer, and as the camera swings on beyond the couple up to the deck, N and L are disclosed standing together beside the boat rail. These "solderings" between non-contemporaneous moments in time may no doubt be traced back to effects in earlier films, but in Robbe-Grillet's work they acquire a new and deep psychic meaning.

Robbe-Grillet appears to be moving ever further towards new realms of subjectivity in the film. But, instead of exploiting the traditional cinematic vocabulary of interiority, the literary apparatus of the confessional or narrative voice, the "clued-in" flashback, soft focus, subjective camera or camera eye, Robbe-Grillet prefers to remain almost entirely at the level of objective surfaces. Though there is, necessarily, a certain photographic picturesqueness and stylization-by-selection in the aspects of Istanbul shown in *L'Immortelle,* nothing is *objectively* deformed. Working with surfaces of realism, Robbe-Grillet plunges us into psychic depths. Without unusual camera angles or lighting, without photographic manipulation, without recourse to the fantastic décor of the expressionist or surrealist film, he is able to make us feel a more intense subjectivity than that of *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* or *Un Chien Andalou.*—BRUCE MORRISSETTE.

YOUNG TORLESS

(Der Junge Törless) Director: Volker Schloendorff. Photography: Franz Rath. Script: Schloendorff, based on the novel by Robert Musil. Music: Hans Werner Henze.

The Vietnam war has soured the jokes Americans used to make about "good Germans and bad Germans." American intellectuals now begin to think about emigrating if things go on this way; and in such an atmosphere *Young Törless* strikes newly exposed nerves. Yet it is not a political film—though people have been trying to read a message into it since it first appeared in Germany last year. It is set far back in time, before World War I; and yet, arguably, its story must inevitably be looked at with Nazism in mind, since it is about the sadistic traits which became such a potent underlayer of German politics. Its choice of distance gives it a quiet strength; a fiction film about Nazism itself, with blackshirts, night arrests, and concentration camps, inevitably becomes a political melodrama. *Young Törless*

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is about the ordinary sadism of some German youths, not notably different from young men we have all known.

What is remarkable about the film is its sureness in handling the ambiguities of its material. Its visual style is firm and compact, with a great deal put into every shot. The opening sequence, in which Törless arrives at the railroad station and is given over to his new comrades, immediately establishes its authority with an awful evocation of the flat, dreary German countryside; the walk through the town to the school, with its linked travelling shots, is a brisk introduction to the milieu: glances of women through doorways, a butcher at work, the tavern, the great stern castle which the military school occupies. Törless's life in the school is sketched in an intense shorthand: a fly is tortured, in close-up, by some boy we never see; a chalk line is drawn on a desk to separate the sharers of it; Törless gets an extra assignment when he makes an audibly cynical remark at the end of Latin class.

The central action of the film concerns the torture of a classmate named Basini by two bullies, Reiting and Beineberg. Basini has stolen some money, and the knowledge of his theft is used to tyrannize him into abject submission, which soon takes on a perverse sexual aspect. Törless, we have seen, is a young man who rather coolly takes the measure of what happens around him, maintaining a detachment verging on arrogance. He becomes a kind of "participant observer" in the weird attic sessions; once he takes an active part, making Basini declare himself a thief—for it is Basini's self-degradation by the act of stealing which chiefly fascinates him. Later, he interrogates Basini in an excited but not hostile way—trying to understand both the motives of the bullies who violate Basini and the motives of Basini in submitting. He finally detaches himself from Reiting and Beineberg, and warns Basini that he is to be "given to the class," but he rather disdainfully walks away from Reiting when he wishes to quarrel. There is a certain moral triumph in his withdrawal, his sense of superiority over both sides. As he said to Basini: "I don't want to torture, I just want to know the truth!"

Well, the old master in Vienna also believed that knowledge was power, in matters of the psyche; and if a victim chooses to remain a victim, knowledge of the fact may be a salvation from fatuous struggle. But *Young Törless* defeats easy generalization at every turn, and this of course is what makes it interesting. It isn't a disguised condemnation of or apology for Nazism; nor is it, like *Lord of the Flies*, a misanthropist tract. It is not even particularly antimilitary. The boys at the school, and their teachers, are not drilled Prussian precisionmongers; in fact they are pleasantly gentlemanly, and the scenes in which they take their leisure in the tavern are done with a clear affection for the setting.

But there are grave faults in the casting and acting. Schloendorff was, I suspect, at such pains to eliminate the stereotype of the bestial Nazi-type German that his student sadists are not wholly convincing. When they are being good, they are too too good, and when they are horrid, one doubts it. In our actual experience, we see little edges of cruelty on people who do cruel things, and those edges show almost all the time, in many tiny ways: how they hold a fork, how they mouth words. (I am not talking about really split, schizoid people, and in this film we're not in Hannah Arendt's depersonalized realm, where ordinary people do monstrous things indirectly—the familiar world we know, which our taxes and votes go to support, and in which our sons someday participate as bomber pilots or mathematicians; the film is dealing with immediate personal acts of violence.) But the young men in the film are contemporary boys; they are manifestly postwar in their movements and attitudes of body and mind; and we are disconcerted by this just as we are by American actors trying to play Europeans, or vice versa. The friendly young whore and waitress Bozena puts them all down—torturers, observer, and victim—as members of the dehumanized bourgeoisie. But despite the force of Barbara Steele's performance, we don't really believe it; surely

these boys listen to the Beatles like everybody else. Hence the density of the world that Schloendorff creates so meticulously is somewhat left hanging.

Nonetheless, the tormenting of Basini in the attic has a frightening force, especially a hypnotism scene; when he is hung by his heels in the gym, and pummeled by the entire class (with Törless half participating, for fear of being turned upon himself) the handheld camera is also flung about and finally assumes Basini's upside-down position. In the print sent to the San Francisco Festival, Törless runs out of the school; mysteriously—evidently due to the cutting of a sexy sequence during which he visits Bozena overnight—we next see him having morning coffee and telling her, disdainfully, that he will have his parents take him out of school. First, however, he is summoned before a school inquiry board, whose members find his carefully philosophic observations irrelevant to the case they wish to hush up, and hence never find out what actually happened. We last see him riding away, in a cab, in the arms of his mother, back to the grim station and the outside world, with the camera movement echoing that of the opening. They are both smiling; but it is a sign of the power and complexity of the film that the audience is not.—ERNEST CALLENBACH

LA COMMARE SECCA

Director: Bernardo Bertolucci. Script: Bertolucci, on the basis of a treatment by Pier Paulo Pasolini.

La Commare Secca, which means literally "The Dry Housewife" or "Housewife Dry" is a Roman-dialect name for death, and Bernardo Bertolucci's film is basically a treatment of death and of processes and conditions which are a part of its nature: solitude, inevitability, ritual. Bertolucci, now 26, made this film in 1962; it was preceded on American screens by his second film, *Before the Revolution,* a study of a young bourgeois Italian's verbal dabbling with Communism and physical interplay with a visiting aunt. Compared to *Before the Revolution, La Commare Secca* tries for much less and comes off much better at it, Bertolucci's weaknesses being more evident in the later film.

A weakness which doesn't have to be one at all in the future unless Bertolucci insists on it is simply that, judging by *Before the Revolution* and despite the fact that Bertolucci has written and perhaps still writes poetry, he does not seem to be a good writer. Most of the writing in that film is in a very banal Italian tradition of regional sentimentalism and would-be-elegant sentence-making; and *Before the Revolution* is not the kind of film where weak writing is relatively unimportant, since its basic theme is of the inconsistencies and uncertain relationship of sentiment, action, and statement. Another weakness is a tendency to plunge, all stops loose, into long bravura sequences which are already compromised by a fundamentally sentimental imposition of his theme. In *Before the Revolution,* where the self-deluding sentimentality of youth forms much of the substance of the film, Bertolucci should have either made of that sentimentality a desperate and all-exclusive myth or else treated its separate components with much more sophistication and originality. As it is, too many of the sequences come off as sentimental treatments of sentimentality rather than "inside" presentations. Allied to that tendency is the other major film-making fault of *Before the Revolution:* the question of pace. Scenes are sometimes stretched out to incredible length, with Bertolucci belaboring the same small notion with image after image and seas of words. And yet despite all this, many things in *Before the Revolution* come off well, especially sequences between the boy and his aunt, articulated by Godardian jump cuts—because Bertolucci, letting go with everything he has visually, makes the scene work as something almost extrinsic to the film, a kind of giant, internally well-balanced cameo.

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able talent it does display, has been sometimes overpraised in this country, due to a certain American provincialism in relation to political themes and also to a tendency to overrate films that deal, apparently sympathetically, with our great cultural hero, the Cop-Out and Failure. (It is a similar American reaction to prefer and misinterpret Antonioni's *L'Avventura* in comparison to *La Notte* and *L'Eclisse.)*

The verbal aspect of *La Commare Secca* presents no problem since, aside from the fact that the language here matters infinitely less than in the very talky *Before the Revolution,* the screenplay stems from Pier Paolo Pasolini who *is* a writer and a good one. The film's setting among the Roman poor and its central theme, the murder of a prostitute, are characteristic of Pasolini's concerns in his novels, poetry, and films—even in *The Gospel.* But from the moment, very early in the film, when an incredible sweeping crane-shot descends from a view of Rome on its hills down to lower ground and centers on the minute figure of a boy scrambling down a hill from his slum home on the outskirts of Rome (out to hustle up money somehow in that monster made of buildings that towers before him) Bertolucci's style establishes itself as a passionate romanticism; he uses a restless, widely moving camera, with jump-cuts derived from Godard but without Godard's elegance or his watered emotions, and very different from Pasolini's more painter-like attempts to create myth through simplicity and arrangement.

The film deals with the police investigation of the prostitute's murder and is broken into sequences which begin with a close-up of a man or boy who was present in a park at approximately the time of the murder; the voice of an unseen detective questions and probes. As each suspect begins relating his story to the police, the film moves into flashback, showing what actually happened to the character in the hours under question, with the alibi to the police sometimes revealed as the truth, sometimes shown to be a lie for personal reasons; in the case of the real murderer, it is an attempt to shift the guilt to other suspects. The characters move through the events of their day— abortive purse-snatching, solitary walking, flirting with their girls; they enter the park for their various reasons, take refuge from a sudden shower (except for the murderer himself, whose story is picked up in the park, after the rain, outside the ritual movement). Between the episodes, in which Bertolucci's camera moves freely and brilliantly, there are brief sequences with a still or virtually still camera, each somewhat later in time, of a woman near middle-age waking up in a darkened, poorly furnished room, getting out of bed, making something to eat, dressing. She is the prostitute whom we will see die.

In her black slip in the semi-darkness of these sequences, and especially in the moments when she is confronting death (in the person of a young worker from northern Italy who will soon beat her to death when she resists his attempt to take her money) her face shows bleak and still somewhat darkened as if in the light of distant street lamps. There is desire in her look, partly professional and perhaps partly genuine as well, for the stranger who is tall and blond and speaks the good Italian of the north; and this woman who is soon herself to die becomes one of the images of death in the film. There are other personifications of death, death seen not as the natural order but as a perversity, a violation of life—the only way the young (and hopefully the old) can envision death. In the first sequence of the film, an unsuccessful young purse-snatcher, on his way back to his slum home at night after no luck in the park, is suddenly confronted in the loneliness of that park by three grotesque bald-headed grim-faced boys who bar his path. Since the purse-snatcher has nothing to be stolen, the implication is that he is subjected to homosexual rape by the bald-heads. More important than what actually may or may not have happened is the image of their three shaven heads and broad bodies blocking any escape. And in a concluding sequence that will have to be discussed by itself, a tight-faced effeminate-looking homosexual becomes the final incarnation of Housewife Dry.

The grayness of the light, the low clouds, the fact that all the suspects are in one way or another loners, all these aspects emphasize the central, deadly theme. But Bertolucci's great energy finds time for other enrichments, especially two almost entirely silent sequences: the first of the purse-snatchers (photographed with a close, hand-held camera) crawling up on lovers who will hopefully be too busy to watch purses (they are not); and the second, perhaps the best sequence in the film except for the conclusion, the almost silent and pleasantly exuberant walk of a young Calabrian soldier through Rome, digging the big-city women with his farmboy's eyes and pursuing them tirelessly with his clumsy advances, delighting in the trains and buildings and noises of the capital city.

The pace of the film stays ritually even through the episode of the Calabrian soldier, which is the third flashback and is beautifully punctuated by a shot of the prostitute and other characters whom we have already met walking slowly toward their places in the park, as if on a stage set where fate must be played for real. In the next flashback episodes, involving the young boys Francolicchio and Pipito, the pace breaks somewhat, both because the same time sequence is not followed and because Bertolucci lets a scene of shy giggling between the boys and two young girls drag on too long. And, for the first few moments, the concluding sequence of the film seems also about to be a failure in pace. We are taken to a dance-hall on an open barge where we are given close shots of couples dancing to rock-and-roll music for what seems like a very long time. A homosexual has been met earlier in the film, propositioning Francolicchio and Pipito, being robbed of a raincoat by them, and then inadvertently witnessing the murder of the prostitute. He walks up a ramp to the barge, echoing the quotation from the great Roman-dialect poet G. G. Belli which is flashed on the screen at the conclusion of this final sequence: "La Commare Secca de Strada-Giulia arza er rampino" (The Dry Housewife of Giulia Street is coming up the stairs). Following him is a man who has some sort of secret understanding with him. The homosexual walks in and out among the dancing couples and gradually becomes an intense symbol of something excluded and alien in the midst of all this life. Then, suddenly, Bertolucci's camera becomes the eye of the homosexual and we move in with him, through couples parting to leave way for Housewife Dry, as he identifies the murderer whose face, distorted by fear and panic, is almost unrecognizable for a moment. Then the police, who have been following the homosexual, leap in and drag the struggling Natalino, the blond murderer, away from his wailing, screaming woman. In its way, in its intense illogical juxtaposition of the homosexual's aloneness and his mission of death (at least the death of long imprisonment away from life, for the murderer) Bertolucci achieves as perfect and unexpected a conclusion for his film as Resnais does in *Muriel* with the sudden arrival of the abandoned wife, whom we have known only as a name, wandering through the rooms of a deserted apartment calling, with genuine anxiety and love, for a worthless man. If Bertolucci can rise that high in his first film, getting those results with a cast of nonprofessional actors, his prospects for genuine greatness in the future are very strong, provided that he can manage to conquer certain loosenesses of feeling within himself.—HENRY HEIFETZ

FILM

Producer: Evergreen Theatre (1964). Director: Alan Schneider. Script: Samuel Beckett. Director of photography: Boris Kaufman. Editor: Sidney Meyers.

Having led the novel form into an inextricable impasse whereby language itself is totally disrupted, having stripped the theater of its most essential elements to the point of literally burying the characters in the ground or in giant urns, having even experimented with the obsolete form of the radio play in an effort to silence sound, it was inevitable that Samuel Beckett should turn to the cinema, and eventually, as he did more recently, to television.

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If Beckett's last novel, *How It Is,* can be read as an ultimate indictment of fiction in its failure to communicate reality with words, and his most recent play (appropriately entitled *Play,* and just made into a film under the direction of Rumanian-born Mariu Karmitz) can be interpreted as a statement of the theater's failure to create illusion through gestures and speech, then Beckett's first scenario, *Film,* consistent with the Beckettian aesthetic system of destruction and purification, represents an attempt to expose one of the cinema's most flagrant failings today: the exploitation of sound, action, plot, and message to the detriment of the visual image.

Though Beckett may stand here in opposition to the avant-garde cinema whose main tendency is, in fact, to achieve a confusion of the multiple elements of the film, his attempt, as with his theater and fiction, is to return to the essence of the medium. This in itself represents an avant-garde effort. For as Beckett himself has expressed it in one of the few striking statements he has made about the creative process: "A step forward is, by definition, a step backward." Therefore, in this first cinematographic venture, Beckett incorporates all the themes and devices he has been exploiting over and over again for more than thirty years, and by simply transposing these to a new medium arrives at a critical judgment of the cinema.

Film, a 24-minute piece featuring "the funnyman who never smiled," Buster Keaton, is a dialogueless experiment whose main theme is the picture itself, that is to say, vision within vision. Expertly directed by Alan Schneider, who is responsible for some of the best Beckett productions staged in this country, the film was the first production of Evergreen Theater, a subsidiary of Grove Press, whose entry into the motion picture field is, according to Barney Rosset (chief editor of Grove Press and head of Evergreen Theater) "a logical extension of our activity as publisher of many of the leading contemporary playwrights and novelists." It coincides with two important developments in the world of literature and film which tend to bring the two closer together: the growing interest among many important writers in the film as a means of artistic expression, and a growing world-wide audience for creative films which emphasizes the shift of the creative role toward the writer. *Film* will eventually form part of a trilogy, with the other scenarios by Eugene Ionesco and Harold Pinter.

Though eagerly awaited by Beckett's admirers, *Film* received a rather cold and negative reception at the Third New York Film Festival both from audience and reviewers. In general, it was found "vacuous and pretentious," too simple, too obvious in its symbolism. One critic went so far as to say that it was "a miserable and morbid exercise"—though the film received several awards at European film festivals. Nevertheless, it is true that anyone even vaguely familiar with Beckett's work in the novel or in the drama might expect a deeper, less naïve, and above all less *obvious* piece of work, simply because Samuel Beckett has acquired the false reputation of being a complex writer; but it is also true that by demanding depth, sophistication, obscure meaning, and intellectual complexity from him we are failing to recognize the basic purpose of his art. For what most people still refuse to accept in all of Beckett's work, and perhaps failed to grasp in this film, is the fact that his entire artistic production is based on the exploitation of the commonplace, the banal, the cliché, in other words, the obvious, or in Beckett's own terms: "The nothing new."

In 1949, in a series of dialogues on painting with art critic Georges Duthuit (published in *Transition*), Beckett made some revealing statements about the dilemma of the artist and art in modern society. Emphasizing that there is nothing new to paint or to say, he defends in a subtle dialectical argument the position of the artist who, even though aware that there is "nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express," nonetheless continues to create an art ". . . weary of its

puny exploits, weary of pretending to be able, of being able, of doing a little better the same old thing, of going a little further along the same dreary road."

Only if one accepts this paradoxical condition can one understand Beckett's aesthetic position, and more particularly the purpose of the present film. It is by returning to the most basic forms of expression, to the primary sources of any artistic medium (in the case of the cinema to the moving image itself and its silent origin), Beckett seems to suggest, that art can be renewed. Thus, in reference to his own work, to the futility of his own creative efforts, he stated in a recent interview: "I am working with *impotence* and *ignorance*." This agony of artistic expression is the theme Beckett has reiterated throughout his work. Why then should we expect from his first film more than what has enabled him to achieve greatness and originality in his novels and plays—basically, the stubborn exploitation of impotence and ignorance, and consequently of artistic failure?

We the quasi-sophisticated theater-going audience, the faithfuls of art films, too often expect from writers such as Beckett messages of deep philosophic meaning, even if we must ourselves impose these values on the work. We are no longer satisfied with the obvious, and yet what seemed so "obvious" in this film is, in fact, its main theme: the simple reaffirmation of the essence of cinema, that is to say, visual expression of life and movement through photographic manipulation. If we accept this as the basic theme, we can then accept *Film* as a work of art which exploits its own substance so as to reveal its own limitation and failure. Therein lies the originality and meaning of Beckett's scenario.

Essentially, all of Beckett's work, in the novel as well as in the drama, exploits its own medium, its own creative elements, as its central subject. The novels of Beckett are all stories of a writer (narrator-hero) who struggles helplessly with the process of putting words together in order to fabricate a fraudulent reality, that of his own fictitious existence within a make-believe world. The theater of Beckett, almost always in the form of a play within a play, reveals in tragicomic terms the *play*-ful and futile process of improvising with words and gestures a theatrical illusion. It is, therefore, logical that Beckett's first film should use as its subject its own essence: visual perception. In other words, if Beckett's concern in the novel is to expose the agony of linguistic expression, and in the theater to reveal the agony of verbal and gestic expression, then, turning to motion pictures, the message he wants to impart is what he himself defines in the screenplay as "the agony of perceivedness."

The theme of *Film,* visual perception, is explicitly sustained throughout by three striking devices: the absence of sound, the obsessive presence of eyes (human, animal, and symbolic), and a limited viewing-angle for the camera-eye which cannot exceed a 45° angle of vision—and for the greater part of the film sees the protagonist strictly from the back. This perceptual limitation is exploited even further by the use of different degrees of luminosity in some images, as well as an increasing blurriness intended to reveal the gradual blindness of the protagonist. Thus Beckett emphasizes that the cinema should primarily appeal to the sense of sight, and only secondarily to the sense of hearing or even to the intellect. For this reason, not only does he eliminate sound in favor of visual images, but he renders the meaning of his script so simple, so apparent that the story itself becomes trivial, almost irrelevant.

This over-simplification of the plot's meaning was obvious to everyone who saw the film, and was summed up by *Time* in these words: "It is a stark, black-and-white portrait of an old man who awaits death in a small, lonely room. Seeking absolute solitude, he turns out his cat and dog, closes the curtains, covers the parrot cage and goldfish bowl with his coat, and blacks out the room's only mirror. Finally, he destroys the last reference to the world in which he has lived, a packet of old photographs. But he cannot escape himself, and as he lifts his eyes to the barren wall before him, he comes face to face with the image of his

own deadpan likeness, with a patch over one blind eye." Indeed, a very banal, commonplace story whose symbolic meaning is self-evident, a story which Beckett has been telling and retelling with comic stubbornness in his novels, in his plays, and now in this film. In fact, *Film* is so reminiscent of *Krapp's Last Tape* that one cannot fail to relate the two works. But the interest here does not lie in the story, nor does it lie in the obvious symbolism or the pathetic condition of the protagonist. It rests essentially on what the *Time* reviewer seems to have failed to *see,* even though inadvertently he stresses it in his summary: Beckett's obsessive use of the eye as the symbol of perception.

This emphasis on visual perception is clearly established at the beginning of the film by a close-up of a withered human eye which stares grotesquely toward the audience. This enormous eye announces the theme. As it picks up the action, it functions both as the perception of the camera-spectator in pursuit of the protagonist, and as the perception of the protagonist in pursuit of himself. This eye follows the main character, Buster Keaton, as he moves clumsily with his back to the camera through three different settings: a street scene, a staircase, and a room. Only at the end of the last sequence does his face come in full view of the camera, in that moment of revelation when he encounters his own self—that tortured image against the wall, with a patch over one blind eye.

From the start of the film, then, an angle of vision ("angle of immunity" Beckett calls it in the script) is established which does not permit the audience a full view of the protagonist. Consequently, he cannot become the "perceiver" but must remain the "perceived object" viewed only from behind at an angle never exceeding 45°. Conventionally, the viewer of a film sees more than the characters in the film. One might say that the spectator has a total perception of the action whereas the characters have a partial perception. In *Film,* however, since the field of vision of the camera-eye never exceeds that of the protagonist, the viewer is denied total perception. It is this restricted "angle of immunity" which creates the "agony of perceivedness."

One of the main objections to this film, however, may result from the fact that the two different perceptions are not clearly established, or too late in the last sequence. Beckett was aware of the difficulty involved here when he specified in his script that "throughout first two parts all perception is E's. E is the camera. But in third part there is O's perception (O being the protagonist) of the room and contents and at the same time E's continued perception of O. This poses a problem of images which I cannot solve without technical help." Alan Schneider and Boris Kaufman tried to resolve this difficulty by following Beckett's own suggestion that "this difference of quality might perhaps be sought in different degrees of development, the passage from the one to the other being from greater to lesser and lesser to greater definition of luminosity." Technically this was not totally successful because the dual perception was never clearly drawn at the beginning of the film. Though the "agony of perceivedness" as expressed by Buster Keaton and as felt by the viewer represents two separate entities which converge toward a unified anguish, it remains somewhat gratuitous. Beckett anticipated this when he stated: "I feel that any attempt to express them [the two separate perceptions] in simultaneity (composite images, double frame, superimposition, etc.) must prove unsatisfactory."

Unable to gain a total view of the character, the spectator is placed in a strained perspective which he cannot exceed either visually or mentally. Similarly, the actor himself is restricted both in his movements and actions as he is forced to remain within the angle of immunity. The dual perception contained in the eye viewing the object in flight, and in the object seeking to affirm its own perception of the self, is a limited and anguished vision which cannot fully apprehend what it sees and what it seeks. Though Buster Keaton excels in this performance, particularly since he can only express his perceptual anguish through the motions of his half-hidden body, his at-

tempt (and of course that of the director) to have both visions coincide remains ambiguous. Beckett understood the problem when he explained in the script that the protagonist is in flight while the viewer is in pursuit, and that "it will not be clear until the end of the film that the pursuing perceiver is not extraneous but the self." For the viewer to grasp this requires on his part an unusual effort of acceptance of the camera-eye with the vision of the protagonist seen objectively and separately by the same camera-eye. But this is in fact the main point of this film, or for that matter of all Beckett's work: to develop in the reader or spectator an extra sense of perception.

While the man rushes through the first two sequences of the film (the street and the staircase that lead to the room) he encounters three other human beings. In the street he stumbles into an old couple who, upon viewing his face, react with a fearful expression toward the camera. A similar reaction of anguish occurs when an old flower-seller in the staircase sees the protagonist from the front. It seems then that what the spectator is not permitted to view causes visual agony for those facing the other side.

In the room, the protagonist is no longer subjected to human sight (except of course for the eye of the camera which, as suggested by the opening shot, is human). He now enters the field of vision of animals and symbolic eyes. He is seen by the eyes of a cat, a dog, a parrot, a goldfish, and symbolically by the eyes of a deity in a picture on the wall, by the reflection of a mirror, by the light of the window, and even by two carved holes in the back of a rocking-chair, which suggest two eyes. Obviously disturbed by these animal and inanimate perceivers, he feverishly eliminates them one by one. In a stylized sequence typical of Beckettian comedy, he puts out the cat and dog, covers the parrot and goldfish with his coat, closes the curtains, places a blanket over the mirror, tears the picture on the wall, and then sits down in the chair thus covering with his back the two eye-like holes.

All this he performs with his back to the camera. However, there remains one last set of eyes which stare at him from his past, those of the people and of himself at various stages of life in the old photographs he now examines. These relics of his past existence represent another perceptual dimension in the film, a kind of play within the play, or in this case pictures within the picture. In great distress he destroys the photographs, and seemingly out of sight now of all extraneous perception, he leans back in the chair to be confronted with his own inner self, his own inner vision. Projected on the wall before him appears his own image, seen for the first time from the front, thus revealing his half-blindness.

The various perceptions which have been established throughout the film as distinct perspectives are now gathered into one and interiorized into the protagonist. This new and concentrated vision results, however, in a series of blurred images which contrast sharply with the clarity of the viewer's perception. While the camera and the spectator have a clear and distinct view, though limited by its angle, the total inner vision of the protagonist is blurred and unprecise. What Beckett suggests here, and what Boris Kaufman achieves through his excellent photography, is a visual ambivalence which stresses and exposes the tragic limitations of external and internal vision, or as Beckett explains in the introduction of his script: "It is a search of non-being in flight from extraneous perception breaking down in inescapability of self-perception."

By exposing the imperfection of the eye, and by reducing the meaning of his plot to self-evidence, Beckett forces the viewer to concentrate on the images themselves, however restricted these may be. But he also uses another device to reinforce his purpose: the absence of sound. The film is silent except for one startling sound which, paradoxically, accentuates the silence. It is a soft "sssh" spoken in the first sequence by the woman in the couple as she silences her male companion who was about to speak (or scream) when the half-blind protagonist stumbles into them. Forbidden to express his inner reaction in words

he stares agonizingly, mouth gaping, into the camera. The same expression appears on the face of the flower-girl, when, unable to express her terror verbally, she transfers this fear to her eyes. The silent spectator in his seat, involved with the images on the screen, is also made to endure the uneasiness and frustration of the situation as he is repeatedly deprived of a clear and full view of the protagonist.

One can conclude, therefore, that the film's purpose is to show the ambiguity of perception, which is shared both by the perceiver and that which is perceived. The perceiver is first represented by the camera-eye and the audience, shifts momentarily to the other three characters in the film, then to the animals, and so on, to become finally the inner vision of the protagonist. Beckett implies by this technique that the "agony of perceivedness" results from the fact of being seen and yet not being able to apprehend that vision, and, moreover, from seeing and not being able to communicate what is seen. In other words, as with all his other works, Beckett once again exposes not only the limitations of the art form he uses, but also the human limitations.

The novel cannot truly pass for reality, the theater is unable to create believable illusion, and the cinema, which essentially should communicate with the viewer simply through a series of moving images, must rely on sound or other devices to achieve its primary goal. Though it is true that for more than thirty years the cinema did communicate meaning solely through images, and that it is generally agreed that the most powerful and truly cinematic moments are not reliant upon dialogue or sound, nonetheless, most film-makers today ignore the basic communicative power of the image. Too often, in fact, as is the case in experimental films which emphasize photographic manipulation, the images are gratuitous and irrelevant to the whole film. Visual perception alone (as exemplified in *Film*) results in frustration and failure. This is indeed a paradoxical process of creation, but a process to which Beckett has remained stubbornly faithful in his effort to create works of art which contain their own critical and analytical judgment. As one of Beckett's own creator-heroes proclaims: to make of failure "a howling success."—RAYMOND FEDERMAN

A TIME FOR BURNING

Produced by Quest Productions for Lutheran Film Associates. Conceived, directed, and edited by Barbara Connell and William C. Jersey. Photography: William C. Jersey. Sound: Barbara Connell. Executive producer: Robert E. A. Lee. 58 minutes. Contemporary.

Sometime in 1965 a Lutheran pastor in Omaha decided to introduce his all-white congregation to some Negroes, planning to begin with volunteer visits by a few of his parishioners with members of nearby Negro churches. Lutheran Film Associates (the agency that produced the feature *Martin Luther* in the early 1950's, and about five years ago another, *Question Seven)* found out about it, got permission to film the project in progress, and commissioned William C. Jersey to do it. This moderately interesting idea was probably expected to end up as a moderately interesting documentary. But things turned out otherwise, partly from Jersey's control of *cinéma vérité* style, and partly because the situation itself went out of control. The project blew up and in January 1966 the pastor was forced to resign; but for four months before that, Jersey filmed committee meetings, church council meetings, congregational meetings, pastors' conferences, youth discussion groups, and conversations with interested Negroes and whites.

Out of this extraordinary opportunity came an extraordinary film. The people in *A Time for Burning* are unselfconscious, not acting, obviously not following either a script or a line of discussion pre-arranged for filming. The impression of the thing really happening in front of one is continuous and wholly convincing. The people had to be used to the camera's presence for that, and it is not surprising to learn that the 2,000 feet of the finished film were culled from 75,000 feet actually shot.

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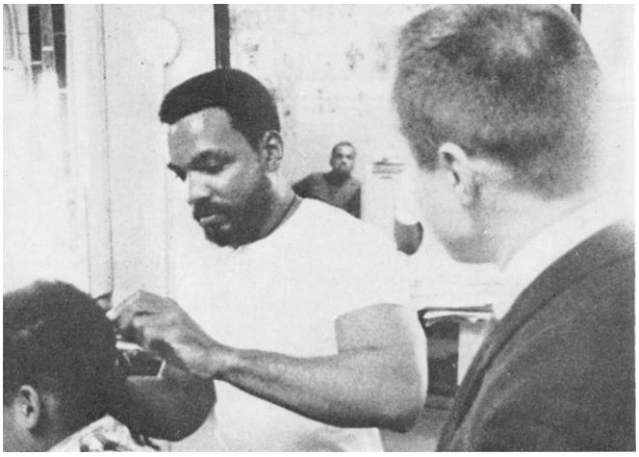

A TIME FOR BURNING

Connell and Jersey did their own editing and did it superbly. Intercutting of episodes sharpens the conflicts and steps up the pace at appropriate moments. Counterpointing of sound and image both creates effects and achieves economy of story line: the camera roves over a Negro barbershop wall covered with clippings and newspictures of racial violence and white brutality, while a Negro barber talks black militancy; under short takes of the pastor playing handball, making a hospital call, greeting parishioners at the church door, the voices of congregation members, Negroes, synod officials argue, accuse, plead, temporize. There is no pointless cutting from face to face in filming conversations: if one of the parties registers the shifting currents sensitively the camera stays on him, letting the sound track provide the continuity and setting of the struggle shown in the face. And sometimes the camera eye and the observer's consciousness become one, as when a woman's voice breaks and her hand shades her eyes: the camera closes swiftly, as if to make sure of her tears.

A Time for Burning makes clear what is essential to *cinéma vérité* as technique. Spontaniety is essential: absolute unselfconsciousness before the camera of the people being filmed. Anarchy—wild jump cuts, encyclopedic unselectivity, deliberate decomposition or splintering of sequences—is not. Anarchy, in other words, when it appears, is part of the statement about the world that the film records. Jersey and Connell show that film-makers with another kind of statement to make can keep the spontaneity, and even the elliptical contemporary mode of narration, while editing their footage down to a lean, rhythmic, coherent narrative.

But Jersey and Connell were fortunate, too in their situation and characters. Easily the most impressive figure is a young Negro barber who speaks for the alienated black community already settled into hostility. Articulate, cool, and implacable, ticking off white offenses and black grievances in an even, dispassionate voice, he is pure judgment delivered without anger and without mercy; the cutting edge a man becomes from a lifetime laid against the whetstone. In one scene he cross-examines a troubled and well-meaning white man about the congregation's response to the pastor's plans. He knows all the answers to his own questions; he asks them only to incise, cutting through one evasion after another to expose the cancer. The man he operates on is another piece of good fortune for the film-makers, a parishioner whose position on the proposed interracial visits changes from reluctance to engagement and commitment. His conversion gives the film a second focal point, inside the problem in a sense, as the pastor, who naturally enough appears to be the sole protagonist at the outset, gives a perspective on it from outside. In fact, it is because this parishioner is caught up into painful awareness that the film ends with the focus where it belongs: not on the pastor's retreating figure as he leaves the congregation, but on the crisis of self-knowledge for the perplexed people he leaves behind.

The timeliness of the film needs no comment. What becomes clearer on reflection, though, is that the issues are more complex than at first appears. One's suspicions of the church are dismally confirmed—yet this congregation has seen the finished film, and authorized its distribution. All civil libertarians will applaud the pastor's intent; but perhaps if he had been as wise as the serpent—simply launched the visits without going through channels, and announced a *fait accompli*—he might have done better.

And the film has implications beyond the race crisis. It is a document of contemporary American life and a study in the human predilection for caste: the club spirit that confers a sense of well-being out of the comfortable knowledge that some are excluded, and out of the corporate narcissism which provides the pleasures unique to an entirely homogeneous group.—HARLAND NELSON

Short Films

TWO DANCE FILMS

NINE VARIATIONS ON A DANCE. By Hilary Harris. PARADES AND CHANGES II. By the staff of Stockholm TV: adapted by Charles Ross and Jo Landor. Produced by Arne Arnbom. Distribution: Extension Media Center, Univ. of Calif.; Berkeley 94720.

The record of "dance films" is hardly promising: looking back, you think of excruciating "experimental," "expressive" films in which a couple prance around emoting poetically, amid abstract backdrops. (After all, dance was movement, and cinema the art of capturing movement.) When that was obviously not interesting enough, film-makers have resorted to superimpositions and color toning. But what has fundamentally been wrong with dance films was not, of course, merely a failure of technique, but rather a failure to develop film styles in which dance could acceptably take place. Fred Astaire surely had some instinctive understanding of this, when he rejected "arty" approaches and insisted on the simplest and least pretentious camerawork for his numbers. And I have a sneaking admiration for the very dullness with which the dancing of one great Russian ballerina was recorded; it was slow and faintly ridiculous, for the camera has an awful way of physicalizing what from the stage may appear ethereal; but at least it was what it was, bluntly and without asking any favors. Most dance films have asked altogether too many: a conviction of High Art, a tolerance of stylelessness, and a fundamentally sentimental attitude toward dance as a whole.

Hilary Harris, in *Nine Variations,* has taken a simple, brief series of movements, and photographed and edited them in nine different ways (with nine different musical variations). The dancing is cool and straight, by a girl who wears long woolies and never bats an eye; she is not being Modern and not trying to express her soul, but doing a curious ritual action with its own internal logic and rhythm. Watching her is like watching a musician play; it has an immense technical interest as well as the delights of motion. She is photographed in a flat light, in a plain room.

Hence the girl is a partner with the camera in a way that no usual dancer, demanding Attention, can be; and hence we are made genuinely to watch her, instead of gazing at poses. The camera sometimes concentrates on her extremities: the relations of arm and hand, the bones and tendon of the heel, the delicacy of fingers. Sometimes it watches the torso: strange disorienting curved shapes, turning, twisting. The camera is very free yet graceful in its motions; evidently hand-held, yet deliberate and never jumpy; sometimes capable of weird perspectives as it sweeps down to the floor, or rises at an angle. It achieves, in relation to the girl's movements, some astonishing effects of turning shapes. And the cutting, which is calculated to different tempos in each variation, is immensely skillful. It is most interesting and suggestive, perhaps, in the last section, where Harris introduces time-overlaps. This is a fairly slow section, concentrating on the terminal action of the dance (lying down). Here Harris achieves a curious effect which might perhaps be called *ritordando;* since we see the overlapped segments from slightly different camera-angles it is not simply a time trick, but rather becomes a kind of gradually declining emphasis, almost a stroking of the girl by the successive images.

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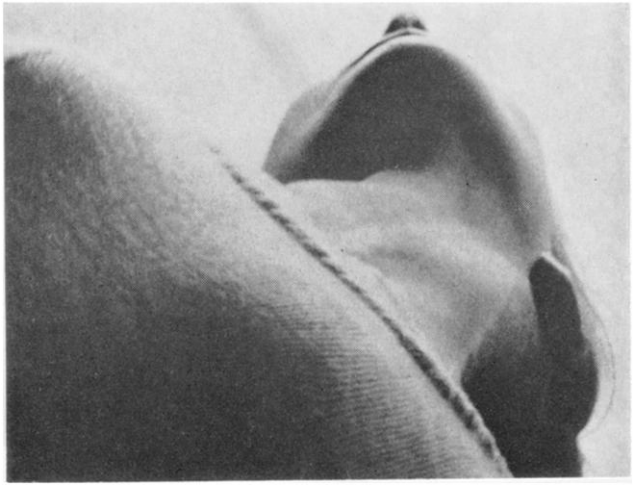
Parades and Changes is a film record of a dance, but it deserves notice because it is so very well made. In fact, it was shot, and simultaneously edited, as a live television performance which was taped, and then put onto film during the visit of the Ann Halprin troupe to Stockholm. Given the improvisatory nature of the troupe's work, the fluidity and coherence of the film is extraordinary. The action is of that strange, proto-purposeful sort which has been giving audiences the creeps all over Europe. In this case the group disrobes and then proceeds to get very involved with a huge mass of paper. Each participant develops, sometimes alone and sometimes in company with others, some seemingly significant business with this paper: wrapping up in it, tearing it, arranging it, hiding under it, and so on. These actions are carried out seriously, intently, almost dolefully. I don't think they are intended to be "Symbolic," which would probably make audiences feel better; they are indulged in (like the dance in *Nine Variations)* as an interesting exercise, although here of a psychological as well as physical kind. Now I can already hear critics attacking this as meaningless or confused or mindless: if there is no *meaning* in it, how can anybody bear to watch? Well, that is not an answer (or a critical standard) but only a question. People find strange things interesting; and it is more intriguing to know why than to hear whether somebody else disapproves of it. The Halprin group do things that *are* interesting, even harrowing, as many audience reactions have proved; we are not in the presence of a Happening where nothing happens. And the Swedes have captured this on tape, with flexible lighting (which is variable —not the usual fixed, flat lighting of a TV studio) and with a careful use of dissolves, so that the perspectives of several mobile cameras, which concentrate variously on different groups or individuals, are woven together in a way that must be at least as interesting as the live performance was.—Ernest Callenbach



Nine Variations of a Dance Theme

THE FILMS OF PETER KUBELKA

(Distributed by the Canyon Cinema Co-operative, San Francisco, and the Film-Makers' Co-op, New York.)

Peter Kubelka, Viennese film-maker, co-founder and co-curator of the Austrian Film Museum, visited San Francisco in early September 1966 as one stop on a three-month tour of the United States. An eloquent speaker, and an even more eloquent film-maker, he has been showing his films and lecture-discussing afterward.

A major reason for coming to this country was his great admiration for the independent film work being done here. Kubelka feels that although the movement is virtually nonexistent elsewhere, independent film-makers will soon appear all over the world, largely due, he feels, to the "inspiration" from America.

According to Kubelka, he is one of the very few independent film-makers in all of Europe. He qualifies this by defining independence as "absolute" freedom from producer control, whether the producer is a corporation, an individual, or the state.

His independence as a film-maker is different from the American conception, and is, in a certain sense, more radical. He somehow gets "assignments" to make films—all of his films have been sponsored—from people who expect

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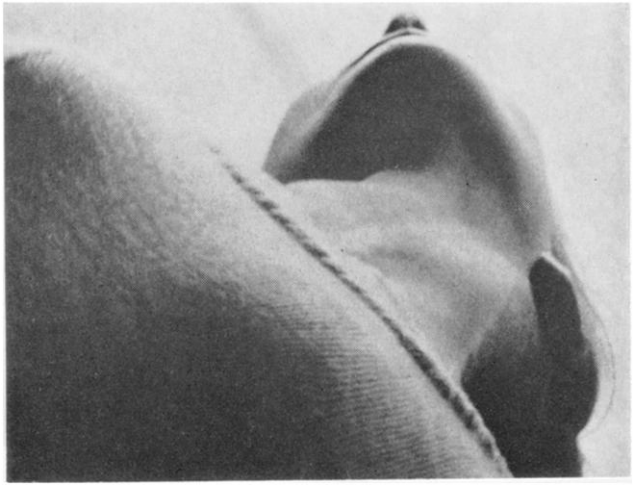

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His independence as a film-maker is different from the American conception, and is, in a certain sense, more radical. He somehow gets "assignments" to make films—all of his films have been sponsored—from people who expect

some fairly conventional result. One man says to his friend, "I would like to have a film made of my daughter's first steps." His friend responds, "O yes, Kubelka, in Vienna. I hear he makes very good films." And so it goes. He made a "commercial" for Schwechater beer that, if it were viewed as a commercial, would make you stop drinking beer forever.

The footage for *Schwechater*—the film retains the name of its sponsor—was originally shot on a 35mm, hand-cranked, scientific camera without a viewfinder, vintage about 1915. Kubelka bluffed his way through the shooting, under the watchful eye of the Schwechater art director, by being very agreeable to everyone concerned and simply turning the camera in the general direction of whatever he was supposed to be filming and cranking away.

After a while the film in the camera was used up, but the art director was just getting into his stride and wanted still more shots of the models drinking beer. So Kubelka merely nodded, smiled, and turned the crank on the empty camera.

When he got the film back from the lab, he completely ignored it for six weeks, to let his emotional involvement with the beer people cool off. Then, when the Schwechater executives began clamoring for their commercial, he began his beautiful sabotage. The work, once he began editing, took six months.

First, he pared down the 400 feet of footage he had shot to about 50 feet. What remained was a "set" of five images of varying lengths: a close-up of a hand pouring beer into a glass with a model in the background, a close-up of bubbles in a glass that looked like exploding shell fragments, the same model drinking beer, two people sitting at a table drinking beer, and a larger group of people drinking in a very opulent setting (the filming took place in one of Vienna's plushest clubs).

These five images were then intercut in short lengths so that an action will begin, be interrupted by another, then another, then another, then the original action will continue. Another image, one of the interrupting images, will then be continued in the same manner. This whole pattern will then repeat with the order of the images changed. It's as though you started with five lengths of film, each length numbered serially, one number per frame, then began to edit:

a b c d e b a d
1-2-3/1-2-3-4-5/1-2/1/1-2-3-4/6-7-8/4-5-6/2-3-4-5-6-7/ . . .

The original footage was black and white. This was printed on color stock, some sections through a red filter. There is also a green aberration in the print which was caused by the photo-chemical qualities of the color film.

To these visuals Kubelka added a track that sounds somewhat like a rasp scraping over soft wood plus electronic bleeps. There is almost a suggestion in the film that the hand that enters the screen in close-up to pour the beer might be making this rasping noise.

The result is an "abstract" film of tremendous power that, because the images come and go so quickly, allows the viewer only to *see* the film, but not to reflect on it while it is still on the screen. The images are seen more or less subliminally, and so the film takes on the aspect of a presence perceived but not known, and operates on an almost purely physiological level.

The beer people came, saw the film, got up, walked out, and stopped all payment to Kubelka. Ironically, a few years later, after the film had made a success at several European festivals, the Schwechater executives asked Kubelka for a print of "their" film—they had destroyed the copy he gave them originally. The film-maker had a print made for them, for which, he says, "they paid very well indeed."

Kubelka has made five films during the last twelve years. The total screen time is less than forty minutes, or less than three minutes per year. *Schwechater,* which takes so long to talk about, is only one minute long. Kubelka works, very exactingly and meticulously, on one film at a time, and wants every frame to be essential to the whole film; one frame too many, and he feels the work to be second-rate.

He worked for more than five years on his

latest film, *Our Trip to Africa,* which he just had printed in August at Western Cine in Denver. European labs will not print A and B roll for 16mm, so that splice marks are unavoidable. Kubelka's feeling for precision and professional quality would not allow him to show a film in which the splices can be seen. If he has "happy accidents" in his films, you would never know it to look at them.

Kubelka's work can be divided, for convenience of analysis, into two types; abstract or musical films which derive most or all of their impact from structure or form, and naturalistic films which are also very formal, but are more complex because they deal with all of our well-entrenched prejudices toward the narrative film.

Schwechater is of the first type, as are *Adebar* and *Arnulf Rainer. Adebar* is Kubelka's first film in this mode, and is structurally much like *Schwechater.* The footage is of dancers at a club called Adebar—the title is neutral, as are all the others—intercut negative and positive with "freeze frames" which stop the dancers in the middle of gestures. The sound is a monotonous electronic sing-song bleep.

Arnulf Rainer (the name of the sponsor of the film) is a film entirely without images and is the distillation of Kubelka's work in this area. It consists entirely of black and white leader. The patterns and colors that the audience sees are purely retinal, evoked by the most basic element of cinema, light. This is the kind of film epileptics are advised not to see, because the frequencies used can get their brains into such an excited state that they will be subject to seizures.

The sound is also black and white—silence and an electronic noise that contains all possible sounds in the spectrum we can hear. As in all the other films, there is continual interplay or counterpoint between sound and the visual tracks. Sometimes white sound and white light, sometimes white sound with black light, etc. At some points the sound seems to echo the visuals.

This film was made in 1960, five years before the popularity of strobe lights for dances, etc., and five years before Tony Conrad made his similar film, *Flicker,* in New York. In other ways, however, Kubelka's films seem outdated. While American film-makers stress their own involvement in their films, Kubelka's work has a surface coldness and detachment that puts some people off. Also, he is not interested in the contemporary obsession with split screens, multiple screens, multiple images, or expanded cinema. If expanded cinema is a product of expanded minds, it might be noted that Kubelka has never turned on.

To read Pudovkin's essay on "Asynchronism as a Principle of Sound Film" is to discover the basis of Kubelka's present filmic activity. He, of course, has carried it very far beyond this narrative orientation. His first film and his latest work are similar in that they are both what he terms "naturalism." Also they both deal with time as a factor of causation. These films could be called anti-narrative. It is as though Kubelka takes the logical fallacy of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* and exploits the efficiency with which the narrative film has made this one of our strong cinematic prejudices.

One image follows another, therefore the second image is an effect of the first: this is what the traditional cinema taught us, and we learned our lesson very well. Kubelka carries this cinematic device to the point where it becomes apparent, but not to the point where it loses all effectiveness. A very difficult balance to achieve.

Our Trip to Africa is a caustic film, and at a certain critical distance from the screen, is almost maliciously humorous. Kubelka was commissioned to accompany a group of Austrian burghers to Africa to film their adventures on safari. He had to work in 16mm, although he otherwise works in 35mm, because they were providing the equipment.

The main feeling of the film is one of an unbridgeable gap between the contemporary, civilized, "armchair" European and the contemporary African who lives, to a great extent, out of time as we think of it. The gap between peoples is most obvious at the very end

of the film. There is a chest-to-knee image of a naked African Negro striding, his penis hanging free, while on the sound track, in heavily accented English, a voice says, "I would like to go to your country, sometime," (cut to a vast, snow-covered valley, a woman wrapped in pounds and pounds of cloth plodding up a hill in dead silence; cut to the Negro still walking) "if I get a chance." End.

There is much speech in both *Mosaic in Confidence* and *Our Trip to Africa,* most of it prosaic according to Kubelka. Unfortunately, I cannot understand German, so much of it was lost on me. My impression, especially in the first film, was that there were many "puns" made by word reacting with image, or at any rate much interrelation. The example above would seem to bear this out.

Sounds other than speech are used in this way also. For instance, in *Our Trip to Africa,* the sound of a gunshot is used many times, from earliest on, to trigger a cut from one image to another. A fish on a line is being dragged to a boat—crack—a grass fire with naturalistic crackling sound—crack—a man with a rifle shooting over the flames at birds that have been flushed by the fire. The song, "Around the World in Eighty Days," is used many times throughout the film, almost always ironically, and with too many implications to be enumerated.

Almost all the images are crisp and clear, and the camera is most often stationary. Because of this, when the camera does move and there is movement within the frame, it is doubly affecting. Kubelka hand-holds his camera at one point and follows very closely the capture of a giraffe by African trappers who use long poles with loops on the end and chase the giraffe on foot.

This kind of image is contrasted with the "great white hunter" leaning his rifle on a "boy's" shoulder and shooting at antelope that have been flushed by beaters. Kubelka says that because his employers were not able to hunt well enough to take any trophies in the wilds, they bribed guards at game preserves where the animals are relatively tame, so that they could hunt within the preserve.

There are many such ironic contrasts, some more subtle than others. One I like particularly well, and it will also illustrate the structural relationship of the naturalistic and the abstract films. Again there is the breaking up and intercutting of continuous actions. A young Negress stands in a group clothed in an open transparent robe. Cut to other images. When we see her again the camera is moving closer. Cut to other images. Again the girl, getting closer still. Cut to two flabby, pale-white men in undershorts bathing in a river. Cut to the rich, full, iridescent black-brown breast of the woman we've been approaching, now in extreme close-up. This may sound rather banal, but in its cinematic reality it is not.—EARL BODIEN

MEMORANDUM

Directed by Donald Brittain and John Spotton. Written by Donald Brittain. Photographed and Edited by John Spotton. Produced by John Kemeny. National Film Board of Canada, 1966. 58 minutes.

"Once a crime has been committed, it becomes for all time a potentiality."

After twenty years the emotional and intellectual chord struck in men by the phenomenon of the camps still reverberates unresolved. Questions of guilt and responsibility permeate the discussion of Nazi bestiality, and the underlying problem transcends the dimension of historical fact and reaches a level of personal relationship. The questions asked are not only "Who did it, and why?" but also "Could I do it, and how?" The dictum that brutality breeds brutality means, among other things, that every act of brutality desensitizes the civilization with respect to the perception of ensuing acts. Napalm, for example, would have been unthinkable without the pre-existence of the camps. It takes a level of desensitization to accept the use of a monstrous weapon which can only be achieved by a prior horror.

Memorandum deals with the phenomenon of the camps, and its history and implications, but not its solutions. As in Resnais' *Nuit et Brouillard,* much is made of the contrast be-

of the film. There is a chest-to-knee image of a naked African Negro striding, his penis hanging free, while on the sound track, in heavily accented English, a voice says, "I would like to go to your country, sometime," (cut to a vast, snow-covered valley, a woman wrapped in pounds and pounds of cloth plodding up a hill in dead silence; cut to the Negro still walking) "if I get a chance." End.

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Almost all the images are crisp and clear, and the camera is most often stationary. Because of this, when the camera does move and there is movement within the frame, it is doubly affecting. Kubelka hand-holds his camera at one point and follows very closely the capture of a giraffe by African trappers who use long poles with loops on the end and chase the giraffe on foot.

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There are many such ironic contrasts, some more subtle than others. One I like particularly well, and it will also illustrate the structural relationship of the naturalistic and the abstract films. Again there is the breaking up and intercutting of continuous actions. A young Negress stands in a group clothed in an open transparent robe. Cut to other images. When we see her again the camera is moving closer. Cut to other images. Again the girl, getting closer still. Cut to two flabby, pale-white men in undershorts bathing in a river. Cut to the rich, full, iridescent black-brown breast of the woman we've been approaching, now in extreme close-up. This may sound rather banal, but in its cinematic reality it is not.—EARL BODIEN

MEMORANDUM

Directed by Donald Brittain and John Spotton. Written by Donald Brittain. Photographed and Edited by John Spotton. Produced by John Kemeny. National Film Board of Canada, 1966. 58 minutes.

"Once a crime has been committed, it becomes for all time a potentiality."

After twenty years the emotional and intellectual chord struck in men by the phenomenon of the camps still reverberates unresolved. Questions of guilt and responsibility permeate the discussion of Nazi bestiality, and the underlying problem transcends the dimension of historical fact and reaches a level of personal relationship. The questions asked are not only "Who did it, and why?" but also "Could I do it, and how?" The dictum that brutality breeds brutality means, among other things, that every act of brutality desensitizes the civilization with respect to the perception of ensuing acts. Napalm, for example, would have been unthinkable without the pre-existence of the camps. It takes a level of desensitization to accept the use of a monstrous weapon which can only be achieved by a prior horror.

Memorandum deals with the phenomenon of the camps, and its history and implications, but not its solutions. As in Resnais' *Nuit et Brouillard,* much is made of the contrast be-

tween time present and time past, and of whether that which occurred in the past could again occur in the present. While Resnais' scope is limited to the exploration of one camp, and the soliloquy of a voice brooding over the possibilities, *Memorandum* presents a more personal and stylistically eclectic view. The film is nonlinear in its logic and construction. It refuses the assumption of the new documentary, whether called *cinéma-vérité* or Living Camera, that a person is intrinsically extraordinarily interesting, and that following the person around with a camera and sound recorder is the key to film structure. The *cinéma-vérité* technique is indeed used as a frame for the action of the film, but it goes as far beyond the Maysles-Leacock-Rouch conception as D. W. Griffith went beyond Porter's ideas of editing. The technique emerges as just that: a technique, matured, confidently done, and treated as more than an end in itself. The camera's task goes beyond chronicling a life. It tells of how the life got to be the way it is, the civilization in which the life exists, and a bit about the next generation of that life.

The life in question is that of Bernard Laufer, Canadian glass-cutter, and survivor of Bergen-Belsen. Laufer, together with a party of other North Americans, visits Bergen Belsen on a day and a half pilgrimage. He takes his son. The film relates the context of Laufer's trip, the Germany of the economic miracle, fat, comfortable, and mostly forgetful: current Munich, Berlin, Cologne, Hanover, Hamburg. The film also deals with the era of German affluence before this one, in which the German prerogative extended to places like Bergen-Belsen, Treblinka, Auschwitz, and Birkenau. In Germany present, we see the continuing war-crimes trials, in which the defendants were examined by psychiatrists and adjudged sane. Some are convicted, but others, who murdered not with their own hands but by memorandum, are set free. It is the Germany of *Gemütlichkeit*, and champagne, and the middle-aged people in wicker chairs on the beach. It all looks civilized, organized, and western-industrialized. We see the opening of the first *Autobahn*, and the baptism of one of Goering's children, with Hitler in attendance, and it also looks civilized. And then there is Laufer's world of twenty years ago: the mother holding her dead child and swaying in awful catatonic rhythm in the streets of Warsaw, and the film made by the British on the day they liberated Laufer's camp, Bergen-Belsen. The narrator tells us that Laufer was one of these people. The ordinary and rather uninteresting Canadian glass-cutter suddenly achieves a uniqueness. He is still alive.

Ultimately, the party of survivors and the retired British officer who led the liberating troops twenty years ago make their pilgrimage. The night before, there is a reception, and the British officer is jolly and smiling in the way that middle-class English gentlemen are when subjected to novel social discomfort. In the camp, now a kind of German garden, he is serious; so are the survivors, as they say *kaddish*, the Jewish prayer for the dead. Laufer's son, 100% Canadian, has until now maintained the objectivity and openness to the New Germany characteristic of well-brought-up young people. At the camp he comments that they should have left the camp as it was, and Laufer questions the accuracy of the inscriptions which state how many dead lie under each grassy hillock. They underestimate. The contrast to the memorial at Bergen-Belsen is Birkenau, left as it was, and even more staggering an infernal device. We see an industrialized, organized factory for death, built according to architect's plans, according to the best available flow charts and statistical projections of input and output requirements, and built of long-lasting ferro-concrete. Rated capacity: 12,000 deaths daily. Over-all output: about 2½ million dead. The film ends with the western-industrial, organized Germany of 1965. There is some guilt, some concern, but most would like to be allowed to forget, or at least be left alone.

The implications of the film with respect to film style, great as they are, seem insignificant against the complexity and subtleness of its conception and construction. It is a total kind

of film, relating the present both in itself and in terms of the past, and making one more than a bit uncomfortable about the future. It is inescapable that one must deal directly with the proposition that there are no good people, no bad people, but only people who do good things and bad things—and sometimes they are the same people. Further documentation of this proposition can be found on the front page of any newspaper, if one can bear it.

—HENRY BREITROSE

EPHESUS

By Fred Padula. Audio Films.

The First Ephesian Church of Berkeley is a Negro church—an institution of more than merely cultural interest these days. *Ephesus* is a record of a service at the church, and ought to be seen by any white who wants to understand life in our black ghettos. In a sense, that is all that can be said about it; the film's contents are too complex, and require too much background information, to discuss in a brief space. Padula—who is white, and a former film student at San Francisco State College—managed to capture the event sensitively, and to produce a coherent chronologically arranged film, despite terrible technical handicaps. He did not have one of those sophisticated, expensive *cinéma-vérité* outfits, and hence had to edit his sound "wild," a process of approximating synchronization whose insanity can only be judged by those who have tried it.

If it is possible for white people to understand Negro people in this country today, *Ephesus* will help. It would, I think, be especially useful if shown with *A Time for Burning;* for that would provide a vivid, inescapable contrast of the meanings which religion has for the two cultures. I myself find the contrast tragic and depressing; I am embarrassed and angered by the sad, defensive whites whose witlessly discriminatory attitudes are documented in *A Time for Burning,* and I admire the black people whose despair and religious passion animates *Ephesus* (they seem to me Christian, while the Lutheran congregation is merely one of the forms of the property-minded white middle class). Other viewers will draw different lessons, no doubt; what is important is that the films, and the reality they are so intimately drawn from, be perceived.

—ERNEST CALLENBACH

Entertainments

Alvarez Kelly. The twists in this Civil War melodrama—the battle centers around a herd of cattle and the South wins, and neither William Holden nor Richard Widmark gets the girl—are engaging enough, and some of the action is pleasant, but Edward Dmytryk's direction is depressingly conventional, and so are his leading actors. The scene in which Union officer Patrick O'Neal questions the Negro slaves about their perplexing loyalty to their plantation masters, and is answered by defiant silence, will not be popular today, but it is a daringly understated and equivocal moment. Little else in the film commands respect or even our full attention. Not bad if you see it on a double bill.

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An American Dream is probably the strangest bad movie to come out of Hollywood this year. The titles, against a rich grey silk backdrop, are something of a relief—it looks as if they've turned it into a lush soap opera. But they haven't, really; Rojack still kills his wife (with less orgasmic relish than in the book, to be sure) without feeling much compunction, and the movie is surprisingly frank about the pressure exerted by Deborah's Catholic father to insure that his daughter is buried in style. At the end Rojack is murdered by the Mafia, which might seem standard Hollywood moralizing, except that the killing seems so purposeless. The Retribution talk that we expect never appears, and in a way Cherry's cold abandonment of her lover to the Mafia is a more amoral conclusion than Mailer's. Anyway we can't blame the producers for wrecking this one—screenwriter Mann Rubin and director

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A Big Hand for the Little Lady. Many reviewers have complained about the surprise ending to this delightful Western comedy concerning a poker game with unusual emotional stakes, but the complaints are probably more the register of unconscious outrage at the film's maliciousness than aesthetic demurrals. For the surprise is a thoroughly, refreshingly cynical slap in the face of sentiments like gallantry, nobility, courage—sentiments which the rest of the film has lured us into swallowing. The ending makes us all fools, and it's not just a cheap twist, because the outrageousness of the sentimentality has been implicit throughout, only we haven't wanted to stop indulging ourselves. What I'm describing sounds like a serious movie, and it might have been, except that Hollywood somehow manages to give even vicious cynicism such a cheerful, healthy look. Fielder Cook's direction is still TV-scale, but the script is cunning, and the cast superb. Except for Jason Robards, who ought to forget comedy before he loses his voice, the actors—Henry Fonda, Joanne Woodward, Charles Bickford, Burgess Meredith, Kevin McCarthy, Robert Middleton, Paul Ford—all slip skillfully back and forth between sentimental folk comedy and sly satire. Some of it, like Paul Ford's glorious overplaying of the skinflint bank president, is very broad; while some of it, like Kevin McCarthy's delicate parody of the frontier *gallant*, is surprisingly subtle. Most of it is taking.—STEPHEN FARBER

Chamber of Horrors, or *House of Wax* revisited, with Patrick O'Neal imitating and emulating Vincent Price in an off-the-cuff manner (humming softly to himself as he prepares for a kill) that lends a peculiar appeal to the otherwise mediocre proceedings. There's some ticket-selling nonsense about a "fear flasher" and "horror horn" designed to "warn" viewers of impending horror that just isn't there. Hero Cesare Danova looks like a Latin Jan Murray. Wilfrid Hyde-White acts like he took time off from *My Fair Lady* to run through this one. It's rather sad to see still lovely Suzy Parker reduced to bit playing. Taken as a whole and stood alongside the "Natural Vision Three Dimension" original of thirteen years ago, this Hy Averback replica is pretty lame. And why on earth the Tony Curtis guest appearance?—DAN BATES

Dear John is the most foolishly overpraised movie of the year—a harmless, moderately dull, smalltime sentimental romance, with some extra sex. There are a few erotic moments, but even the sex is disappointing—it's a very *frustrating* movie because it shows just enough to get you a little bit excited, but never quite enough to satisfy you. I can hear the protests already. "But *Dear John* is a serious movie." Rubbish. True, its time sequence is all jumbled up, but once you get the hang of that, you see that it doesn't have much psychological or dramatic or even poetic point; it's just for arty effect, or maybe to cool us off. If the film's inventiveness does not lie in its editing, what about its characters or its story? This line is even less fruitful—John and Anna are the kind of likable, pretty people we're used to seeing in TV comedy, and their

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ing. It also has an expertly delightful yiddish-Roman performance by Zero Mostel, a touching if too seldom visible role for Buster Keaton, and a script with a number of excellent wisecracks. What it does not have is the mysterious essence of great comedy, that inspired madness which we cannot define, much less prescribe a recipe for, but which we recognize when it has reduced us to helpless agonies of laughter. *A Funny Thing* has many nice comic moments, and it even attempts a slapstick chase, in a cluttered, labored way; but it has no real feeling, no underlying and animating grasp of the human condition to give its ribbing the touch of anguish we find in great comedy. It assumes an expense-account audience looking for "a good time" (some amused titillation about sex, jokes that make you feel "in") and it relentlessly gives them what they want. (Although director Richard Lester seems unable, here as in his other films, to provide much real sexiness; it is all jiggle and flash.) Hence, despite the bravura of Lester's direction, and the Beatle-sharpened acuity of John Victor Smith's editing, the film comes nowhere near a personal comic style. It is only another cleverly constructed entertainment, and it leaves you hungry for the real thing.—E.C.

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Kaleidoscope is a romantic-comic suspense adventure that is interesting for the liberties that it takes with the genre. Barney, the hero, may be sophisticated, appealing, and dependable, but he's a professional gambler who has contrived an illegal revenge on the Society that seems to oppress most of us. Angel, the heroine, may be feminine, pretty, and charming, but she's a little sloppy and dumb, too. Barney and Angel are attracted to each other and get into bed without any hesitation. Dominion, the villain, is a campy individual who likes young men and a young man of Scotland Yard is trying to help and "make" Barney at the same time. The means of foiling Dominion is not through elaborate escapades that will result in his death, but through his favorite pastime—poker. The reason for the failure is not Dominion's perceptiveness, but Barney's lack of foresight and stupidity. Barney and Angel escape death not by their own ingenuity, but by the shooting skill of the young man who has failed with Barney. The film is meant to be an audacious put-on, but it fails to achieve that status for three reasons: the elaborate Technicolor production which tends to swamp the action, the stolid direction of Jack Smight who seems to understand the script, but is unable to convey its spirit, and the use of Warren Beatty who is uncomfortable and unable to speak one articulate line effectively.

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Lemonade Joe is a Czech satire on the American Western, a delightful little film directed by Oldrich Lipsky. For some unknown reason, it is being distributed in this country by Allied Artists and was given a limited run in New York recently; mostly, it has been turning up at the kind of neighborhood theater that panders to the Walt Disney-Ivan Tors audience, perhaps because it is nicely dubbed, but more likely because it is thoroughly enjoyable and hilarious from start to finish. *Joe* is about the Western hero, dressed in white woolly chaps, a fifteen-gallon hat, and two six-guns that fire at least twelve rounds apiece; he's the paragon of "manly" virtue, riding through the Old West, armed with a sappy smile and several bottles of Kola-loca Lemonade (his father owns the formula), which, like Popeye's spinach, provides him with all of the instant energy he needs to blaze a temperance trail through every one-horse town he enters. Liquor is his only dread: he actually faints at the slightest whiff of the stuff, and his enemies make the most of his weakness. Joe's chief foes are a saloon owner, a woman of pleasure (naturally), and a notorious dime-novel villain (played by Milos Kopec, whose performance is excellent). Together, the three of them set out to undo all of Joe's good deeds, which consist mainly of converting the township's hardened lushes to abstinent lemonade drinkers. The most admirable qualities of the film are its authenticity (in a Czech Western, no less) and its laugh-a-minute pace. Director Lipsky shows an uncanny ability to toss every conceivable type of sight gag into his film and always get a laugh: undercranked

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The Sound of Music. I put it off, but I broke down, and I found it wanting, as expected. They say it has everything, and it has Alps, nuns, Nazis and children, but it does not have a dog. This sort of movie needs a dog, to serve as a center of sensibility and intellect. *My Fair Lady* may be dull from time to time, but in comparison with *The Sound of Music* it deserves an Academy Award, or two, or even three.—R. M. HODGENS

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The Wild Angels has several pleasant sequences of motorcyclists on the move—against the skyline, roaring down desert highways, horsing around at a campsite. Motorcycle material is always beautiful to watch, and on a big theater screen it takes on some of the sweeping quality we love in westerns. Although director Roger Corman and scriptwriter Chuck Griffiths have used Peter Fonda and Nancy Sinatra as leads, and crucial dramatic encounters are badly written and stiffly played, what makes this picture interesting is its "documentation" side. We are assured, and I guess I believe it, that the gang here includes real Hell's Angels from San Pedro; at any rate the film-makers count on our believing it, and being as fascinated as we are repelled by the Angels' deviant ways. They enjoy brawling and racing around dangerously on expensive bikes; they smoke pot ("Honey, do you have a *straight* cigarette on you?" somebody asks); both men and women fornicate with relish; they drink a little beer, wear highly individual hair and clothing styles, and in short seem to have utterly escaped the American Way of Life. It is true the plot tells us there's really no place to go; when the gang leader is asked what they really want to do with their "freedom," the script gives him no answer except "have a party." (Then ensues the first movie sequence which can be considered an orgy by any careful definition of that term.) But what lies beneath this trashy construction, and this opportunist seizing on the Angels' "image," is the fact that the motorcyclists display a personal sense of social cohesion; they live in a group bound by emotional rather than economic ties—however perverse the emotion sometimes gets. And to the savage in every suburbanite, waiting by his TV for McLuhan's new tribalization, the image of such a group is a frightening glimpse of unmet needs raging into the open.—E.C.

The Wrong Box has the same dubious relationship to comedy that Bryan Forbes' previous films have had to drama. *The Wrong Box* is at least less pretentious than *King Rat* or *The L-Shaped Room,* and this time Forbes did *not* write the script, but enlisted Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart (*A Funny Thing Happened On the Way to the Forum*) to spoof a Robert Louis Stevenson novel. Their writing here is uneven, but it contains some mock-macabre business, like the confusion of a spare wood money-box and a coffin, discovered only when the distracted widow notices that her dead husband seems to have shrunk. As usual Forbes has assembled a good cast—Ralph Richardson, John Mills, Michael Caine, Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, and Peter Sellers (who turns his two scenes as a drunken old quack into masterful caricature of the grotesque). But once again Forbes directs erratically, with sticky fingers in many fashionable pots—black comedy, Victorian parody, knockabout Lester-ease farce. The film recalls *Kind Heart and Coronets,* and the contrast crisply reveals Forbes' utter lack of control over his material. But he's pleasing the Swingers.—STEPHEN FARBER

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The Wrong Box has the same dubious relationship to comedy that Bryan Forbes' previous films have had to drama. *The Wrong Box* is at least less pretentious than *King Rat* or *The L-Shaped Room,* and this time Forbes did *not* write the script, but enlisted Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart (*A Funny Thing Happened On the Way to the Forum*) to spoof a Robert Louis Stevenson novel. Their writing here is uneven, but it contains some mock-macabre business, like the confusion of a spare wood money-box and a coffin, discovered only when the distracted widow notices that her dead husband seems to have shrunk. As usual Forbes has assembled a good cast—Ralph Richardson, John Mills, Michael Caine, Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, and Peter Sellers (who turns his two scenes as a drunken old quack into masterful caricature of the grotesque). But once again Forbes directs erratically, with sticky fingers in many fashionable pots—black comedy, Victorian parody, knockabout Lester-ease farce. The film recalls *Kind Heart and Coronets,* and the contrast crisply reveals Forbes' utter lack of control over his material. But he's pleasing the Swingers.—STEPHEN FARBER

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The Sound of Music. I put it off, but I broke down, and I found it wanting, as expected. They say it has everything, and it has Alps, nuns, Nazis and children, but it does not have a dog. This sort of movie needs a dog, to serve as a center of sensibility and intellect. *My Fair Lady* may be dull from time to time, but in comparison with *The Sound of Music* it deserves an Academy Award, or two, or even three.—R. M. HODGENS

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