FILM QUARTERLY

WINTER 1971–1972

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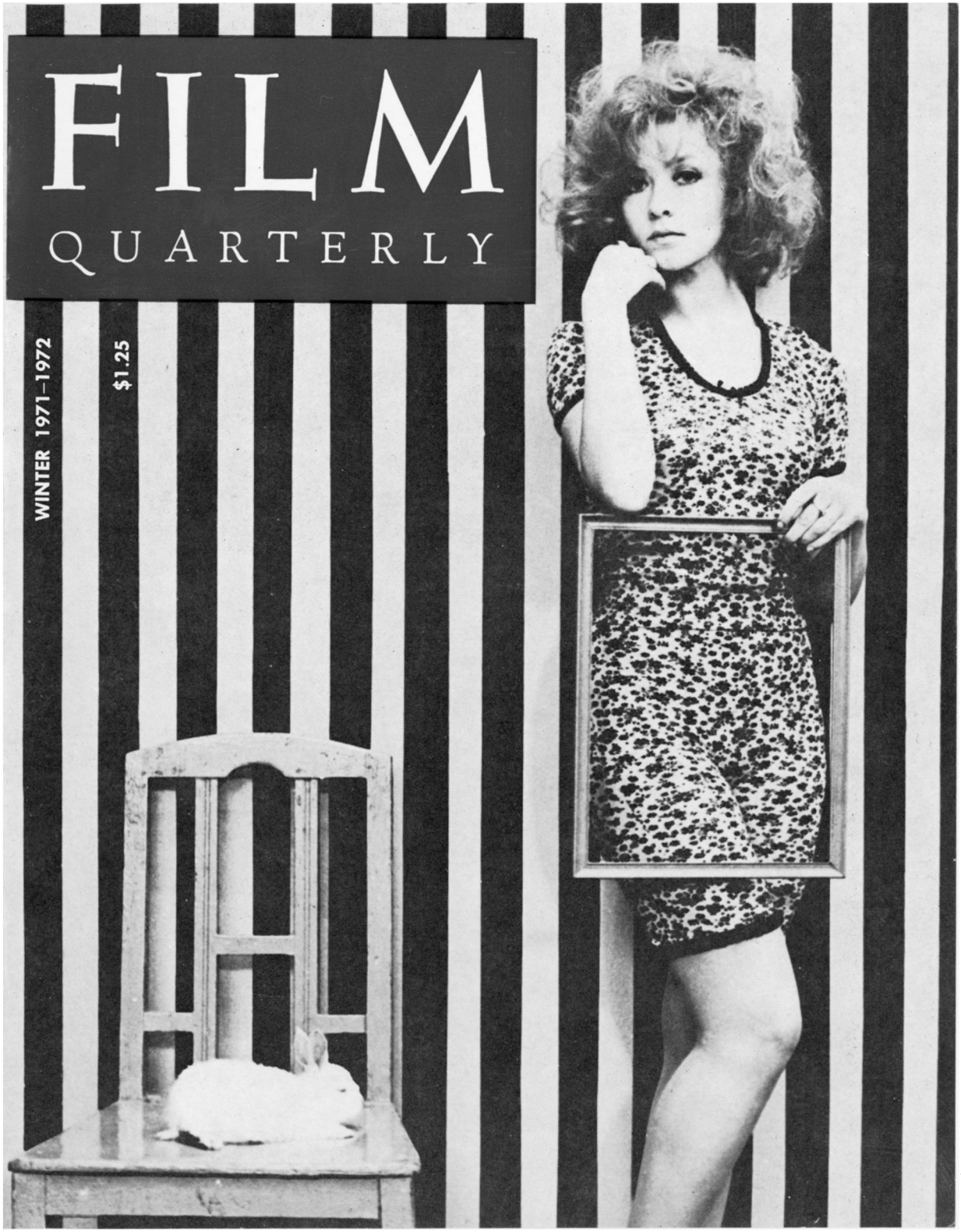

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Editor's Notebook

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REGIONAL FILM CENTERS

The National Endowment for the Arts has also just announced a matching-grants program for regional film centers. It appears that these grants will aid schemes to take film out into the country on a more enterprising basis than the American Film Institute's centralized programs, and interested individuals and groups can obtain more information from: Chloe Aaron, Public Media Program, National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C. 20506. Regional film centers could be set up by museums, libraries, universities, or other organizations. Funding up to $25,000 will support (1) high-quality film programming for the public at low cost, (2) resources for research and film study, (3) the providing of information to individuals, schools, and institutions (the appointment of "media extension agents" is one possibility envisioned here). Considerations in evaluating proposals will include an accessible location, a sponsoring institution of some kind, a nearby film audience, and a willingness to work with film-related elements in the community.

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—JOSEPH MCBRIDE

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[cont'd. on p. 19]

and metaphorically; and anyone of the century can understand it as the disease of the civilization. For America, science represents a cosmogonic myth. Accessible to the American as Christianity never fully was, it provides a reservoir of energy that can generate American art.

Examples of this are everywhere. In film, as in literature, the genre of "science fiction" has left its woolly monsters behind, and gained a new respectability in speculative vision. For example, in *2001: A Space Odyssey* Stanley Kubrick simultaneously explored man in relation to machine, and man in relation to his own spiritual possibility. The alternative potential, death by technology, has also been considered, in such films as *Dr. Strangelove, Little Big Man,* and *Catch-22.* For the technical civilization, these films have engaged a fundamental notion of apocalypse, demonstrating the human and his environment to be mutually exclusive.

From the time that John Henry ceased to be a survival-type, the American adaptation to technology has been painful. Perched on the handlebars of a careening driverless motorcycle in *Sherlock Jr.,* Buster Keaton was the wholly uneasy rider who had to predate Hopper and Fonda. If the Civil War was the first semimechanized modern war, the nation survived it on the hairs-breadth level so emblematic of Keaton's own survival among machines like *The General's* steam locomotive.

Keaton's relation to technology was acrobatic. With the parallel evolution of the medium and of America, the relation, man to machine, has necessarily become more organic. What was Jimi Hendrix's relation to his amplifiers? Doesn't the word "organic" limply understate the case for an adjustment, to anyone who has seen Tina Turner nuzzle the *Gimme Shelter* microphone?

In *Sherlock Jr.,* Keaton the projectionist looks with wonder on a film image he imagines to be himself. In *Gimme Shelter,* Jagger the artist looks with dead acceptance on a film image that is himself. *Monterey Pop, Woodstock, Gimme Shelter, Mad Dogs & Englishmen,* these festival rock films illustrate as well as anything else the full acceptance of technology in art. Here is the striking symbiosis of humans and electronics, the simultaneous realization of human and electronic ecstasies. Unaccommodated thousands come, in the spectacle-tradition of dionysia, having stripped their lives of careful clothes and nonessential gadgetry, but never of the electronics which make the dionysia possible. Here is the culture that begins to feel easy with its machines. The films will follow.

Forms of American art must be phased with the forms of American myth. Engineers control the energy, and establish the modern artistic relation to image and sound; while Americans sense the mechanics of their new habitat, and begin to try to live inside.

NOTES

1. "Autobiography and America," *Virginia Quarterly Review,* Spring, 1971, p. 262.
2. See *When Attitudes Become Form (Works Concepts Processes Situations Information),* the show catalogue for the exhibition of the same name, Inst. of Contemporary Arts, London, 1969.

Special acknowledgment is due to Professor J. M. Cox of Dartmouth College for his remarkable perspectives on American forms in general, and particularly those related to the South, and the War Between the States; and to Professor A. T. Gaylord of Dartmouth College for advice in preparing this article, and for the series of lectures which occasioned it.

[Editor's Notebook, contd.]

teaches at Stanislaus State College. JAMES ROY MACBEAN now teaches film at SF State College. MIKE PROKOSCH studies film at Harvard and has written for *On Film* and the *Crimson.* ROBERTA RUBENSTEIN teaches at American University, Washington. ROBERT SITTON, who has been on the staff of KPFA--Pacifica Radio, teaches media at University Extension, Berkeley. GEORGE STEVENS, JR. is Director of the American Film Institute. MICHAEL WEBB is Film Programming Manager of the AFI Theatre, Washington. GREGG E. WHITMAN is a New York sociologist interested in horror films and the sociology of art. HERMAN G. WEINBERG, historian and critic, is the author of a forthcoming book reconstructing Stroheim's full version of *Greed* via stills (Arno Press).

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ROBERT SITTON, JAMES ROY MacBEAN, ERNEST CALLENBACH

Fight Power with Spontaneity and Humor: An Interview with Dusan Makaveyev

"In fact, humor is a mechanism of counter-repression, truth is a weapon of counter-repression, joy, all kinds of happiness and of creation are anti-repressive actions. There are always creative individuals who help open up people around them and provoke social change. So I said to myself, why not make a film which would make a start in this?"

—Makaveyev, POSITIF, *No. 129.*

NOTE: Makaveyev's new film WR: *Mysteries of the Organism* is preceded, in its American prints, by a title stating that it is in part a personal response to the life and teachings of Wilhelm Reich. This was evidently necessitated by the sharply critical reactions of some Reichians in New York, who attempted to enjoin circulation of the film. The interview, made the day after *WR* was shown at the San Francisco Festival, began with an extensive discussion of this situation, and the attitude of one of the protesting Reichians, and continued thus:

D.M.: He was so upset by the film that he wanted to censor it. Actually I don't believe—in fact I'm sure—that the way *he* is presented in the parts of the film where he is present is very correct and very good: documentary pieces. But he was not able to conceive that documentary parts together with fiction parts or other documents can compose some sort of more complicated film that says *more*: that expresses much more than the parts. This is the question of film montage, I think; and if we are now fifty years after the famous Russian theory by Pudovkin and Eisenstein about montage, we can no longer speak simply of two pieces of film together giving a third meaning: now we know that two scenes together are giving a third meaning, and a number of scenes together are multiplying each sequence times each sequence, so it means we have thousands of meanings, in a collage film of the kind I am making. Now what was very important for me was to *preserve the integrity of every piece.* So that means I didn't mix into documentary shots with his patients; or there is stock footage of Reich and his collaborators, and the commentary that is run over it is some sort of just interpretation of what people were talking about then. The film *is* very complicated; there is a lot of playing in the film; but I never played in the separate pieces, I kept them as separate blocs. Because I wanted the film to be some kind of vehicle for important information, that is kept covered by ignorance or the so-called conspiracy of silence. [Above all,] I wanted to give wide circulation to information about Reich himself.

E.C.: I was remembering John Huston's film about Freud, and I wondered if you would say why you thought in terms of a collage film rather than a straight narrative film—which might have pleased the Reichians more.

D.M.: Well, the Huston film *Freud* shows clearly that it's very difficult to make nowadays a good biographical film. In fact I think one of the last good biographical films was *Young Edison,* with Mickey Rooney, an Andy Hardy sort of movie—that film influenced me greatly, I was really moved, because the guy ran away from

Makaveyev arranging the severed head of Milena Dravic: WR.

school and became famous! I saw it when I was ten, or something like that. But we can't make this kind of melodramatic biographical movie about important people like Freud or Reich—I think that's almost impossible. And actually I thought for years about how Reich could be explained.

Somebody told me that Paul Newman is trying to make a movie about Reich—probably his last years or his youth *can* be the subject for a good fiction film. In his youth he was a charismatic leader, a young doctor in the revolutionary movement in Germany, who tried to introduce sex and love into the revolutionary movement and keep the movement alive. But what happened to Reich actually: he started the Sexpol movement in Germany; in 1930 they had about 30,000 members and organized lectures all over Germany. Reich's ideal was that the Communist Party should organize youth around dance-halls, not to try to get young people to dull political lectures—to find young people where they really are. I even remember reading about young Nazis, members of the Hitlerjugend, coming to hear Reich and leaving the Nazi Party after getting a deeper understanding of their own inner troubles, their reasons for being politically active. I have heard from our ambassador in Paris—he attended Reich's lectures when he was a student in Prague in 1934—that there were thousands of students just all over the hall, sitting on windowsills and in the staircases, like Columbia in April '68, or Berkeley; and he was a kind of prophet of a new time, an affirmative culture—some kind of new integrity between man and his social life.

J.M.: Didn't Reich undergo quite a drastic evolution in his development? He started out by pointing out to his fellow Marxists that they were neglecting a very important realm of the psychosexual foundations of all behavior, and their political programs would never be effective if they continued to ignore these—but then he became more and more disenchanted and bitter at the Marxist movement's refusal to accept this, and finally felt that politics was the worst thing you could get into.

D.M.: What happened at the end of the Sexpol movement was that Reich was thrown out of it. It was organized by the Communist Party; and what he was teaching was too much for them. First they banned his books from all Party

bookstores; and then they organized a majority in the Sexpol movement and threw him out. It was just a few months before Hitler came to power, so it is not widely known. So you see first he was oppressed by people in his own movement. He was very devoted to the revolution, but he realized that the revolution didn't need him. And when Hitler came to power, his books were suppressed and then burned. And then it was repeated, in '56 and '57 by such a democratic government as the American one.

E.C.: His books were literally burned in New York, as you show in the film?

D.M.: Yes. Actually the Food & Drug Administration agents burned many books that Reich wrote before he came to the idea of the orgone accumulator [which was the ostensible basis of the FDA action].

Now going back to the previous point, Reich says that contemporary human beings have reactionary bodies—rigid bodies. And our characterological stiffness is rooted in muscular armor. Psychological armor equals muscular armor, on the biological level. And we are conditioned to be like that from our early months of life. So it seems that the task of changing people is much more complicated than it looks like if you just feel you can apply Marx's theories and make a redistribution of wealth or abolish private property, and everything will be OK. That's not true, because people are repeating—that's what happened in the whole so-called socialist world today: it's just one great repetition of all the rigidity of bourgeois society. So when I made my film *Man Is Not a Bird* I was trying to explain that you can have global changes but people can still stay the same, unhappy or awkward or privately confused; and in all my other films I try to follow this line, and I came gradually to Reich, who really explained *why* we are unable to change quickly. We *are* able to change, but not so quickly, and probably some people are unable to change at all.

R.S.: Did you just discover Reich after making *Man Is Not a Bird*?

D.M.: I knew his booklet *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis*—where Reich explains the similarities between Marx and Freud in his opinion. . . .

R.S.: Do you think orgone accumulators really work?

D.M.: Well, I sat in an orgone accumulator in London—and I felt something. But some people claim that you can feel better in an orgone accumulator if you are ready. . . .

Reich was actually sent to prison for contempt of court. They chased him because of "illegal interstate sale of orgone accumulators"—devices that had not been scientifically proved. But then he didn't appear before the court; he said "Science has to judge me, and not an agency for food and cosmetics that is connected with the interests of the cosmetics industry." He was very angry, and had good reason to be. He got two years for contempt of court.

E.C.: What is your impression of the general public reception of the film? The time may be ripe now for a revival—a rehabilitation!—of Reich and his ideas.

D.M.: Well, at the Cannes festival they had to organize five additional screenings besides two official screenings—more and more people just kept coming. In Berlin the same; there was a very successful screening in Lucerne—that's the place where Reich was thrown out of the International Psychoanalytic Association in 1924. Then in New York and San Francisco we had enthusiastic receptions from festival crowds. So from people who are preconditioned to accept innovations the reception was extremely good. The film has opened publicly so far in Denmark, with six successful weeks in Copenhagen, and a very good press; we also had an extremely good press in England.

E.C.: Do the papers take the Reichian ideas in the film seriously, or are they mostly just pleased with the sexiness of the film?

D.M.: Well, I will tell you that we got a recommendation from the International Evangelical jury in Berlin—composed of priests and people connected with the ecumenical movement—and they gave a recommendation for the film to be seen and discussed on the subject of the "importance of eroticism, sexuality and love for political freedom." So it seems that people understand that the main topic of the film is not sexuality but human personal happiness connected with political freedom, which means men

in the social environment. Generally reactions in Europe were more political than sexual, to the effect that "sex is not so important in the film." (In fact, that's not true.) But it seems that people are getting the message that the main thing in sexual repression or sexual freedom is actually the political content of human personal freedom. But I don't know yet how many people will get this message. In Yugoslavia we got in trouble very quickly when we came back from Cannes [where the film won the grand prize].

A screening was organized by people hostile to the film—they got about 400 people, mainly older people, some of them connected with some sort of preservation of traditions, that means people who are taking care of monuments and graveyards and museums, plus old revolutionaries, so-called hard-liners who are now out of the main social activities and are on the margin of social life taking care of their memories of our glorious past—and they were mad. It was terrible. People just started shouting. It was an extremely unpleasant experience.

R.S.: On what grounds were they angry?

D.M.: Because Stalin was connected with sexuality! Stalin was connected with the phallus. And they are just completely unable to see *any* connection between political power and sexual potency; the sexual meaning of political power was completely strange to them, and they were completely sexually upset. They were sweating, trembling, a lot of physical signs: they were just showing complete physiological distress. But these reactions were expressed in very political terms: "politically unacceptable," "ideologically wrong," "attitude of the enemy," this kind of political cliché were all activated against the film.

R.S.: Have they banned the film?

D.M.: They succeeded in stopping it, so far, on administrative grounds, although we have the necessary signatures on the censorship board. But they didn't dare to send the police to take the film away from us; they don't want to fight us in the courts. Meanwhile new censor regulations have been set up and a new board has come in, so we are tied up in all this legal procedures business.

J.M.: Has the Yugoslav government granted an export visa?

D.M.: Actually we have no visas for export. Some people believe the film has to pass the censors before it goes abroad, but I don't believe our laws can be applied to foreign countries. Actually we passed the censors before we went to Cannes, and then in the meantime the film has been sold to about 10 or 15 countries. Besides the film has a German co-producer, so if they did try to stop it, he can sell the film abroad. And then if they stop the film completely in Yugoslavia, a distributor could import the film as a *German* film, and then it goes through another censorship, the one for foreign films! So we have several ways to fight this kind of hostility.

E.C.: The film contains some very satirical scenes against organized Communism—for instance that scene where the madman is banging his head against the wall and on the sound track is this hymn to the glorious Communist Party, "from which all our blessings flow," and so on. Is the film attacked as being anti-Communist, and if so how do you reply?

D.M.: It's interesting that the film was attacked on those grounds by a very tiny portion of Party members, and in fact not so much by Party members as by *ex*-Party members who were thrown out of the Party as Stalinists. It seems that for most people in the country it is clear that the film is not anti-Communist but anti-Stalinist.

J.M.: It's also anti-Leninist, however.

D.M.: Oh, no, that's not true. The film is discussing some points in Leninism, or about Lenin, but the film is not anti-Lenin, in my opinion. Even some people in high Party positions told me the film is clearly anti-Stalinist, and the film is clearly against blocs, and the film is for independent communism or independent socialism. So it seems many people understood the film politically as an honest contribution to inner discussion in the communist movement.

Now about Leninism. In the film you have direct quotations from Lenin in two places: one is where the awkward Russian figure-skating champion is trying to talk to the Yugoslavian revolutionary girl, and they have no other way

to talk with each other but to whisper political ideas in a very tender way: so they speak about "what are the tasks of youth," and this is an exact quotation from Lenin.

J.M.: And the other is the statement about the Appassionata Sonata and how it makes him want to treat people nicely and pat them on the head, when what is needed at this time is to hit them over the head.

D.M.: Yeah, because he believed that we must *change* people. Lenin was a true neurotic, a man torn by his wish to change people and the world, and his wish to help people. So I think to talk about Leninism in terms of a theoretical outcome of a deep wish to change—this is an effort to understand, both to criticize and to understand, but I don't think it is just hostile if you are critical. And then if you remember the moment when the Russian says, "In principle we are against any violence," and she touches him on the most important part of his, uh, revolutionary organism, which he is trying to forget—and then he hits her. So at the moment he turns to pure violence. You remember what is the next shot? She looks at him, but he is not there any more: there is Stalin. Stalin crying. That's a beautiful shot, and I took it [from a Russian feature]. Stalin watches the bench in the snow where Lenin used to sit, and he is crying. This is pure demagogy, and I loved this scene for its shallowness, this kind of kitsch quality, surrealist qualities. But I introduced it into the film at a moment connected with Lenin. Of course everything is distorted a little, or made into caricature, because the music that follows the skater Vladimir Ilyitch's speech—he is a kind of positive hero, beautiful, an artist—not the real Lenin, he is kind of a marzipan reincarnation—that music is of course *not* the Appassionata but some Hungarian gypsy music entitled "Like a Beautiful Dream": low-level music, not Beethoven. So there is another shift in meaning between his speech and the music on the sound track. Then if you remember the scene that follows, Stalin is receiving a letter that is addressed to Lenin. So I think that Stalin is the worst possible reincarnation of Lenin—all forceful features of Lenin, all Lenin's efforts to change things forcefully, they were reincarnated in Stalin. This is the part of Lenin's revolutionary program that I can't agree upon; because forceful change can't bring change: that's I think very simple.

"What are the tasks of youth . . ."

E.C.: Do you think that traditional "organized communism" is inherently anti-sex? Can the anti-body, anti-sex attitude of the traditional left be escaped?

D.M.: I think it is not only communist organization that has been anti-sex; it seems to me that *all* organization in the world—look at the churches, look at governments, look at the police, the army, everything is anti-sex; the essentially homosexual structure of the whole government is completely hidden; we have only males in business, in politics, in the army and police—so all that is a pure continuation of boyhood; this kind of homosexual male period is projected into the structure of the whole society, so women are completely outside of the image of any kind of meaningful social organization. They are kept just to medicine, teaching, and "humanitarian" cages, completely out of the main power structure.

The only movements that were connected with the body were fascist movements: they were talking about blood, and earth, and body, but again in I think a different kind of homosexual overtones, and not in a fully heterosexual meaning.

It seems to me that the sexual significance of movements and organizations is completely destroyed in our alienated style of living. And my idea was to build a movie that is a kind of

interplay between organization and spontaneity. For it seems to me that the all-anarchism of, let's say, the New American Cinema or the anarchism of the New Left, this kind of totally unorganized way in which people are now reacting to power structures, is inefficient because it lacks organization; yet if it turns to organization it takes the same old forms, like the highly organized, militant, puritan, self-sacrificing groups, so this just perpetuates the old system of power and fighting power with power. And it seems to me that we have to fight power with spontaneity and humor, but in a more organized way than it is done. It seems to me that some future society which I believe in, a society organized on work and love without any political mediators—work, love, and communication, let's say—must be a highly organized kind of society that has a lot of space for all kinds of spontaneous activities. In my film—I worked eight months on it in the editing room to get this kind of strong organization, yet trying to preserve all the spontaneity possible in the film. And I feel that's the reason it is puzzling: people are not sure where I am leading them.

Actually the film is very traditionally structured. There are the first three reels of documentary introduction, and then we have this very slow dramatic exposition, then we have the conflict say in reels five and six, and those highly emotional things in reel eight—the plaster-caster scene, which is a kind of climactic scene; and then you have a melodramatic continuation in reels nine and ten which in purely dramatic terms explain this conflict between personality and society: "You are able to love mankind but you are not able to love a human person." (The women's libbers are very happy with this scene, where she is hitting him trying to awaken him to real masculinity instead of this empty masculinity.) And then you have this kind of cathartic song at the end. So as you see the whole structure is very traditional: you are supposed to be relaxed for a few reels, then puzzled, then you have a build-up of the conflict, then the big chase, and then you have catharsis! But this traditional organization is completely invisible in my film: there are a lot of other attractions, and they are done in this kind of open-structure way so that everybody is projecting his own thing into the film. I call it the "liberating trap"—an open structure that forces people to throw their own irrationalities into the film. There are so many things left unanswered, so many questions posed—you must answer them in order to be able to "survive," to be able to follow the story, to go on. And there is not time enough left for thinking, just for projecting your own wrong ideas, your own misinterpretations, your own irrationalities into the film—but then to go on. At the end many people are very restless, puzzled, confused—but highly interested in the subject. They're ready to come see the film again, to read more Reich, to ask me about all kinds of things.

R.S.: The things that seem to interest you in America seem to be things which are outside the official culture, they're the alternative culture things, and they have the spontaneity and freedom which comes from being an alternative. Will spontaneity in the world of the future be built into the system, or will it always have to come from outside?

D.M.: I am very skeptical about systems, living in a country which is not in this big bloc of "freedom-loving" nations in NATO, and also is not in the big bloc of "freedom-loving" nations in the Warsaw Pact; in Yugoslavia we don't see very many differences between life in America and Russia as far as big ideas are concerned: these big, beautiful, patriotic ideas that enable big countries to smash small countries and kill people in the name of humanity, or impose their own systems of values on others. So I think these big superpowers may have the same policy on the global level. On a practical level of course America is very different from Russia—because in Russia each individual has his own happiness delivered to him by the government or Party, and here everybody has to fight for his own happiness in the market. But it seems to me the sets of illusions are very similar, and the inflexibility of the two systems is very similar. Of course the American system is much more flexible in responding to the market, but politically many things that are against all economy are perpetuated. So more and more, all over the world, people feel that something

must be done: systems that start from people spontaneously organizing themselves in some sort of meaningful groups, and then *not* alienating their power to some sort of more "representative" higher levels—just preserving their own communal power. I think the new means of communication that we have in the media, in this electronic world, enable us to live in our small ethnic groups, or very specific groups, yet being able to communicate all over the globe without the necessity of having this type of power structure to mediate in our names. I believe in a world without states, a world without politicians, without these political structures representing alienated power.

R.S.: A kind of loosely structured anarchy?

D.M.: No, a kind of well organized anarchy! I think the failure of world communism to do anything meaningful is that it built some sort of very militant, Christian-style militancy of fighting for a paradise that will come for our grandchildren, and for them we must put ourselves through the fire; and this leads to terrible things, like millions of people put in concentration camps by their own comrades, and many of them in the camps even believing that the camps were good for the system. You remember that many people died shouting "Long live Stalin!" even when they were being killed on Stalin's orders. This self-sacrificing revolutionism is the same kind of religious, Judeo-Christian kind of bullshit.

RICHARD L. KENNEY

American Cinematic Form

When people think to praise a work by calling it art, they often also mean to set it off into a safe, "cultural" category where it can't do any harm. Even in a rambunctiously commercial art like film, distinctions between life and art have been glib and unexamined. The following article makes some startling proposals about these basic assumptions, and suggests some particularly American aspects of the search for new cinematic forms.

1 America

"Listen to the States asserting: 'The hour has struck! Americans shall be American. The USA is now grown up artistically. It is time we ceased to hang on to the skirts of Europe, or to behave like schoolboys let loose from European schoolmasters.' " That is D. H. Lawrence, the European, opening his *Studies in Classic American Literature*. America has evolved a literature, created it and perceived it according to the peculiarities of the North American continent, and the special forms of the life there. With a new cinema in Europe and intimations of one here, now the American will try to discover his original relation to film. I am interested in the forms which will define that relation.

The question, Would the American find an original relation to literature? was met by the

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father Benjamin Franklin, the revolutionary of 1776. James M. Cox sees autobiography as the self-inventive, self-discovering creative art, the form that can stand for the revolution.

> For before Franklin there was no American literature; there was only English Colonial literature. With Franklin came consciousness, total consciousness in the form of autobiography—a history of a self-made life written by the man who made it. [1]

Father Franklin made the beginning of American literature simultaneous with his making of the revolution; there is a formal relation between the two events; there is in that double creation a model hypothesis for the modern solution: in times of greatest stress and revolution, non-fictional modes supercede fictional ones. Cox writes:

> For when politics and history become dominant realities for the imagination, then the traditional prose forms of the essay and the autobiography both gain and attract power and the more overtly "literary" forms of prose fiction—the novel and the short story—are likely to be threatened and impoverished. As such a process takes place—as politics and history tend to claim dominion over the imagination—then the literary imagination tends to respond by denying the generic distinctions which are both powerful and convenient categories in periods of stability and peace.

Revolution in the late 1700's fused the biographical and autobiographical styles of Franklin, Rousseau, and Boswell. Twentieth-century revolution gives us Mailer, and Malcolm X, and Cleaver: essays, autobiographies, chronicles, arts of non-fiction.

The questions are very fundamental: What are the cinematic forms, the American forms, the American generative energies of creation and perception? And to begin even more fundamentally: What "generic distinctions" can still classify the varieties of human creation, within a society that is experiencing cultural and political revolution? What is fiction?

2 Connections

Art is human creation: a human event by which found objects are connected together to form a composition. The composition may be a communication to men or gods, a description and criticism of new or old or timeless things, abstract or representative, accessible or inaccessible to the mob, a noncommunicative statement unto itself, a whim, an idea never objectified, an object never explained: but the composition is a metaphor for some aspect of what it means to be human.

This is the formal vision of art that the twentieth century has shaped, and must face in its fullest extension. This is not to try to violate the bounds of category until the word "art" is swollen out of all usefulness in the English language. Simply, it is to point out that bounds, separating "art" from other levels of human creation, cannot be easily drawn.

In older days, "art" was perhaps more readily recognized; a play of Shakespeare or a sculpture of Michelangelo was immediately named "art" for its craftsmanship; later it would be named "masterpiece" for its vision. Pure abstraction made the problem more difficult. At first, society generally refused to call simple optical or pop abstractions "art," because of an apparent poverty of craftsmanship (anybody can do *that*!)—until the artist was proven to be a man of real vision. Metaphors that in some sense describe what it means to be human can be extracted from nearly any piece of created or found art, depending on the amount of creative perception an audience is willing to exert. Most people are defensive enough to avoid being caught creatively perceiving things that have not received the stamp of excellence, of "vision." That stamp comes from collectors, galleries, critics, extraordinary and powerful individuals whose sponsorship is a critical guarantee. Most people listen for that appraisal, reserving themselves; because they have all seen where hasty judgments like "Anyone can do *that*!" or questions like "Is it *art*?" can lead. We live in a time when the artist is often freed from the critical judgment of a wide public; a time when formal artistic canons are thought to be pedantic.

Two corollaries: symbolic or associational content of a work cannot be measured wholly in terms of the artist's intention; and artistic value cannot be assessed only in terms of communication. The metaphorical significance of any phenomenon depends upon the creative will of the perceiver to make connections; the judgment of whether too much or too little has been "read into" a work rests not in the sheer number of "symbols" an artist manages to pack into his work, but instead upon the consistency and force of his human vision.

Underlying the greatness of the Mona Lisa's smile is the certainty that Leonardo could never have enumerated the things it "means," all the human qualities it suggests. Some of the greatest literary artists of this century, such as Joyce and Faulkner, have often followed the aloof convention of neglecting to enter into critical debates and controversy surrounding their work. A no-risk policy for themselves, it also invites their readers to discover a private and personal relation to the art.

The form of the event always gives better clues to its nature than does preconceived aesthetic theory. In the Nevada desert, Walter de Maria constructed two parallel lines in chalk, twelve feet apart, running for a full mile.[2] In Kansas, Truman Capote discovered a murder story, which he investigated exhaustively, and described in his book in great detail. One work was all personality and less communication; the other was all communication and less personality. Is it illuminating to pin down de Maria's effort as "sculpture," "graphics," "concept," or maybe chalk pastel, or geometry? Describing *In Cold Blood* as "journalism" inclines us to speculate on its sale as a "novel"; yet calling it a novel does not increase our understanding of what it really is. What are these things, the parallel lines and the murder history? Are they "art"? If creation is apparent, and the man calls it art, in the twentieth century, it is a waste of time to contradict. It is a minor point.

With his Campbell soup canvases, Warhol follows Joyce in using commonplace events in art; while artists like Heizer, Smithson, and Oppenheim, with their "earthworks," stretch the definitions of sculpture. There has been resistance to their work. Most people have assumed that didactic art represents the one class of "artificial" events most legitimately crossed with events in the living world. The confusion of literature with new journalism, or theater with guerrilla theater, or visual art with propaganda poster design—these things have seemed less of an affront to the popular conception of art than the confusion of supermarket labels with painting, or natural landscapes with sculpture. But didacticism is not the primary point of crossing between artistic creativity and real-life creativity. It is much more a matter of formal pattern and design. For those who mistrust Warhol and other modern plastic innovators, this point can be illustrated as well by very ancient traditional Japanese art forms like haiku poetry, rock gardening, and tea ceremony. At the surface, these things appear to be spontaneous natural occurrences, rather than self-conscious "creations"; simple, spare, exquisitely refined, more than creations, they are discoveries.

Creation involves a discovery of form. Human minds do little more than lace together webs of connections, associations between the things they see, and see done, and do themselves. The child or the painter may notice that December birches resemble the whitened hands of a grandmother. This does not mean, in a painting or a Bergman film, that the coal-etched trees stand for grandmothers, but perhaps for all autumnal fleshless things. A philosopher takes those connections, and hones them from visual to linguistic metaphors, from impressionistic to analytic modes. That is another composition. Dennis Hopper one day made the connection between horseshoes and motorcycle tires, and for fun he juxtaposed the shoeing of a horse with the changing of a tire in *Easy Rider*. Do connections chain out from that single visual linkage? Horses to motorcycles, the old dirt farmer to the young adventurers, the land to the road, one culture to another? To say that they are all "really there," and more, and to speak of intention, is to be heavyhanded. Perhaps Hopper was heavyhanded; but to understand that the groups of connections can simply be made, by the eyes or the brain, is to begin to understand composition.

Artistic composition is a *bricolage** of found objects. Single aspects of men and nature are found objects, history is full of found objects. Creative humans sense the objects, and connect them together in the associations of their experience, making compositions from them; paintings, sculptures, ordered lives and autobiographies, wars, religions, movies. Small compositions describe and criticize and constitute larger compositions. Creation is connective and compositional. The essence of all creation is similar; only the forms vary.

Just as the boundary between "noncommunicative art" and spontaneous human "life" has become difficult to hold, so has the boundary between "communicative art" and "criticism."

3 Guernica

The artistic chain of "Guernica" provides a good illustration of the problems, without yet engaging peculiarly American circumstances. Everyone is familiar with Picasso's masterpiece, *Guernica.* Its subject is the fascist destruction of the Basque capital, on April 26, 1937, during the Spanish Civil War. Its abstracted themes involve human suffering, the bestiality of war and total war, the horror. Robert Flaherty had begun to make some filmed studies of the painting, now put together and available for viewing through the Museum of Modern Art. This film explores the surface of the work carefully with the emotion of expressive movement from detail to detail. Alain Resnais made a film entitled *Guernica.* This piece makes use of newsreel footage, photographs, the master painting, and other canvases and sketchwork and sculptural work of Picasso. Finally, there has been literature of criticism on the painting, the two films, and the bombing itself.

The initial work was the German piece. It was dramatic in form, executed by a company of professional craftsmen, an event begun and completed through a single space of time, a complex and carefully orchestrated military composition. It was an experimental work: the total destruction of a human community by aerial bombardment, a political and social experiment in terror and subjugation. It spoke eloquently of human suffering and of the bestiality of total war.

Picasso's creation was fused by the terrible energy inherent in the German event. The painting is on one level a criticism of that event; it says much about the nature of the event; and at the same time it transcends the event to treat universal questions. The destruction of Guernica was recognized as a metaphor. Resnais's film uses Picasso in much the way that Picasso used the Germans. Each bleeds energy from a previous creation. Of the three, Picasso's is the most powerful: Resnais's film is not important, the actual bombing has been largely forgotten by worldwide generations, and "Guernica" is only the name for Picasso's painting.

Flaherty's film is a piece of simple "criticism" which examines the painting alone; any universality achieved is due to the power of Picasso, and not the compositional skill of the film-maker. It is pure communication, similar to a literary review of the painting, or newspaper reportage of the Basque tragedy. It is secondary creation, a literal translation of one medium by another, but no less creation.

The tradition would be to call the German *Guernica* "life," the Picasso and Resnais *Guernica* "art," and the Flaherty *Guernica* "criticism." The distinctions are very shallow. The problem involves the nature of fiction, and that is a problem of form. Tradition might say that life is for real, that art tends toward fictional free play, that criticism is free play purged of its fiction for the sake of clarity and analytic precision. But this view belies a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of fiction, and it embraces many inconsistencies and internal contradictions. Art is so important that city civilians will risk everything to preserve it in times of disaster. Yet the root of the outrage I provoke

*Claude Levi-Strauss uses this word very effectively in his comparative discussion of myth and science (*The Savage Mind,* University of Chicago Press, 1966, pp. 16ff.). The *bricoleur* is a technical handyman whose building materials are odds and ends, found objects. His *bricolage* can thus be considered new creation only in that it represents a reorganization of old component parts.

in comparing the German version of "Guernica" with Picasso's lies in the historical fact that women and children died in that Basque town: the event should be treated with reverence. The ringing implication is that art—gratuitous fiction—is not completely serious. Yet still people will continue to protest that the greatest and most profound expressions of existential horror reside in Wastelands or Lears or Weekends. The critics and poetasters so vacuously name the artist "magician," his craft, "magic": that is purely because they do not believe in magic. True magic is frightening. Precisely because men treat war and religion with fear and reverence, they refuse to recognize these things as the rich "artistic" compositional achievements of entire civilizations. Contradiction is inevitable when men revere the "artistic" creative process, and yet cannot take fiction seriously.

They do not understand fiction. They imagine it to be a narrow artistic category comprised solely of things which are "not true"—as though "fiction" were the opposite of "fact." Instead, one might say it is the *arrangement* of "fact." As a category, it must embrace more than the traditional notions of linear fantasy, sequentially unfolding fabrications, yarns spun and tales told to the eyes, ears, or mind. In a sense, as Cox predicted, this essay represents a "denial of generic distinctions." But not a capricious denial—there is no sense in challenging these categories unless they are no longer helpful in describing the nature of artistic creation. Creation is: making the connections to make the metaphors, building the discovered metaphors into larger metaphorical compositions. Fiction lies in the selection of metaphorical "found objects" and their incorporation into a composition.

Any other viewpoint leads to silly twentieth-century remarks such as "art is shading into life"; and a misunderstanding of the new forms. Consider Godard's *Weekend*. The form is cinema, salvaged "from the scrap heaps," cinema, the freely admitted fiction. The actors self-consciously despise the film, Godard injects signpost frames to break up any audience identification with visual continuity, so the fiction is advertised over and over. The cinematic road is glutted with weekend traffic, the roadsides become a hellish junkyard of gutted automobiles and travelers. The wayfaring protagonists ride each other's backs toward Oinville, meeting Emily Brontë and companion on the way, asking nearly every living person: Are you in a movie? Then come the truly shocking moments: a pig is slaughtered by the ludicrous band of hip revolutionaries. In the audience, we react with disgust. Then we try to imagine why; the road shoulders and human wreckage had been a horrifying vision, but only the killing of a pig had touched our gorge. Was it that the pig was *really* killed, that the fiction was dropped for a moment? Was Godard's art shading into life? And subconsciously, did the monster Godard really kill that poor pig just for a movie? Godard killed that pig because he wanted to. He was making a composition of visual images; he wanted, among other things, the false burning of a fantastic human, and the real slaughter of a real pig. Those images were found objects, discovered by Godard in Saigon immolations, literary historical Brontës, and slaughterhouse routine. Fiction was never suspended; the composition was fiction. Godard selectively placed his metaphorical found objects within the new context of his cinematic fiction. Godard has explored the nature of fiction. His work is not part-fiction-part-fact, but a compositional fiction, a *bricolage* of objects found and connected in Godard's sensing mind, framed and objectified in the secondary creation of celluloid. Cinematic storytellers like Howard Hawks create obvious fictional tales; but Godard's work is no less fiction. Some abbreviation of plot may be used; music may be used, actors or non-actors; street sounds, color, stillness, motion, any of a thousand cinematic forms may be used; Godard even uses language, printed words, long dialogue scenes in which visual power is deliberately suppressed in order to try to liberate the pure power of language. Each of these devices is an object found by Godard, and reincorporated into a new composition, his film. Some metaphors are dragged in from the street, others are structured in the new context to appear fantastic. A funky revolutionary sylvan drummer, an Alice-in-Wonderland Emily Brontë, a twisted goose and slit pig all belong in the

same collage. The composition is fiction.

Proof: imagine if Godard had poleaxed a human being instead of a pig. (With a tinge of fear, the audience knew that that was the extension, that the crazyman Godard might have preferred to have his fat Abhorson kill a real man.) Clearly Godard takes his art seriously. If he had killed a man, in *Weekend,* he would be in prison. If he had killed a man, his composition would have been identical with the German "Guernica." But it is ridiculous to think that the strictures of law in this case define the boundary or division between life and art. It is ridiculous to say that art is that which people pretend to take really seriously, and that life is that which people really take really seriously. Humans make the compositions that they want to make; criticism and law and scholarship drift across the levels of composition, and make their marks.

4 Portraits

Portraiture is like biography, and in the traditional way of thinking, it might have to be considered a "non-fictional" mode. Here is a generic distinction that deserves denial. All the styles of twentieth-century art—impressionism, expressionism, cubism, pure abstraction, to mention several—have been carried to the field of portrait study. Insofar as a line drawing can be considered a portrait, it illustrates the fundamental difficulty in restricting the concept of "fiction." Not a photographic representation, the portrait still may be true to its subject. Here, perhaps more obviously than in the literary genres, it is clear that the question of fiction is really the question of composition, of selectivity, arrangement, proportion, emphasis.

In his discussion of art, Levi-Strauss mentions a delicate portrait of a woman, by Clouet. He writes that Clouet's work is

> like Japanese gardens, miniature vehicles and ships in bottles, what in the "bricoleur's" language are called "small-scale models" or "miniatures." Now, the question arises whether the small-scale model or miniature, which is also the "masterpiece" of the journeyman may not in fact be the universal type of the work of art. (p. 23)

Levi-Strauss contends that it is, if "miniaturization" can be extended to the "reduction of properties" inherent even in larger-than-life size works, when they are compared with real-life subjects (for example: Michelangelo's David is very much simpler than a flesh and blood man, despite the size of the stone; and in this sense there is a reduction of scale.)

The problem of scale is really the problem of selection and composition. "Miniaturization" and "reduction of properties" are only other expressions for "editing."

The *Portrait of Athens* is a whimsical piece of concept-sculpture, in description of the capital of Greece. On August 1, 1969, the curb of Stadiou St. and the guard chain beside it stood in the precise relation that is recorded. The measured relation is reproducible, and represents a tiny fixed portrait; it exists to provide the potential for a recreation of "Athens"—though most of the "found" Athens has been edited out of the composition.

Medium Cool is a controversial movie, because it has been misinterpreted as another case of "art shading into life," and misunderstood in terms of fiction unexpectedly intermingling with non-fiction. Clearly there is a contrast between the tale-weaving footage and the "real" riot footage. The cameraman, the nurse, the Appalachian girl and her hubcap-thieving boy all interact by script and choreography to tell a prearranged story. Among other things, the story was about the man as camera, and the capacity of man to remain medium cool inside a hot circumstance. Then, in the summer and the city of the filming, the convention riots became ugly. Police choreography and cinematic choreography came together in a single field before the camera, the masses and the actors passed through one another, there was teargas, and on the soundtrack was recorded, "Look out, Haskell, this is real!" The audience drew breath with the sense that fiction had momentarily been suspended; it was like the slaughter of the pig.

(This is a typed copy of the concept-sculpture by J. W. Buchman, entitled "Portrait of Athens," which was originally issued in eight copies, in Athens, in 1969.)

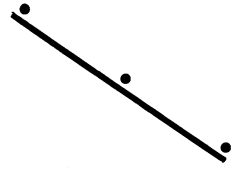
Portrait of Athens

⅛ Buchman 17 May 69

By following these instructions, you can recreate the part of Greece on the east side of Stadiou Street between Omicron Street on the south, and Sina Street on the north, approximately seven and a half blocks south of Omonia Suare and three and a half blocks north of Syntagma Square, Athens.

Directions:

1. Imagine a line passing through two points, (1) 35 degrees W of N, and (2) 35 degrees E of S.
2. Indicate a segment of that line equal in length to 6.25 meters.
3. At the midpoint and endpoints of this segment indicate three points to the east of the segment at a distance equal to .5 meters.
4. The line represents the east curb of Stadiou Street.
5. The three points represent the poles that support the chain guarding the sidewalk.



Then people began to criticize the film. The Purist: "Wexler was weak, he couldn't resist including the riot footage, even though he knew it was tangential to his story." Or, the didactic opposite, "If this was supposed to be about *Chicago* (in the reverent tone of *Jerusalem*), why did Wexler have to hang his thing on a mushy plot?" Or in between: "I never mix my modes."

Haskell Wexler didn't mix anything, or pioneer any revolutionary mode. His work is similar to Mailer's novel-as-history-and-history-as-novel approach. The key to his fiction is in the editing room. He used found objects, and he found Chicago, and he used it selectively. During its creation, his planned cinematic composition collided with the planned dramatic-political composition, and like other directors who use fortuitous events like clear days to shoot in, Haskell Wexler made use of the Chicago demonstrations.

It was not a purely fortuitous accident, of course, that a film such as Wexler's, 1968, roughly about "Involvement," filmed in the very center of America, should coincide with other compositions of similar form. If Wexler were making cowboy films, he would not have been in Chicago, but in southern California deserts where clear days would not be purely fortuitous. Retrospectively, from a formal point of view, it seems almost that *Medium Cool* and Chicago had to coincide: perhaps one might have predicted that Wexler would have had the opportunity to film the riots, and crediting him with a modest sense of artistic acumen, that he would surely have taken advantage of it.

One man can be other men's coordinate; smaller compositions can take the measure of larger ones. Wexler did, in fact, make a film about the energies of the convention summer. Very selectively, Wexler shaped a portrait of Chicago.

So far, this essay has largely concerned itself with twentieth-century notions of art, of fiction and composition, and *bricolage*. A general exploration of forms that the American may discover is by itself inadequate without at least a glimpse of the forms of energy available to American creativity.

5 Christianity

The Christian myth is perhaps the greatest artistic composition ever shaped by post-classical western civilizations. The Christian cosmogony was both astoundingly successful and supremely beautiful. From conceptual metaphors of universal creation and order, the myth spread over the world in huge, intermeshing webs of

symbol and ritual; and in the service of Christianity, men achieved much of history's greatest triumphs in every medium of artistic expression. But the music and painting and sculpture were only details from the primary masterwork, the Christian myth itself.

The Christian metaphors have provided a storage of almost limitless energy, an almost limitless potential to feed secondary creation on every human level. The energy has been accessible to Europeans, and they have released it in political directions to build empires and subjugate peoples, in warlike directions to destroy those things, in plastic directions to create masterpieces of every variety. In an American direction, the energy was released, and puffed the Spanish sailships to the new continent, and colonized and subjugated South America, and colonized North America, but never fully subjugated it. The energy of Christianity, accessible to Europeans, was never wholly accessible to the American. Now the Christian myth seems nearly exhausted.

Yet one of the finest pieces of cinematic art ever produced, Ingmar Bergman's *Seventh Seal,* clearly taps a great deal of its power from Christianity. Bergman folds back to medieval times, and rides the metaphors and sucks the apocalyptic vision of the old myth and its proofs, and rides part way to his glory on the swell of remembrance inside the European civilization. The American can never make that film. In *Easy Rider,* the communal prayer for a good crop is thin and dead; in *Midnight Cowboy,* the flashing plastic Christly ensemble that swings back from the bathroom door in the evangelist's scene is pure disease; even the mystic-religious vision of the starchild in *2001* is more Emersonian than Christian, and it draws no power.

But Christianity is only the greatest example of traditional energy denied to American creativity. Bergman in Sweden, Dreyer in Denmark, Cacoyannis in Greece, these directors have tapped sources of historical and mythic energy at a depth that no American can hope to reach.

6 Fantasy

The American tried, in his new country, to develop an original relation to the new cinematic art. He understood fiction to be tale-weaving, and in Hollywood he massed the wealth requisite to complicated tale-weaving. Cameras rolled at American accelerations; and in a few decades, Hollywood had churned forth an entire cinematic tradition, its gift to America, the remarkable gift to a traditionless art. By its fathering act, Hollywood became an American force, a formal polestar, and every future filmmaker will have to stand in some relation to it. An enormous body of folklore, history, and fantasy was collected on film; then the Americans weeded the assemblage to discover their characteristic and favorite forms. Tale-weaving fantasy refined itself by natural selection.

One example: Cowboys made the American romance of freedom and violence. Americans have always been a violent people, and they admire the rugged individualist, pioneer spirit, the loner and the open road. Hollywood gave a tradition of Western romance, and now filmmakers try to stand in original relation to it. Their heroes are often outlaws. Clint Eastwood, directed by an Italian, looks back as mirror of the old days. He goes through the motions, and his relation is set in the anti-overstatement of a super-mean; the audience that has been Vietnamized into true disgust for real killing enjoys the Eastwood challenge and triumph: Can he go through another movie without betraying even a trace of humanity? Most of the other movies find their relation by trying to set their heels in a last statement of the open road that has closed. Even in the atmosphere of nostalgic humor, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid cannot live as anachronisms beyond their Southwestern time; neither can the Wild Bunch hope to escape baroque death in an age of Verdun. Cassidy, the Kid, and the Bunch didn't die because they were bad men, or even violent men—they were good men, or good enough, and they each died in an astonishing apocalypse of gunfire, under a far greater violence than they ever would have generated by

themselves. The laws and soldiers and societies had become more dangerous than the outlaws.

The "Guernica" sequence was a European composition. A similar (though much larger) chain of compositional creations has arisen in this country as a result of the central, most brutal, most significant violence that America has created and suffered—the war between the states. The American Civil War defines this country as surely as it defined the newly locomotive and ironclad shape of modern machine warfare. The Civil War synthesized many tensions of the first American century, fused the Union together forever, and released inside the new unity the tensions of the next century. Racial freedom, domestic violence, invasion by the United States army as a political technique. And with this, the first iconography of the South. The South is the violent ground of moral anachronism and racial crime, the perpetuator of redneck violence, and the excuse for even greater violence, visited in return by moralizing Northern power. So the Civil War has given America the iconographic consciousness of "rednecks." We recognize them by the sardonic drawl, by the cokes they drink, the mean provincial glares and the ragged edges that assure us they could never make it in New York. *Easy Rider* is a romance of the open road, no matter if the commune was real, the café scenes played from life, the rednecks true to life. The rednecks may have been "so real," but they were in no way distinguishable from a hundred other stock rednecks trotted out time and again in a hundred books and movies. Rednecks hate niggers and Yankees, and recently they hate hippies; especially they hate racial freedom and change, smart Yankees, and smartass blacks; everyone knows these things. The South and the Civil War are two vital aspects of American form. Rednecks are part of the American formal iconography; they exist for a reason, their consistency is an article of belief.

Lack of artistic and mythic tradition in America, new cinematic art form, Hollywood and a short-term restructured backlog of American fantasy, cowboys and the open road, the Civil War and the close of the road, rednecks, and the fantastic romance of *Easy Rider*. This sequence of discussion represents an increasingly specific analysis, which can help to illuminate some of the peculiarly American forms that condition our original relation to film.

7 Documentary

Traditionally, the forms of fantasy and of documentary seem to stand as polar opposites on the fiction/nonfiction balancing scale. That is a false balance, since each is a fiction by selectivity, a creation by composition. Yet in a very important way, they do represent an opposition. As pointed out, in one of its dominant forms, fantasy is Technicolor film exhibited in urban theaters, a romance of the single self-reliant uncowed American, freely coursing American segments of the open road, underneath the big sky. In its newly dominant form, documentary presentation is live, through private television, displaying men in corporate movement, trapped underneath the weight of a great technology.

The message is that, despite what he may have predicted, man has not been able to free himself by populating his world with steel children; any more than the hopeful old Lear was able to abdicate responsibility for his kingdom. Man is of necessity learning to symbiotically inhabit his machines. The moonshot was only the most blatant example. Armstrong and Aldrin and Collins rode the machine into deep space—not a very specialized machine, but a tiny but entire steel world, which they lived inside instead of on top of. Before they stepped on the surface of the moon, they did not put on spacesuits—they climbed into portable life-support systems. If man has any destiny as explorer, he will have to learn to live in colonial groups inside life-support systems of one or another dimension: in spaceships or bubbles or enclosed cities for consecutive lifetimes. On Buckminster Fuller's Spaceship Earth, in our time, we are not at that stage. The urban environment is more controlled by machines than uncontrolled, however. Architectural encasing machines, nuclear thermostatic machines, com-

putational thinking machines. The rifle is a machine which fills a roughly cylindrical space defined by the straight line from the butt of the stock to the tip of the barrel, and extending several hundred yards forward. Documentary coverage of American political assassinations and American wars is the chronicle of the failure of various American heroes to exist within the space of American war machines. That inhabitation has been death, a failure to adapt to the environment controlled by a machine.

The proliferation of the television mechanism itself represents a kind of corporate artistic achievement. In Medieval Europe, when there was a representation of Christ or a crucifix in every dwelling on the continent, something massive was achieved. Not only the aesthetic shape and iconographic association of the crucifix or the Christ, things artistic in themselves; but beyond these alone, there are connections, made by minds that can see each unit as a reflection of another, each as a section of a huge continental sculptural object. Infrared cameras, photographing only heat, can produce interesting and revealing pictures of human bodies or natural landscapes. If a camera were producing a negative exposed only by the force emitted by the crucifix, an aerial photograph of medieval Europe would show fairly accurate human and geographical boundaries, and embody a unique cultural expressiveness. The same might be said of the huge interconnected continental kinetic wire-sculpture of television in North America. From central points, the corporate artists activate a huge machine sculpture—which is a unique portion of the American habitat. Inside the wire sculpture and its arching electromagnetic connections, spatially caged Americans move.

As an art form, documentary television is appropriate to the new revolutionary age. It is on-the-spot with complex heavy mechanics, worrying at historical events, found objects, trying to create a representational electric likeness. For America, this is self-invention, a selective autobiography on the short order of instant replay, a self-consciousness, inherited like electricity from father Franklin's experiment.

Motion pictures learn from the techniques of television. Budgets and production schedules are streamlined, so that film-makers can match the TV crews, like war correspondents to a cultural revolution, with fashionable up-to-date compositions. Old Hollywood found the objects it wanted to film, and brought them to California and built with them a *bricolage* stage set. New auteurs tend to film their found objects where they find them rather than restaging them at greater expense. Then they reap the stylish benefits of showing film that appears both fantastic and documentary. Since the found objects are not dismantled into such small bits for transcontinental shipping, they are filmed in larger pieces; larger patterns of American formal energy (such as Chicago) appear on film, and closer biographs of America tend to result.

8 Science

A revolutionary style has grown with twentieth-century America, with vast energy behind it. In the cinematic art, Americans are finding an original relation to technique, and image, and form. Inhabiting the continental throne of scientific power and missionary technology, Americans are discovering that science has become so specialized and advanced, so macrocosmic and microscopic, that human eyes can no longer perceive the processing of data. Practically everyone believes unquestioningly in $E=Mc^2$, in atoms and genes and quantum physics, with no firsthand evidence whatever. Science has become for the layman a matter of pure faith: not so much in the fail-safe capacity of technology to solve all human problems, as in the truth of the scientific description of things. But inasmuch as that is a human description, it is a metaphorical description; and the faith goes beyond this foundation of assumptions and things taken for granted, to embrace what might be called an iconography. The "atom" is not just a pictorial or mathematical metaphor for the smallest unit of an element; it is widely recognized to be the metaphor of an entire age of man. Cancer is not only a cellular condition characterized by uncontrolled growth; it is the disease of the twentieth century both medically

and metaphorically; and anyone of the century can understand it as the disease of the civilization. For America, science represents a cosmogonic myth. Accessible to the American as Christianity never fully was, it provides a reservoir of energy that can generate American art.

Examples of this are everywhere. In film, as in literature, the genre of "science fiction" has left its woolly monsters behind, and gained a new respectability in speculative vision. For example, in *2001: A Space Odyssey* Stanley Kubrick simultaneously explored man in relation to machine, and man in relation to his own spiritual possibility. The alternative potential, death by technology, has also been considered, in such films as *Dr. Strangelove, Little Big Man,* and *Catch-22.* For the technical civilization, these films have engaged a fundamental notion of apocalypse, demonstrating the human and his environment to be mutually exclusive.

From the time that John Henry ceased to be a survival-type, the American adaptation to technology has been painful. Perched on the handlebars of a careening driverless motorcycle in *Sherlock Jr.,* Buster Keaton was the wholly uneasy rider who had to predate Hopper and Fonda. If the Civil War was the first semimechanized modern war, the nation survived it on the hairs-breadth level so emblematic of Keaton's own survival among machines like *The General's* steam locomotive.

Keaton's relation to technology was acrobatic. With the parallel evolution of the medium and of America, the relation, man to machine, has necessarily become more organic. What was Jimi Hendrix's relation to his amplifiers? Doesn't the word "organic" limply understate the case for an adjustment, to anyone who has seen Tina Turner nuzzle the *Gimme Shelter* microphone?

In *Sherlock Jr.,* Keaton the projectionist looks with wonder on a film image he imagines to be himself. In *Gimme Shelter,* Jagger the artist looks with dead acceptance on a film image that is himself. *Monterey Pop, Woodstock, Gimme Shelter, Mad Dogs & Englishmen,* these festival rock films illustrate as well as anything else the full acceptance of technology in art. Here is the striking symbiosis of humans and electronics, the simultaneous realization of human and electronic ecstasies. Unaccommodated thousands come, in the spectacle-tradition of dionysia, having stripped their lives of careful clothes and nonessential gadgetry, but never of the electronics which make the dionysia possible. Here is the culture that begins to feel easy with its machines. The films will follow.

Forms of American art must be phased with the forms of American myth. Engineers control the energy, and establish the modern artistic relation to image and sound; while Americans sense the mechanics of their new habitat, and begin to try to live inside.

NOTES

1. "Autobiography and America," *Virginia Quarterly Review,* Spring, 1971, p. 262.
2. See *When Attitudes Become Form (Works Concepts Processes Situations Information),* the show catalogue for the exhibition of the same name, Inst. of Contemporary Arts, London, 1969.

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[Editor's Notebook, contd.]

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JAMES ROY MacBEAN

Rossellini's Materialist Mise-en-Scène of *La Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV*

"The history of all human society, past and present, has been the history of class struggle."
—KARL MARX

"The basis of historical materialism is the concrete analysis of a concrete situation."
—V. I. LENIN

"Marx insisted on the prime importance of economic factors, of the social forces of production, and of applications of science as factors in historical change. His realist conception of history is gaining acceptance in academic circles remote from the party passions inflamed by other aspects of Marxism." —V. GORDON CHILDE

The last quotation (from Childe's *Man Makes Himself*) seems to me to describe a position very similar to the one Rossellini has developed in his recent investigations into history. *The Iron Age, Socrates, La Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV,* and *Man's Struggle for Survival,* like the writings of historian Childe, evidence a very down-to-earth, commonsense materialist approach which focuses on economic conditions, the organizing of society in terms of economic functions, and the importance of technology in social change—all of which, as Childe points out, are keystones of Marx's analysis of history. But Rossellini is obviously no Marx or Lenin; and although I will contend that *La Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV* is exemplary in providing "a concrete analysis of a concrete situation" and in bringing to the movie screen, for once, the depiction of class struggle as the motor of history, nonetheless I am well aware that Rossellini's public stance is to reject all labels and to refuse to draw any "political" consequences from his analysis of history. However, this public stance—and, in particular, Rossellini's tendency to take refuge in the lame and discredited notion of "pure research"—strikes me as possibly disingenuous. In denying any political intentions, he speaks of the need to "demystify history" and to "get at simple facts" [see interview in *Film Culture* no. 52, Spring 1971]; but it hardly seems possible that he is unaware of the essentially political nature of the act of demystifying history.

Rossellini's *La Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV* is not a film *about* Louis XIV. Rather, as the title (in the original French) clearly indicates, it is a film which examines the *taking of power* by Louis XIV. The film's principal focus, then, is not Louis himself, but the mechanism of power as understood and manipulated by Louis XIV.

The distinction is crucial, I think, for depending on the focus of investigation, one raises very different types of questions. Rossellini himself has revealed that each of his films is an attempt to answer a specific question: and he acknowledges that the question at the base of *La Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV* was not "What was Louis like as a person?" but rather "Why did people at the court of Louis XIV dress the way they did?" An interesting question—and one which the film answers very clearly. But perhaps intelligence consists not so much in coming up with the right answers as in asking the right questions, that is questions which open up some fruitful lines of investigation by raising further questions. In the case of *La Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV,* for example, Rossellini's question about fashion styles may have served him as a point of departure; but the film as a whole is by no means limited to a dramatization of the answer that "fashion styles were deliberately set and cultivated by Louis XIV as part of an overall political strategy." On the contrary, per-

haps the greatest of this film's many merits is that Rossellini places the answer to his original question within the larger context of a clear materialist examination of the basic socioeconomic situation of seventeenth-century France, and implicitly places the whole epoch within the ultimate context of the *process* of history itself.

To accomplish this, Rossellini resolutely avoids the crudely psychologizing interpretations and melodramatic structures of Hollywood's historical epics; and he rejects as well the lyrical excesses of Eisenstein's emotionalized reconstructions of historical events. Utilizing simple camera set-ups with very little movement of the camera, long takes, and a discreet but very effective use of the zoom lens, Rossellini maintains a cautious, alert distance from his historical material—thereby enabling us to experience, for once, the *strangeness* of a historical period that is not our own. This strangeness, however, is not to be confused with exoticism—especially the Cecil B. DeMille brand of exoticism where postcard images of "local color" (often Hollywood plastic) are shamelessly exploited, and every historical utterance is delivered with heavy-handed flailing by ham actors who dream of an Oscar.

Wisely, Rossellini relies primarily on nonactors in this film (Jean-Marie Patte, who plays Louis XIV, is a French Post Office functionary); and, preferring understatement to histrionics, Rossellini eschews the big scenes of emotional intensity that are the stock in trade of most historical films and lets us experience instead the subtle tensions of the daily, mundane deeds of history. And even when dramatizing the high points of Louis's *prise de pouvoir*—like the arrest of Fouquet—Rossellini evokes from Jean-Marie Patte a curious and penetrating sense of the dogged determination and single-minded effort involved in being (or playing) Louis XIV. Moreover, in close collaboration with historian Philippe Erlanger (who is credited with the script of this film), Rossellini brilliantly develops what I would call a *materialist mise-en-scène* in which *things*—the material objects of seventeenth-century France—are not mere props and backdrops for the drama, but share equal billing, as it were, with the human figures.

Rarely, if ever, has a work of art been so solidly rooted in *things*; and rarely, if ever, has an artist explored so vividly and yet so profoundly the rôle of *things* in the making of history. Significantly, the closest artistic antecedent I can think of for this film is Bertolt Brecht's *Galileo*, a play in which the dynamics of history are also explored from a resolutely materialist point of view.

Rossellini's eye for detail in this film is masterful. But the details are not mere flourishes added on to the major dynamics of the film; on the contrary, it is largely through the details—the Cardinal's bedpan, the blood-letting, the King's morning toilet, the pastimes of the court, the preparing and serving of the King's dinner, and, of course, the all-important articles of clothing—that we begin to understand the way in which man's social existence is intimately tied to and strongly determined by his relationship to things.

But Rossellini examines as well the way in which man, starting with a concern for things, takes a detour—in his dealings with other men—into the world of *appearances*. "One rules more by appearances," declares Louis XIV, "than by the way things really are" *[la nature profonde des choses]*. True enough, in one sense—and certainly the film documents the masterful manipulation of appearances that characterizes Louis XIV's reign. Nonetheless, that sophisticated web of appearances which Louis weaves around himself is by no means unrelated to "the way things really are." Quite the contrary, it is part of an overall strategy to *change* "the way things really are" while diverting people's attentions from this material reality.

Along this detour from things to appearances, however, individual men and even whole classes may wander so far astray in the realm of appearances that they lose touch with the real world of things. But here we are anticipating: let's begin where the film begins.

In the shadow of an elegant chateau, the common people take a momentary pause in the morning's chores. There is news of relatives who have well-paying jobs in the service of the King. A cousin is off to Bordeaux to purchase the King's wine. The news is greeted with laughter

and that characteristically Gallic mélange of envy and sarcasm. "The King can't do without his wine, eh! So our cousin is the King's number-one winetaster; what a life!"

"The King, the King," interjects another, "in the end, he's just a master like any other. In England, they cut the head off a King, and there were no earthquakes or eclipses . . . ."

"Don't complain," another interrupts, "if there were no kings, there'd be no palaces; and if there were no palaces, there'd be no work for us."

"Okay," chimes in another, "let's get back to work."

The point is worth emphasizing: *the film begins with the common people.* Not for reasons of plot, however. Granted, certain information is introduced—when the men comment on the doctors who pass by on horseback—about the illness of Cardinal Mazarin and the extended stay of the court at Vincennes. And this information then serves as a transition between the first sequence and the second, which shows the arrival of the doctors at Vincennes. But the information that Cardinal Mazarin is ill would be conveyed just as well if the film simply began at the second sequence: it is clearly secondary and incidental to the real function of the opening sequence, which is to examine the economic foundations and ideological overtones which enlist the common masses within the socio-economic system of the French monarchy.

One can even recognize, in this seemingly offhand beginning, the basic elements of the ideology on which the aristocracy bases its rule: Divine Right (by this juncture in history, it is taken with a grain of salt—as evidenced by the "no earthquakes or eclipses" remark); and, more important, acceptance as a *given* of the notion that there could be no *work* other than within the existing economic system. The "no kings, no palaces, no palaces, no work" remark clearly demonstrates the strong carry-over into the seventeenth century of the feudal ideology in which economic relations are only thinkable in terms of control of the land (with the feudal manor—and, by extension, the royal palace—as the locus of control from which all work-opportunities emanate). This feudal ideology, we realize, is especially deep-rooted in an agricultural economy like that of France, where, in the seventeenth century, the working-class *per se* is still hardly distinct from the peasantry.

It surely is no mere coincidence—in a film which examines the mechanism of power—that the opening sequence should provide us with some indication of what factors enlisted the common masses within a given social system—particularly a system geared to provide such ridiculous extravagances for the aristocracy as is here the case. The "underprivileged classes" are talked about occasionally in the film (as objects to be manipulated and won over), and we often see them at work serving the nobility; but nowhere, except in the opening sequence, do we get any idea of *their* attitudes towards the existing social system and why they accept their menial status.

Finally, it is worth remarking that the opening sequence has a very distinctive nature: unlike all the other sequences of the film, it does not have its roots in actual deeds or words of historical figures. It does not reconstruct an event which, documentably, ever took place. The people are nameless; and their words—although they are of the sort that might have been spoken a hundred times a day—are purely the invention of Rossellini and scenarist Erlanger. Those words, however, perform an important analytical function. They may even be an answer to a question Rossellini might have posed: "How developed was the class-consciousness of the common masses?" In any case, this is a logical way to begin a materialist examination of a given historical situation.

Throughout the film, each successive sequence has a two-fold function in which information is presented to advance the chronological story-line and, at the same time, to analyze different aspects of the historical period. That the former is often less important than the latter, is illustrated best, I think, by the doctors' examination of the ailing Mazarin. In terms of story-line, this sequence is disproportionately long: all we really need to know is who Mazarin is (and the film doesn't really supply this

information until the following sequences) and not *how* he died but simply *that* he died. But Rossellini is interested in other aspects of history than merely "who did what."

So the doctors' examination of Mazarin becomes Rossellini's examination of the state of man's scientific knowledge in seventeenth century France. And what more telling index could there be of man's knowledge than his knowledge of his own *materiality?* The doctors take the patient's pulse . . . or roughly ten seconds worth. (In 1661—the year of Mazarin's death—the fact that blood circulates through our bodies was still a very recent discovery, the ramifications of which were only beginning to be understood.) They run their hands along the patient's nightshirt and bedding, then sniff their fingertips—presumably to evaluate the odor of the patient's sweat. Then they examine the . . . The word is not spoken, out of *délicatesse;* but the request is immediately understood, and the Cardinal's bedpan is quickly fetched from beneath the bed and handed to the chief consultant, who holds it up to his nose, shaking it gently to stir up the contents, sniffing it in short, businesslike inhalations.

After several moments, he passes the bedpan to a colleague, accompanying this move with a telling arching of the eyebrows; and, turning to the Cardinal's resident physician, he concludes: "He must be bled." The other consultants quickly voice their agreement. Informed that the patient has already been bled several times that day and may be too weak to be bled again, they reply that "the human body contains 24 liters of blood and can lose 21 liters and still live." And to reassure the resident physician, they support their argument with analogies in the form of aphorisms: "The deeper you have to go to get water from a well, the better the water" and "The more milk a mother gives, the more milk she has to give."

The Cardinal is lifted from bed, placed in a chair, and bled from the ankle. As he faints, the blood is collected in a small pot. Repeating the same procedure as with the Cardinal's urine, the chief consultant grimaces resignedly: "Unless there's a miracle . . ."

Things and appearances: 17th-century science (Brandon Films)

Finally, the renowned physicians withdraw. Outside the Cardinal's chamber, they discuss several treatments that might be tried in desperation. "Perhaps His Eminence needs to be purged of his 'bad humeurs'," suggests one doctor. "But I already gave him rhubarb," counters the resident physician. "Precious stones," suggests one; "A mother's milk," suggests another. But they admit they have never tried these measures and don't really have any faith in them. The scene ends.

Quite tangential to the film's story-line, this sequence is absolutely central to the film's basic preoccupations. The dialectic between objective and subjective factors, between things and man's perception of their appearances, is *mise en scène* in the Cardinal's deathchamber. The doctors recognize the importance of the material things of this life—like our bodies. But at this stage of history they can only examine what is externalized—like urine, sweat, blood, and the general outward appearance of the patient—and their basic tools are their senses of sight, smell, and touch. Their information is limited to sense data. They can smell the urine, but they cannot yet perform a chemical analysis of the urine. Sense data is a prerequisite and an important part of analysis, but, alone, it often does not accomplish very much. And while we concentrate on the outward appearances of things, things go their own way—they degenerate, decompose, and are transformed into something else. And when *we* are the things that degenerate, decompose, and are transformed into something else, all the other *things* that we accumulated in our lifetime are then passed on to someone else. We make out a will to determine who gets what.

Enter the Church. Mazarin—himself a Cardinal—is dying. He must be confessed and prepare himself for death. In the eyes of the Church, this means settling his accounts in the material world in order to enter the realm of the spirit. "Settling accounts" is a business term. Entering the realm of the spirit is a business deal. There is an entrance fee. The Church sends a business representative to hammer out the terms of the bargain.

Things and our perception of their appearances . . . matter and spirit . . . which is more important? Louis XIV might claim that "one rules more by appearances than by the way things really are"; but how true is this? The Church—any church—might claim that the spiritual realm is infinitely more important than the material realm; but how can this be reconciled with the Church's well-documented appetite for the material things of this world? Who is fooling whom? If material things are really so unimportant and insignificant, why do rulers and priests —throughout history—resort to such devious and complicated appearances to accumulate and control things? And since this film is an examination of the mechanism of power, what rôle does the Church play in the struggle for power? Isn't this, too, a question Rossellini is likely to have asked himself?

Enter Colbert. Briefly, the ailing Mazarin discusses with his assistant the affairs of government. Colbert tells of the state's depleting financial reserves and the flagrant corruption which permits ambitious individuals like Fouquet to fill their pockets at the state's expense. Colbert concludes with a warning that if Fouquet were to become Prime Minister, anything could happen.

Finally, enter Louis—or rather Louis *se lève*. Our first glimpse of Louis XIV is in bed. We, like the assembled nobles of the court, witness the opening of the bed-curtains and the morning ritual of a seventeenth-century monarch. It is quite a spectacle—complete with *esprit de vin* for the king to wash his hands and face with, prayers that are mumbled (for appearances' sake) to sound like Latin, an announcement by the young queen to the effect that the King performed his conjugal duty during the night, and, finally, the dressing of the king by his servants while the nobles of the court look on admiringly.

By introducing the figure of Louis XIV in this manner, Rosellini very skillfully suggests the purely *ceremonial* function of the young French monarch under Mazarin's regency. Like Cardinal Richelieu before him, Mazarin as Prime Minister is entrusted with the actual tasks of

governing, while the function of the French monarchy is now almost entirely symbolic. In the pomp and circumstance which surround His Royal Highness, the nation shall see the image of its greatness and prestige. Louis XIV, acutely sensitive to this public image, even refuses the dying Mazarin's generous bequest of his personal fortune—for "the public must never be able to say that a King received a fortune from a mere subject." (What the public doesn't know, however, doesn't hurt them—as we see later when Mazarin's fortune is *secretly* put at the disposal of Louis XIV, who, under these circumstances, has no hesitation about using it.)

But the 22-year-old Louis XIV has no intentions of remaining *only* a symbolic figure. In a conversation with the Queen Mother, Louis pours out his frustrations and very petulantly asserts his determination to change things. Power, he tells his mother, is shared by too many hands. The Parliament is getting too strong; it might get the idea of turning against its master. Louis fears the recurrence of the infamous *Fronde*—a rebellious coalition of bourgeois parliamentarians and dissident nobles who callenged the monarchy and ravaged French politics from 1648 to 1653, even forcing the royal family to flee Paris on several occasions.

The problem, Louis insists, is that the nobles of the court, living far from their lands, are in need of money and therefore turn to the bourgeoisie—putting themselves in debt at the hands of bourgeois creditors. "It's reached the point," he declares with disgust, "where *honneur* is for sale just like sugar or tobacco." "Power, today, equals *money*." Insisting that the selling of titles must cease, Louis sums up his aspirations: "What I want is that everyone should keep in his place!"

And the King's place, it is clear, is at the helm of his country, actively steering the ship of state. Everyone else—even his own mother—may be convinced that Louis is a self-indulgent, spoiled fop who will quickly tire of the responsibilities of government; but Louis XIV intends to fool them all and govern in his own right.

Slowly, painstakingly, with innumerable seemingly irrelevant details, Rossellini has drawn the basic issues of Louis's rise to power. Now, the stage having been set, things move very quickly. Mazarin dies. Keeping abreast of the situation minute by minute, Louis quickly hurries to assert his power. A well-placed remark makes a calculated impression of Louis's determination to exercise power himself. Then, to assert his will, Louis goes against tradition and imposes full mourning—normally reserved for the royal family—to honor Mazarin. Further, he immediately calls an emergency meeting of the Council of Ministers and stalks in brusquely to announce his intention of governing personally without the intermediary of a prime minister. Then, in private conference with Colbert—whom he appoints as his personal advisor—Louis inquires about the ambitions of the influential Fouquet, his Minister of Finance; and he carefully excludes from the Council meetings several individuals known to be closely associated with Fouquet—including his own mother and brother.

When the Queen Mother subsequently reproaches Louis for his ingratitude towards her and scolds him for his none too delicate flaunting of his affair with Louise de La Vallière, Louis dutifully implores her forgiveness and quickly hastens from the room as if overcome with remorse. As always, Rossellini's handling of this scene raises questions without imposing any heavy-handed answers. When Louis falls to his knees and buries his face in his mother's breast, the gesture seems quite natural. But the perfunctoriness of this gesture is highlighted by the quick exit which immediately follows; and, in any case, with Louis's face buried, we—like his mother—cannot see what emotions may or may not be expressed in his features and we thus have only the gesture itself and the seemingly fervent request for forgiveness to judge by. Is it just the appearance of remorse or the real thing? Perhaps we'll never know; or perhaps we should look elsewhere for clues. In any case, immediately following this encounter between Louis and the Queen Mother, Rossellini carefully inserts a brief but telling exchange between Colbert and Louis in which the King reiterates his insistence that neither his

mother nor his brother shall take part in Council meetings.

Brief glimpses of the court at play (at the country retreat at Chantilly) then reveal that far from reforming his promiscuity, Louis indulges himself ever more openly, in spite of his mother's disapproval and the increasing humiliation this brings to his wife Marie-Thérèse. And the love intrigues, it is clearly demonstrated, often become enmeshed in the political intrigues of ambitious nobles like Fouquet who try to buy over the confidence of the King's favorites.

Fouquet himself, this most dashing and ambitious figure whose prestige and flair rivalled that of the young monarch, is abruptly arrested by the captain of Louis's guard, D'Artagnan, in a move of calculated audacity. Planning the move with an eye to public opinion, Louis stages the arrest of his most powerful rival right in the man's own stronghold at Nantes—thereby accentuating the boldness of his action and the confidence he has in his own omnipotence. Rossellini subtly underscores the strategy of Louis XIV by having Louis tersely order that the arrest be shrouded in secrecy beforehand and announced with "as much stir as possible" afterwards. Even the Queen Mother—a close associate of Fouquet—can only respond to Louis's unexpected audacity with an awestruck "Louis, vous me faites peur!"

Having thus eliminated his chief potential rival, Louis sets about consolidating the power he has so assiduously acquired. And, as Rossellini suggests, it is the King's personal advisor, Colbert, who plays the pivotal rôle in devising and implementing Louis's long-range political program. Granted, the King himself dictates certain basic principles. "Each person must derive everything from the King, just as all of Nature derives everything from the sun . . . and the nobility must be kept separate from the bourgeoisie . . . these are the general goals of my policy." But Louis turns immediately to his confidential advisor and asks "What are the practical means of implementing them?"

Colbert, a bourgeois technocrat with a genius for organization, responds to the challenge with a zealous, far-reaching program of economic reform and development that will reshape France from top to bottom. "Industries must be developed to enable us to produce for ourselves what we now must import from abroad; roads and canals must be built and maintained to facilitate commerce; we must build a fleet of ships to compete with Holland in trade with the New World; the lower classes must be taken off the 'dole,' it is dangerous for them to be idle, and we must provide public works to keep them busy; we must also reduce the tax burden of the most underprivileged classes, this way we'll win their allegiance and remove a source of discontent; on the other hand, we shall increase the indirect taxes which hit all classes of society—taxes on tobacco, alcohol, salt, etc.; and we should reduce interest rates on loans to cut the profits of the bourgeois money-lenders. . . ."

As Colbert systematically elaborates his proposals for reorganization, we cannot help but admire the foresight and thoroughness of this "bourgeois from Reims" (as Fouquet had contemptuously called him); and we may remark how fortunate it was for Louis XIV to have such a practical-minded man as Colbert for his chief advisor. But we begin to be aware, too, of a curious paradox involved in the collaboration of Louis XIV and Colbert—a paradox which becomes more evident in the session with Louis's tailor which follows, but which is already implicit here in the juxtaposition of Louis's ends with Colbert's means.

Louis's goals have an anachronistic, backward-looking quality about them. In desiring that "each person must derive all from the King," Louis seeks nothing other than a return to the central institution of the early feudal age, where the basic social contract was the sacred pact of personal indebtedness and devotion that bound each subject to the King. And just as the planets revolve around the sun in fixed orbits, Louis would have his subjects revolve around him in a clearly delimited hierarchy where "everyone would keep in his place." In short, Louis's ideals are the ideals of a feudal age long past. Even his attempt to restore the monarchy to active rule is an attempt to stem the tide of

history—as his mother has earlier in the film pointed out to him.

How strange it is, then, that the resolutely forward-looking proposals of Colbert should seem to fit in so well with the anachronistic ideals of Louis XIV. As the saying goes, politics makes strange bedfellows. But then so does history—and it is often only through the light of history that we can see how strange certain political alliances really were.

The brilliance of Rossellini's artistry, however, is that he knows how to visualize not just historical events themselves, but also the *internal contradictions* of a given historical situation. And here, in the meeting of minds between Louis XIV and Colbert, one of the primary internal contradictions of class struggle in seventeenth-century France is subtly brought to the fore. The bourgeois, practical-minded outlook (here personified by Colbert) is concerned with *things*; while the aristocratic spirit (here personified by Louis XIV) is excessively preoccupied with *appearances*. And although, as the session with the tailor indicates, Louis XIV is a masterful manipulator of appearances for political effect, nonetheless, he seems very limited in his ability to comprehend the economic (and ultimately political) consequences of the scheme he elaborates.

As Louis carefully specifies the number and placement of ruffles and feathers on the outlandish costume he intends to impose on the court, he explains to Colbert that these extravagant costumes will cost the nobles roughly one year's income apiece—thus bringing in a substantial income for the state treasury at the same time that the financial power of the potentially dissident nobles will be drained. Then, to placate the nobility and to keep them out of the hands of ambitious bourgeois creditors, Louis reveals that he will personally undertake—with funds from the state treasury—the housing and feeding of the court at the newly planned palace of Versailles.

Throughout this session with the tailor, Colbert keeps silent and lets Louis do all the talking. Louis's plan is so bold and Machiavellian in design that even its excesses are fascinating. But the look on Colbert's face, so evidently cautious and skeptical, tends to highlight, by contrast, the inconsistencies and excesses of a scheme which financially entails giving back with one hand more money than the other hand just took in, and which requires that enormous sums of money be pumped continuously into an almost totally nonproductive sector of the economy. Through the stolid presence of Colbert, we begin to sense that while in the short run Louis's concern with appearances may seem to complement and reinforce Colbert's concern with things, in the long run the forces of history have them headed in two very different and conflicting directions.

And, in fact, it is perfectly clear from the perspective of history that Colbert's practical development of French industry and commerce served to accelerate the very patterns of social change—particularly the rise of the bourgeoisie—which Louis deplored and sought to reverse. Moreover, Louis's own policy of hosting the nobility at Versailles while ruining them financially eventually ruined the state's finances as well; and life at Louis's extravagant court, with its single-minded concern with appearances, so distracted the nobility from the material world of things (except as luxury items for conspicuous consumption) that by the end of Louis's reign this once-mighty economic class no longer played a vital rôle in the system of production and was, as Marx put it, reduced to a mere "parasite" in the new industrial and commercial economy dominated by the bourgeoisie.

All of this is simply implicit, however, as far as the film is concerned, for Rossellini traces only the ascendancy of Louis XIV from 1661 to the mid-1680's. Nevertheless, the film as a whole, and particularly the later sequences dealing with Versailles, suggest quite clearly that despite the flamboyance of Louis's court, his reign is by no means a healthy, fruitful flowering of the French monarchy. Rather, it is simply the last flowering—dazzling in its sickly hues—of a dying plant artificially kept alive in a hothouse.

And what a hothouse! Louis instructs his chief architect, Le Vau, to build Versailles large

enough to accommodate 15,000 guests. Versailles is to be the showcase of his reign—and, after his death, the temple of his glory. And at this moment, in a magnificent long shot of the construction in progress, Rossellini reveals the simultaneous *splendeur* and *misère* of Louis's grandiose conception. Seen from a distance, countless laborers scurry about like so many ants, their backs glistening with sweat as they strain under the enormous stone blocks which are cut, measured, and endlessly fitted into place. And for what? The way the shot is framed, it is hard to tell just what they are building. We know, of course, that it is the palace of Versailles; but—aside from a small arch in the foreground—it might just as well be the pyramids at Giza or the temples of Babylon. There are historical variations, to be sure; but it's the same old story: the privileged few live in lavish luxury, while the impoverished masses are forced to bear the burden, giving their lives to build the tombs and palaces of the rich. The shot is held only a few seconds, but it seems like an eternity, so powerful is the moral impact of this image of man's injustice.

Finally, the scene shifts and we jump ahead to the completed palace of Versailles, where Louis imposes his will unabashedly, gradually transforming the ceremonial functions of the court into a quasi-religious cult over which he presides as the living incarnation of the divine. Louis XIV becomes the "Sun-King"; all eyes are focused upon him, and every glance or word which he deigns to address to one or another of his subjects is a life-giving ray of sunlight.

Absolutely faithful in each detail, Rossellini depicts the daily ritual of the King's *grand couvert*—the evening meal at which Louis, seated alone at a raised daïs, eats a dinner consisting of several dozen courses prepared and served by a legion of domestic servants, while the entire court stands respectfully and engages in courtly gossip. And when Louis XIV majestically demands some musical accompaniment, Rossellini's camera obediently follows a court functionary as he makes his way amidst the gathered nobles to communicate the King's orders to the musicians who are seated in a tiny balcony at the rear of the long, narrow hall. At the appointed signal, the musicians pop up like so many choirboys; and the camera's perspective from the rear of the hall clearly emphasizes the churchlike atmosphere—with Louis seated at the raised altar, the focus of everyone's devotion.

Then, in a brief concluding sequence, Louis XIV is seen taking a short stroll, followed by his sycophantic retinue, in the ordered gardens of Versailles. Entering the palace, Louis momentarily withdraws to a private salon. In a scene which somewhat paradoxically recalls Brecht's famous dressing of the Pope in *Galileo*, Louis XIV removes, one by one, the numerous articles of clothing which are the outward symbols of his power. But as the gloves, sword, wig, medallion, vest, and various collars and sleevelets are removed, it is questionable whether Louis—although perhaps a tiny bit more "human"—is any the less majestic. So painstakingly has he woven the web of appearances around his person that he has now almost completely identified himself with the fabulous demigod of his public image.

The private, intimate Louis XIV—we suddenly realize—has never existed! Eating, sleeping, participating in the hunt, presiding at court, even love-making, have all been political functions: for the sake of his public image, every act of Louis's daily life—no matter how trivial—has been carefully executed with a calculated aura of serene omnipotence. Only now—when we see him *alone for the first time in the film*—can Louis allow himself a brief moment of privacy: and even here, the private Louis and the public Louis XIV are barely distinguishable.

Almost totally absorbed now in the artificial rituals of the court at Versailles, Louis XIV is also almost totally isolated from his fellow men and the real world of things. In his lofty solitude, he can only take comfort in the spiritual ruminations of La Rochefoucauld, whose book of maxims Rossellini depicts Louis as meditating over endlessly—presumably finding in their Delphic ambiguity an inspirational pastime for his godlike aloofness.

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The case has here been argued that the analysis of history in *La Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV* is a materialist analysis and that the dramatic presentation of that analysis—its mise-en-scène—is a materialist mise-en-scène. By way of conclusion, however, it is worthwhile to examine the limitations of Rossellini's achievement and to ask why such a resolutely materialist work of art (assuming that we are justified in identifying *La Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV* as such) should have, as it were, so little political *bite*? (One objective indication of this film's political innocuousness is the simple fact that the French national television network—for whom the film was made—went ahead and showed the film, a precedent they have certainly not followed in their dealings with other film-makers (like Godard and Marcel Ophuls, to name only two) from whom they commissioned films which were subsequently suppressed by the government and refused TV exposure.

Why is it, then, that in spite of its subtle artistry, the depth and scope of its materialist analysis, and its uncompromisingly unemotional, antimelodramatic structure, *La Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV* is a film so easily digestible by the general bourgeois "art-film" audience? Part of the answer, of course, is simply that the opportunity to take a peek at the life of a king (and this is not just any old king) is one of the great dreams of the social-climbing bourgeoisie; this is a constant theme of bourgeois art (as well as of tabloid journalism, which bourgeois art often resembles). Consequently, the magnetic pull of the anecdotal aspect of this film is so strong that it is very easy for the bourgeois spectator to shift the film off its basic axis—which, as I indicated at the outset is not the person of Louis XIV but rather the mechanism of power as understood and manipulated by Louis XIV—and to deal with the film on his own self-indulgent terms rather than on Rossellini's more austere and intellectually demanding terms. Moreover, *La Prise de Pouvoir par Louis XIV* admittedly has a great deal of sumptuous spectacle to divert the spectator, and there is enough that is bizarre and extravagant (after all, Louis XIV did reach a certain zenith of the bizarre and extravagant) to titillate even the jaded bourgeois audiences who are wallowing these days in the self-indulgent decadence of Visconti and Fellini.

Nonetheless, it is the task of the serious critic to penetrate beneath the surface of spectacle and to recognize—in this film and on each of the few occasions the cinema offers him—that even spectacle can serve as a practical tool to focus our attention in directions which will produce some *useful knowledge of our objective condition* instead of merely mystifying us once again with more sugar-coated dreams that are useful only to the privileged few, who, like Louis XIV, would forever "keep us in our place."

MIKE PROKOSCH

Bresson's Stylistics Revisited

If in twenty-eight years Robert Bresson has been able to make only ten films, it merely indicates the austerity of his work. He refuses to make his narratives accessible, populating them instead with the proud heroes who are closest to his heart. Where another director would develop a relationship gradually, Bresson gives us only a few scenes, hardly enough to define the psychology of his characters unambiguously. Because of this critics generally describe Bresson as a man determined to deny us experiences, especially richly emotional ones. In terms of ordinary fiction, Bresson's films are indeed ascetic—and those are just the terms critics generally use.

Of this approach André Bazin's early and influential article, "The Stylistics of Robert Bresson," in *What Is Cinema?*, is rather typical.

> Bresson treats the novel [*The Diary of a Country Priest*, from which Besson adapted his film of the same name] as he does his characters. The novel is a cold, hard fact, a reality to be accepted as it stands. One must not attempt to adapt it to the situation in hand, or manipulate it to fit some passing need for an explanation; on the contrary it is something to be taken absolutely as it stands. Bresson never condenses the text, he cuts it. Thus what is left over is a part of the original. Like marble from a quarry the words of the film continue to be part of the novel. (p. 136)

Bresson's film, however, is not an exegesis of the novel, but an independent object. Its images do not set out a reality and then excise certain elements in order to rarify and spiritualize that reality; believing that they do leads Bazin into such critically absurd statements as "It would be in vain to look for its devastating beauty simply in what is explicit [in its images]." (p. 140) On the contrary: Bresson constructs his images from the beginning to be rarified and, for that matter, devastatingly beautiful. He does not collect or select them from somewhere else; he builds them from scratch. Their significance does not consist simply in what is excluded from them—a cheap enough paradox—but in what has been designed into them.

Bazin's approach is basically that of bourgeois film criticism; it describes films as if they were taken directly, selected, or at best reflected from reality. What is significant, however, is that the "reality" on which Bazin bases his argument here is literary and narrative instead (as usual) of being the real world itself. For Bresson's images are too obviously stylized to be described in terms derived from documentary and applied carelessly to fiction films as well.

But this also holds, though less clearly, for all images. The "reality" from which they are thought to be taken, or which they "reflect," is a synthetic and conventional one, namely our largely literary pictures of the real world. Far from capturing the real world directly, films borrow and echo the signifying forms without which we cannot comprehend material reality.* A film must therefore be criticized in terms of the meanings it constructs for itself from the cultural stockpile on which it rests. That is the basis of a materialist analysis of film—one which sees a film as a cultural object and not a reflection, an illusion of reality, an unfathomable dream, or any other chimera.

(In that case, what is the relation of a documentary or a political film to the reality most

*Even cameras' lens-systems are built so as to reproduce Renaissance perspective, which is the currently accepted convention for "objective" renderings of visible reality.

Au
Hasard
Balthazar

critics would say it "records" or "reflects"? That of a critique. Political films are objects to be used as critiques of social reality. Documentaries, which necessarily embody political attitudes, are also critiques, as works of fiction also implicitly are.)

* * * *

At first Bresson's way of joining things together seems intended more to confuse than to reveal, for he does not follow the sentimental logic after which ordinary narratives are constructed. Bresson erases the categories into which we normally classify various beings. Most important, he breaks down the distinction between subject and object by having his actors move and deliver lines as flatly as possible; this weakens our habit of seeing them as fellow-subjects whose emotions we can share and understand directly. Bresson will treat a firecracker, a donkey, a hood in his black leather jacket, a mess of broken bottles, and an old woman (in one of *Au Hasard Balthazar's* more astounding scenes) as members of the same order of reality.

Here Bresson's montage distinguishes itself from that of, say, John Ford, who breaks down a scene into its constituent small elements (an initial overview, close-ups of each character's face, a particular grouping of two or three, more close-ups, another particular relationship) so that as the scene is reassembled in the editing room every action will take its place in a hierarchic depiction of social process. By changing levels of significance rapidly, such bourgeois directors achieve great emotional richness: one moment we have the private sentiments of one character, the next the feeling of the whole group. Bresson, on the other hand, renders every dramatic event in one action and one shot, and cuts from one event to the next as if they were completely equivalent emotionally. No complex sentimental or psychological structure is required to assemble the narrative. There is no question here of upsetting the normal order of reality; a film in which event simply succeeds event is, if anything, closer to the workings of the real world than is the bourgeois narrative's stratification of reality.

Beyond this dramatic structure *Au Hasard Balthazar* has a particular direction, which is transcendental, and which comes from the way Bresson constructs his images. By refusing to

separate subject from object, Bresson enables everything that appears to have an equal significance; there is no longer one spiritual order of being and meaning for characters and another "inanimate" one for objects.

In the absence of the usual hierarchy of more or less meaningful beings, every object signifies directly to us; meaning is imminent in every visible form. The same, however, is true of Godard's recent work, which similarly destroys audience identification with flat acting styles which turn the characters into objects. Godard, however, uses further alienation devices to keep insisting that his images and sounds are deliberate political presentations. Bresson uses none beyond his acting and compositional design, and thus leaves his films among those works which pretend to be naturalistic representations of reality rather than ideological constructions. A work which makes everything equally meaningful, but also represents the real world, is a representation of a world whose material forms are completely spirit—that is, a transcendental reality.

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By angling his camera only slightly to every setting, Bresson minimizes the depth of his shots and leaves few tensions in the third dimension. The actors, moreover, often move across the shot along a slight bias, rather than employing the full depth of the composition. Instead of drawing us deep into the image, Bresson pushes the composition and its actors toward the plane of the screen.

The sense of immediacy this generates is increased by Bresson's staying close to his subject. Scenes are introduced by close-ups; instead of building up to the core of the action like a conventional dramatist, Bresson hits us with it immediately, then moves on to something equally important. Only the most significant events are left: Bresson eschews all connective material, which would not be meaningful in itself but only insofar as it helped explain more important events.

There are no contemplative passages and few long shots; Bresson constantly moves the camera in on his characters as if he wanted to reduce their physical context to the necessary minimum. Similarly, the camera stays close to a character and pans to follow him through a scene, instead of holding back in long-shot or cutting between shots of him in different positions. Though this would give a clearer view of his actions, it would explain his relationship to other objects and characters by using three-dimensional space analytically—each figure in a given spatial location, each location with a special significance. Bresson refuses to endow spatial structures with any independent significance; meaning must come directly from objects themselves.

One feels very strongly, then, that Bresson's characters are fixed in their physical surroundings; there can be no transcendence of their material context. They are not fellow-subjects whom we can abstract from the images in which they appear. But if they enjoy no relief from their world, and experience all events on the same emotional level, they also experience only things which are essentially meaningful.

One also has a very strong and confining sense of the passage of time, for Bresson depicts events strictly in sequence, never using a flashback and frequently cutting ahead weeks or years without warning. This passage of time, however, is not progress or development in the conventional sense for the characters, since the logic of their situation does not change. The world in which they act remains flat and rigorously present; only the present exists.

Gradually, however, a marvelous completeness grows through the accumulation of complete facts. By showing each event in a single action Bresson condenses his narrative and moves through situations with unprecedented speed. *Au Hasard Balthazar* covers extraordinary distances; at the same time its lack of compositional depth gives the film a linear continuity from one image through the next. By its ending the film has developed, completely without the aid of normal explanatory connectives between events, to a point of meaningfulness which is unique in its refusal, at every moment, to be sentimental. From the rigor of his style Bresson has built a really new narrative, which is to say a new way of looking at the world, a new mode of understanding.

MICHAEL DEMPSEY

War as Movie Theater—Two Films

Because their mixtures of material and methods are so volatile and eclectic, what succeeds in many movies is often close to what fails in many others. Trying to view horror through the prism of comedy, Richard Lester came to grief, despite some trenchant moments, with *How I Won the War.* Yet with *The Bed Sitting Room,* despite several failures, his off-center, "goonish" slant works. The horror in the new movie is World War III, rather than II, which in two minutes and 28 seconds including the signing of the peace treaty (though God knows who was left to sign it) has wiped out all but some twenty odd Englishmen. And they are odd, given to running off at the mouth, stomping around in bemused circles, holing up in caves with their tattered obsessions, cracking wan jokes. The film depicts an upended "final solution" that recreates the problems it solved. The survivors take up where they left off with petty ambition, sexual lunacy (Roy Kinnear's "rubber" mania), racism, arms stockpiling, religiosity, psychological bedevilments (someone returning to the womb is offered his choice of wallpaper to decorate the place), and despotism (Peter Cook and Dudley Moore in a roving crane ordering everyone to keep moving). The movie's humor derives less from its mixed bag of gags and skits than from the strenuous efforts of all hands to be funny, consequently unnumbed and able to cope with the holocaust they have barely survived. Ripples of nostalgia and memory, mingling with the humors and underscored by a few plangent passages in Ken Thorne's music, are fleeting but strong, despite disruptive gaffes like the flashes to Mao and Wilson leaving 10 Downing Street just at the approach of the B - - - (a four-letter word that none use). These garrulous caricatures, their English quirks twitching maniacally away, are all of humanity that remains.

Working with a brashly theatrical script (the John Antrobus-Spike Milligan play), Lester predictably opens it up by spreading the scenes across a vast landscape. But he also insists on the play's theatricality and tries for a visual style that will combine both approaches. On the one hand, the movie is unabashedly stage-like. David Watkin's lighting and photography are often theatrically multicolored, dividing the screen into layers of orange, red, green. The open-air locations are used as outsized sets, filled with props, details, gadgets. The actors dive headlong into caricature. As Lord Fortnum, who mutates into a bed sitting room and worries lest any blacks rent him, Ralph Richardson, in particular, is sharper than he has been on the screen in years. Yet the film's post-nuclear world makes these artifices seem quite realistic, in a way. They suggest well-known images of urban pollution—the oil-fouled Santa Barbara beaches, junk yards, filthy waterways. Furthermore, since this postwar setting is happily something that we can still only dream about, the theatrical stylization blends with the realism to form a dream image. The rubble-strewn canyons, the huge mounds of old shoes, the fields of shattered crockery, while never ceasing to resemble stage sets, also embody what we have imagined the world would be after an atomic conflagration. The lighting can be either theatrical spotlighting and atmospherics or poison gas, air pollution, radiation. The locations, even when most stagy, are both naturalistic and reminiscent of "real" settings in other movies—the jungles and hills of *Fires on the Plain,* the searing vistas that stun the astronaut in *2001.*

Lester thus succeeds where he failed in *How I Won the War.* The earlier movie also featured caricatures going through hopefully surrealistic routines, but the director failed to stylize the locations. Thus, the actions and the dialogues

(which were badly spoken anyway) took place against quite ordinary backgrounds. The clash wrecked the movie, made it both unfunny and uninvolving. In *The Bed Sitting Room*, whose dialogue and acting are far superior, Lester provides settings congruent with his caricatures. Thus, even when they go astray, the actors never look like your lead-brained neighbors shooting 8mm monkeyshines on their front lawn. This fusion of styles is highly unstable. Sometimes it indulges an actor's bad antics (Milligan's especially), overdoes the colored lights, rehashes stunts from Dali (a woman opens a drawer in her breast), wanders into tedious scenes (a wrangle over some official papers). At these moments the film teeters, but it stays upright.

This method, which provides no "real" people with whom we can "identify," makes for a "cold" film. Though artists and critics (such as William H. Gass) are strenuously questioning the concepts of characterization and feeling in literature, film audiences still seem to want the most naive kind of "warmth," an emotional bath in which they can splash around. But Lester avoids emotionalism. He has enough sense to cool off an overheated subject and present it with perspective. But his direction does more than subvert movie routines by eliminating easy climaxes. Because he so consistently resists tugging at heartstrings, he can achieve momentary epiphanies that infuse the movie with the sweetness of sudden recollection, brief beauties that we barely grasp before they vanish. One of these moments is just a shot of a tossed stone splashing into a polluted lake. The film's wandering family rests beside the fetid water; the splash crystallizes the scene into a passing suggestion of the family's lost serenity. Two others interrupt hectic banter on a subway where they live for a while: the husband, locked off the train, glaring fearfully through the window; the wife, chopping up a Hershey bar and jabbering mindlessly, suddenly worrying about being left alone. In such moments, by revealing for just an instant fears his people dare not yield to and old joys they dare not dwell upon, Lester gives the movie extra resonance.

Similarly Rita Tushingham, eighteen months pregnant, of necessity looks gross and ungainly as she waddles along, but her smile can suffuse the film with momentary tenderness. No less impressive is her soliloquy over her sleeping lover, in which she enumerates his clownish faults but keeps returning to "I'll say this for him" as an affectionate refrain that accepts an unalterable fate and defies its ability to break her. But most penetrating of all is a short scene in which the wife, describing her prewar feelings of perpetual anxiety, says that often she wished that they would drop the thing and get it over with. To which her husband mildly replies, "Only when you were very tired." If such a tiny fragment can epitomize the contemporary state of mind, this does.

One survivor is a nut who hides underground and waves fistfuls of unedited movie film showing various disasters of war. He continually gibbers at passersby to look at his footage and avidly holds it up to the light, the better to slobber over the frames and savor both the images of suffering and his own indignation. "Oh, the horror, the horror," he forever cries. But nobody pays any attention to him, and we never see what his strips of film contain.

Through this moron, Lester reiterates his attack from *How I Won the War* on the conventions of war films. Such genre movies, even when explicitly antiwar, have usually failed because (as many have noted) audiences ignored the message and lapped up the thrills. These thrills have been not just gung-ho heroics but also such things as piled corpses, mangled civilians, starving children, emaciated remnants of death camps, blasted cities—all intended to make us cry, with Lester's mad movie-maker, "Oh, the horror, the horror," while enjoying the pleasure of being shocked and the greater pleasure of feeling either helpless or vengeful, but in either case, impotent. If we see no actual war in *The Bed Sitting Room*, it is because we have had it, and rightly so, with the horrors of movie wars, whether documentary or fictional. At a time when war flares all over the globe, Lester calls for an end to using their atrocities and pain as visual propaganda against war and for a humanitarianism that the most bellicose hawks

and vicious rednecks can and do profess without altering their policies in the slightest.

But, during the final sequences, it begins to seem that we may, after all, behold horror. Ominous clouds gather, the characters grow apprehensive, the end appears imminent. Yet Lester ends the film quite inconclusively. Visually, the landscape changes; it becomes freshly green and sun-soaked. After giving birth to an unseen monster, Rita Tushingham has its fraternal twin, a normal child. Cook and Moore reappear with their crane, but Moore is now a pekinese thanks to the nuclear aftereffects that have been transforming characters left and right throughout the film. Cook announces that England is now a nuclear power again and that the rebuilt society will naturally need a ruler. "Here I am," he says cheerfully, "so watch it." Then he takes off in a balloon while lovers and baby stroll off amid blossoms, health, and hope. The mixed feelings of the scene are stirring. Lester wants to express hope in a renewal of life, and consequently he now fills the screen with his brightest, most sensuous colors. Yet he cannot repress despair. The authoritarians are benevolent and funny, yet perhaps they will prove all the worse for that. The resurgence of the now mentionable bomb darkens the mood. Yet the geniality and lilt in both the colors and the voices are particularly unexpected after the brittleness, polemics, harsh editing, and cynicism of recent Lester movies. Here we sense him drawing upon the gaiety that flickered in *Petulia* and may have seemed purely a Beatle trait in his two films with them. *The Bed Sitting Room,* a far less frenetic film than any of these, extends the range of his expressiveness.

Although it attacks the genre, *The Bed Sitting Room* is, of course, itself antiwar. But a chasm yawns between its stance and that of *Oh What a Lovely War.* Richard Attenborough's movie *trades* on its viewpoint, as if opposition to war were indicative of special moral and artistic enlightenment. With its combination of blandly realistic trench combat and theatricalized set pieces—World War I as a carnival for admission to which a family of anonymous "Smiths" pays with its lives and grief while medal-festooned nobles strut in some colonnaded heaven—this movie, too, looks at first like an attempted fusion of theater and realism that will prompt us to question war's many rationales. But the sole question that this swollen, beached whale inspires is "What's the point of having made it?"

Points, naturally, are all too evident. Each scene has one and telegraphs it to us almost instantly. Yet no scene ends almost instantly; nearly all drag, padded with stagy business that, unlike Lester's theater devices, battles for attention with the no-man's-land sequences until the two nullify each other. Typically, the meetings of Allied and German soldiers are trite and maudlin, but significant, oh so platitudinously significant. As a painted hooker recruiting peach-fuzzed youth with lusty song and dance, Maggie Smith (a real-life, anything but anonymous Smith) roars in to thrash some vitality into the obese movie. But her vigor also kicks it to smithereens because while she is on we forget the message and enjoy her performance for its own sake, just as we blanked out on the sententious speeches and moments of silence in standard war movies and relished the battles instead. *Oh! What a Lovely War* is basically conventional. It holds up a pseudo-stylized collage of war images and wants us to reply with "oh, the horror, the horror." Attenborough directs like a more dignified version of Lester's subterranean babbler.

The film carefully focuses on World War I, a war we can with no strain whatsoever call senseless. Yet the movie makes it seem less a particular conflict with its own causes and effects than a giant, picturesque tableau of "war in general." There are plenty of surfacy, research department details—uniforms, historical figures, songs—to limn the period, but they are not much unlike the authentic sets and costumes of *Funny Girl.* In both cases superficial verism imparts the shaddow without the substance of a specific era.

The movie grows steadily more confused as its efforts to detail the causes of World War I become scrambled with the bluff and bluster of its fat, mustachioed kings and field marshals. We cannot separate the star turns from the potted history lessons. We get no insight into the decades of complex sociopolitical maneuvers that

led to this war. For all that Attenborough shows us, we could well believe that it occurred simply because wicked princes had venal ambitions. Meanwhile, we doubt that it even matters to the director, who cannot seem to decide if he is portraying a war or War. He might just as well have filmed the Boer War; any such long-gone war sufficiently laden with passing-of-Empire overtones and susceptible to his decorative approach could have served just as well, or badly. The final shot, a receding aerial view of thousands of graves (somewhat like the coda of *All Quiet on the Western Front)* wants to be definitively elegiac. But who can mourn a field of Smiths who had no more life alive than they do planted beneath those crosses row on row? The title is meant to be ironic. Ironically, it is not, since what we see really is a lovely war.

Together, these two British war movies imply that the war movie as we have known it is no longer a viable genre for artists. Although they have been attacked for glorifying war, films *have* shown all of its fury and devastation. Photos of My Lai look so much like photos of Auschwitz from *Night and Fog* and other films that, terrible as it is to admit it, they are almost *déjà vus.* So the underground idiot's cry rises once again to our lips, sincerely yet mechanically, while slaughter continues. Whether or not we want to admit that (to paraphrase Wilfred Owen) all a film-maker can do today is warn, these films tell us that he must, like Lester, find his own new techniques to do even that.

GEORGE STEVENS, JR.

About the American Film Institute

The American Film Institute was offered space to comment on Ernest Callenbach's commentary on the Institute which appeared in the Summer 1971 issue of *Film Quarterly.* A dialogue on the Film Institute which explores the issues it faces and the possibilities that lie ahead of it should be useful, so in that spirit I have studied the May article carefully and will comment on it in this piece.

Although I sensed a spirit of constructive intent in Ernest Callenbach's approach, there was much to disagree with. It is perhaps not surprising that in an article of over 10,000 words there might be some factual errors and misrepresentations, particularly when Mr. Callenbach was able to devote only three hours to meeting the Film Institute leadership in examining what he describes as "a complex entity which no one person can ever quite grasp."

The American Film Institute *is* a rather complex entity, particularly for a relatively small and somewhat new institution. Its complexity has to do with its underlying concept—that of an organization which brings together many different elements of the film community into a productive relationship which can "advance the art of film in the United States." There is no question that politically and economically it would be easier to sustain an institute which dealt with one clearly defined constituency; however, its founders believed that The American Film Institute should operate in several different areas of film activity in a way which would allow these program areas to nourish and reinforce one another and in a way in which leading figures from different realms of the film community (film-making, history, education, industry, "establishment," "non-establishment," etc.) could work together in a fashion that would let the different sectors come to be better understood by one another.

To some, the very existence of executives from the film industry on The American Film Institute Board of Trustees was cause for suspicion (or apoplexy), whereas one would have hoped that anyone interested in a thriving film institute in a country with a "mixed economy" would realize that the collaboration of people from the commercial side was essential. The cultural film establishment was traditionally articulate without effect, largely due to an inability to make its case forcefully and recruit allies within the different power centers which had tradi-

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tionally obstructed progress and change. The American Film Institute was fortunate in that the executives appointed to its Board came with progressive views and a willingness to learn about and vigorously support aspects of film that had not been part of their earlier thinking. It is harder to understand the suspicion that is leveled at the presence of accomplished film artists among The American Film Institute Board members. These people have worked alongside educators (David Mallery, John Culkin, Arthur Knight, Andrew Sarris, Joan Ganz Cooney, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.) and film-makers with varying styles and points of view (e.g., Francis Ford Coppola, Richard Leacock, Gregory Peck, Arthur Penn, Ed Emshwiller, Sidney Poitier, John Korty) in an effort to deal with the immediate problems facing film culture in the United States (archives, historical research, and cataloguing) and to realize possibilities of the future (training and aid for film-makers, education, and publications). Determining what should be done, how it should be done, and doing it are tasks which are normally sufficient to keep the trustees and staff of a new institution busy; but from the beginning it has also been The American Film Institute's lot to have to raise the money to pay for its programs. In order to minimize government influence, the National Endowment for the Arts set AFI up as a private organization. This has many advantages to an institution whose purposes encompass support for artistic projects, some of which must be controversial, but along with this freedom of action the Institute acquired what has been an onerous fund-raising responsibility.

Several of the recommendations made in the *Film Quarterly* article were already part of The American Film Institute's planning and are now actualities. Other suggestions, particularly some in the areas of film distribution, were not under active consideration and have been helpful to the Institute's planning. Mr. Callenbach's strongest criticisms were leveled at the Center for Advanced Film Studies, and therefore this reply will deal at some length with the Center. But, first, I would like to treat briefly six points in an effort to set straight some factual errors and challenge some allegations about the original intent of The American Film Institute.

(1) The proposal that AFI "employ a comptroller to supervise budgets and expenditures" suggests that the writer discovered the absence of such a person. The AFI has always had a responsible budget officer on staff. Also, Haskins & Sells, certified public accountants, performs an audit of the Institute's finances each year as does the National Endowment for the Arts for each grant period. Haskins & Sells has also created a financial control system for AFI which gives the operators of different activities the type of periodic budget information they need to run their programs. Any variation from AFI's fixed budget has been with the approval of the Trustees. During 1970, spending had to be retarded and funding for some programs reduced due to uncertainty about our grant from the Ford Foundation and diminished contributions from other quarters. It should be pointed out that AFI has no endowment. Each year it must petition for funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and many other institutions and individuals and also work to increase revenues from income-producing projects. We do not expect a gap between projected spending and income to reoccur as it did in 1970, but fund-raising remains our daily preoccupation and organizational concern due to the need for sources of dependable funding for the many activities which The American Film Institute would like to and should be able to undertake.

A four-year report on The American Film Institute which includes financial data can be obtained by writing AFI. It also contains information on all the AFI programs, and the names of individuals and institutions who have received assistance from the Institute, as well as those who have contributed to it.

(2) The suggestion that "explicit procedures and standards in the personnel area" should exist for employees is certainly valid. These policies have now been incorporated into one printed guidebook which is available to all employees.

(3) It is to underestimate the intent of the founders of The American Film Institute and the members of the National Council on the Arts to suggest that the Film Institute was designed by "sophisticated *Kulturpolitik* thinkers" who hoped the Institute would (a) be an instrument for "taming dissident talents through periodic infusions of cash"; or (b) "would be in touch with a sizable portion of the possibly dangerous film-makers of the country" for some grand roundup. This seems to me to be just a willful refusal to understand or investigate the record of the National Endowment for the Arts or the character of the artists and leaders associated with it and unfortunately, a recurring tendency of Mr. Callenbach's to find it uncommonly difficult to attribute good motives to others.

(4) The American Film Institute, its Director, and its Trustees are accused of being "production oriented." Having read the article several times, my wonder has increased at the apparent hostility to-

ward the people who make films. The American Film Institute is most certainly concerned with film-makers. It is always useful to remind ourselves that without them there wouldn't be nor would there ever have been a need for a film institute (neither for quarterly magazines on cinema). It is hard to conceive of an institute concerned with another art form to be labeled in a pejorative way as "painter oriented" or "musician oriented." Critics, guided by former employees of the Institute, have declaimed staff reductions in research and education during 1970 but avoided discussion of the fact that proportionately large reductions fell to the film grants program in terms of staff and budget. For fiscal year 1971, the year during which educators were asked to believe (and did) that budget cuts had been unfairly applied to education, while production was protected, AFI's audited financial report shows a reduction below the previous year of $22,735 for the education department and a reduction of $199,359 for the production department. Production suffered the largest cutback of our year of financial difficulty, not education. I think it is best to turn from this criticism which tends to be parochial, and guard against the day when someone might accuse The American Film Institute of being oriented *against* film-makers or film-making, as has occasionally been the case with similar institutions in Europe.

(5) While a reasonable amount of paranoia about the film industry is not a bad thing, it is far from the truth to imply that AFI was created to serve it. The people who organized the AFI and breathed life into it were anything but "running dogs" for the film industry. Many of us who had worked within the industry committed ourselves to an American film institute because we knew there were things which must be done which would never be accomplished by the industry. The difficulty AFI has had in obtaining consistent and full support from all elements of the industry indicates that its leaders have not entirely accepted the concept that AFI directly benefits it. I believe that the cooperation of the film industry, particularly in archival and historical work, is essential and worth the time and energy necessary to obtain it. Furthermore, the work of AFI does redound to the benefit of the film industry for the very reason that advancing the art of film, which is the function of the Film Institute, cannot help nourishing the industry of film.

(6) Finally, Mr. Callenbach implies a very direct connection between an article in the summer 1961 issue of his magazine suggesting the need for an American film institute and the creation of The American Film Institute in June of 1967. I can assure you that the connection between the two is remote not only in time but in fact, because The American Film Institute was not something that "arose." It was the result of years of firm and determined effort by individuals who used their knowledge, artistic prestige and influence to get a share of federal, foundation and industry money for films and a film institute. This is too long a story to recite in this space, but steps along the way included engaging President Kennedy's interest in seeing that film not be excluded from recognition in the cultural policies he was initiating; reversing the *exclusion* of film from the Congressional legislation which created the National Endowment for the Arts; and, at a later stage, persuading many factions that an institute devoted to the art of film was of sufficient importance in the hierarchy of good works to justify funding. This included obtaining a pledge from the Ford Foundation to match the original founding grant of $1,300,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts and a pledge of a similar size from the seven major motion picture companies.

This is not to discredit the ideas contained in the 1961 *Film Quarterly* article, many of which are today part of The American Film Institute's programs, but to make it clear that other people had ideas about the need for a national film institution and moved actively to make it happen.

To move on to three major AFI program areas about which Mr. Callenbach raised questions, there are, first, some corrections about the Archives program which seem to me important; second, the rationale for the Center for Advanced Film Studies should be clarified; and, third, The American Film Institute philosophy about film distribution and exhibition should be discussed. The latter is also dealt with in a companion article which appears on page 43 of this issue, written by Michael Webb, the manager of The American Film Institute Theatre.

Archives

Mr. Callenbach praises the film preservation and documentation program of The American Film Institute, but in so doing he included some inaccurate comments. For instance, the impression is created that the AFI was aloof to other expert opinion by the charge that an advisory committee was not appointed until "late in the game." The record shows that I formed the Archives Advisory Committee of AFI on December 8, 1967, at the onset of AFI's archival activities. Its original members were Dr. Edgar Breitenbach of the Library of Congress; James

Card of George Eastman House; William Everson, author and film historian; Dr. John Kuiper, Chief of the Library of Congress Motion Picture Section; Arthur Knight, film historian and AFI Trustee; and Willard Van Dyke, Director of the Department of Film at the Museum of Modern Art. They have recently been joined by Andrew Sarris, a new Board member of AFI.

It is misleading to say that the Archives budget was, at any time, "drastically cut." AFI's archival expenditures year-by-year are as follows:

FY 1968	$168,592
FY 1969	339,488
FY 1970	351,056
FY 1971	285,384
FY 1972	488,235

Except for the cash flow difficulties of FY 1971, the Archives budget has increased yearly. Because AFI is not an endowed institution, we must obtain these funds from other sources. This knowledge has guided what is widely regarded as a wise approach to dealing with this country's film preservation problem. Knowing that limited funds were available relative to the magnitude of the task ($10 million is required to transfer the important nitrate film holdings to acetate stock, and with each successful discovery of "lost films" that figure increases), the AFI organized its thrust as a collaborative one with other museums and archives. Our work has been to spur and coordinate the acquisition and safeguarding of missing films. This involves research, travel, negotiations, and, in some cases, purchase. Acquisition activities are another instance of useful cooperation from the industry, whereby 80 percent of AFI's nitrate acquisitions came as gifts, and AFI resisted the temptation to build a brick and mortar empire of its own film vaults and chose to deposit the 8,000 titles it has gathered in the vaults at the Library of Congress where they are inspected and those in immediate danger of decay are transferred to acetate.

We were confronted early on with skepticism about our intent and our effectiveness in film preservation. Therefore we took satisfaction in the unsolicited appraisal of William Everson, one of the most respected film historians in America, who wrote this year in *Film Review* that the "number of 'permanently' lost films turned up by AFI has become *staggering.*"

The next step is to obtain the $10,000,000 needed to transfer to acetate stock the films in the AFI collection as well as important holdings in other archives. Mr. Callenbach notes this need, and is undoubtedly aware, that, as was true in creating the Film Institute, there is a large difference between writing of a need and obtaining, in this case, the $10,000,000 needed to do the job.

The Center for Advanced Film Studies

The Center for Advanced Film Studies was part of the original plan of the AFI and was made possible by a special grant for that purpose from the Ford Foundation. Thoughtful people in all areas of film in the United States realized that those who study film were in need of a bridge from the university to professional work. To acknowledge, as Mr. Callenbach does, that the "artistic record of our film schools is not impressive" and then to cite vaudeville as a training ground as an argument against having a national film conservatory is to ignore the fact that vaudeville is gone and so are the equivalent cinematic training grounds—two-reel comedies, centralized major studio production, and live television drama. There is now, more than ever before, a need for disciplined and academically sound learning opportunities in film. The fact that the universities have not been completely successful does not mean the idea of educating film-makers should be abandoned. There is evidence from overseas that the learning of film-making can be organized and accelerated within an academy just as other disciplines are in schools of architecture, music, and medicine.

Mr. Callenbach believes the two main obstacles facing all talented young people wishing to develop their film-making talents are "getting their films distributed" and "getting into the industry." Our experience would add a prior and more profound difficulty to that list and place it first among the three: the difficulty of learning the artistic principles of film-making by some means other than the time-consuming and very costly method of trial and error. It is to create this possibility that the Center for Advanced Film Studies was founded, not simply to serve those who attend the Center, but with the larger purpose of being a force which can inspire and help the universities solve the problems that are holding back their training programs.

The Center is a laboratory where over 50 film-makers are learning and working and which at the same time is becoming a prime source of information about the creative aspects of film-making. Its premises are that film-making can be learned (as opposed to taught) and that this country desperately needs improvement in the quality of its film learning opportunities. Our experience in interviewing hundreds of applicants to the Center for Advanced Film Studies

indicates that most of the universities are not yet able to provide a complete learning experience in film-making, and I have found few people who wish to dispute that assertion. It is an exceedingly difficult task for universities to provide an individual with his humanistic education (the sum of which will be a major factor in how interesting an artist he is) and at the same time provide a complete learning experience in so complex an art as film. This is particularly true because the sources of film knowledge such as books and films are extremely few as compared to what is available, for example, in architecture, theater, and music. Also, the number of practicing professional film-makers who are willing to serve the learning process is so small that there is a continuous shortage of tutors, particularly when considered in proportion to the 6000 students who are today majoring in cinema at universities in the United States.

The Center for Advanced Film Studies is a conservatory for writers, directors, and cameramen. It is also a laboratory for research into the creative process of film-making. Artists and craftsmen from every realm of film-making come to the Center and discuss their work with the Fellows. These discussions are being tape-recorded, transcribed, and made available to universities around the country. The most accomplished creative people in film visit the Center for Advanced Film Studies and discuss with considerable definition their ideas and experiences about the film-making art—ideas and experiences which at this point in history exist almost solely in the heads of film-makers. This represents the first systematic effort to gather a broad spectrum of knowledge from film-makers about their art. The seminar transcripts will not be an end in themselves, for as they increase in number they will become a bountiful source of research for books on comparative approaches to film-making. This has been condemned as an "elitist" or "great men" approach, but it is hard for me to understand the resistance of some educators to the idea of drawing out and compiling the first-hand knowledge and experience of the world's leading creative artists and craftsmen. It has been said that "great men speak to us only so far as we have ears and souls to hear them; only so far as we have in us the roots, at least, of that which flowers in them." The young people at the Center are "hearing," in a very deep sense, from extremely accomplished people.

The Center program in many respects goes against the grain of the times, but we think properly so. We have had the era of the "film explosion," the passion "to do one's own thing," the wish to "tell it like it is," and the appetite to use the camera "like a paintbrush." This approach has encouraged countless numbers of serious young people to be seriously misled in terms of what an artistic career in film-making calls for. Robert Steele, a professor at Boston University, has observed that most of the young film students who came to him lack maturity and discipline. He said, "Many of them are not well read enough to be English majors and others do not want to spend the time studying in a scientific course. Film looks like an easy thing, and I am sure that lethargy and indolence brings a lot of them into film-making."

It seems time now to recognize that cinema is a complex and demanding medium of expression requiring all the properties of creative discipline and concentration called for by the other fine arts. Inspiration without knowledge is not going to make for a career as a film artist. As the film industry becomes increasingly fragmented—or to pursue the metaphor, as vaudeville fades from the scene—institutions such as conservatories and universities are increasingly going to be the centers where film learning takes place. The hothouses where trial and error in the making of countless films provided film knowledge are no longer there. We foresee collaboration between the Center for Advanced Film Studies and universities toward improving the learning opportunities for film-making in this country. And—lest we be misunderstood—we are not talking about the technicalities of films or the mechanics of the different crafts but of the creative process of dealing with ideas so as to give them a structure that will sustain their life on the screen.

Mr. Callenbach's other, more sweeping, implication is that there is no "theoretical rationale" for the work at the Center. This is simply untrue. Had he chosen to spend some time with the faculty, they would have gladly described it. It seems a disservice to the Center and the readers of *Film Quarterly* to lightly dismiss a carefully conceived curriculum without, at least, exploring the program in some depth. Specific criticisms—which include referring to the people who go to the Center as serfs, the charge that the faculty is intellectually inferior, that the projection and editing equipment is too good, and that aspirants should be able to teach themselves what they need to know about film-making ("with a little help from their friends")—are simply areas where we disagree. The use of Greystone mansion at one dollar per year rental was economically favorable to any other alternative and will make only its

most neurotic followers feel like serfs; the faculty members are not only well educated (all have degrees from universities, the Dean has a Ph.D.), they have tested their education through professional experience; and the Fellows at the Center would not be there every day (without stipend) if they didn't feel they could learn better in this professional learning atmosphere than out doing their thing with their friends, perhaps in some measure because they *are* learning to work with professional equipment. As to whether or not the Center will do for America what the New Wave did for France, let me say first that although it is attributed to me in *Film Quarterly*, it is not a phrase of my making. I have the greatest respect for the film-makers of the New Wave for their work and for the influence they had no international cinema, but it is worth considering for a moment what residual effect the New Wave had in terms of *perpetuating* a standard of film-making in France. Not much, I fear. Our hope is to create an institution which can grow and change over the years, organizing and disseminating knowledge about the film-making process and at the same time providing a learning experience for individuals who can go on to enrich the film scene. Naturally, we hope that somewhere along the line an American Truffaut, Godard, or Chabrol would emerge from the Center, but at the same time we hope that something permanent and lasting of an educational nature will result.

One final point in connection with the Center. Mr. Callenbach criticizes my dual involvement as Director of the Institute and Director of the Center. I functioned as Director of the Center during its planning stages and its two formative years. It is now staffed, its curriculum and its nature defined, and the leadership of the Center has been turned over to my colleague, Frank Daniel, a gifted teacher and writer, who I am certain will be a splendid Dean and who will also provide leadership in film education in this country. The suggestion that the Center be spun off and operated independently from the rest of AFI is, in our view, not a good one. The idea of the Film Institute is of an organization in which many different elements and sectors of the film community reinforce one another. The Center's links to the archival and documentation activities of AFI, to the independent film-making program, to its theater and distribution activities, and to the various projects in research and publications are mutually reinforcing. The research and oral history projects managed from within the Center provide it with a sense of film traditions which can reinforce the learning process. Also, the Center provides an ideal workshop for historical films such as *Directed by John Ford*, which Peter Bogdanovich made there in collaboration with AFI staff and Center Fellows. There is nothing to gain from isolating the Center from the other AFI activities.

Film Distribution

The questions of film distribution which were raised in the *Film Quarterly* article are in many ways useful. The AFI is interested in coming to grips with many of the problems which Mr. Callenbach cites, and, on the theory that you have to begin somewhere, it was our decision to start with a local operation near our headquarters in Washington which could gradually reach out in different ways across the country. Whether Washington is culturally disadvantaged, as Mr. Callenbach argues, is for someone else to determine. It is no longer *cinematically* disadvantaged, due primarily to the impact of AFI's theater programs which have provided a film equivalent to the National Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian, and the new Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

We rejected the idea of setting up the regional offices which Mr. Callenbach proposes as being impractical for an organization at AFI's stage of development, and perhaps, even if it could be afforded, an excessively centralist approach in a country of the size and diversity of the United States. We want to be able to do more to help effect what Mr. Callenbach describes skillfully as "new connections between talent and audiences," and we believe our role in that process is to work with existing organizations across the country. It is my hope that before too long AFI theater and archives personnel can be freed from some of their duties in Washington to work collaboratively in search of those "connections" with film institutions in different parts of the United States.

I hope the readers of *Film Quarterly* will write to the Film Institute headquarters (1815 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006) and ask for a copy of a new report on the first four years of the Institute's activities. It describes in detail the film preservation program; the massive and unique documentation effort which has resulted in the first volume of *The American Film Institute Catalog* listing all films for the decade of the 1920's, including cast, credits, synopsis, and an elaborate cross-index; the oral history and research projects of the Institute which

have been carried on at the Center by virtue of a grant from the L. B. Mayer Foundation, resulting in interviews and basic research material on a wide range of significant contributors to the art of film in the United States; the Institute's work with teachers and regional film groups in the film education movement and the establishment of the National Association of Media Educators; the internship program which has placed promising young film-makers in apprenticeships with professional film-makers; the nearly 100 independent films which have been supported by grants from the AFI; complete information about the programming of AFI theater and retrospectives which have been assembled by the archival staff of the AFI; and details about membership and publications.

This report of AFI's first four years also explores the basic problems of the Institute, the most significant of which is the struggle to establish permanent or, at least, continuing sources of financing. Many have looked upon the AFI as an instant source of funding for the vast range of worthwhile film projects across the country. It is not that. It is a growing organization which is compiling a record of achievement and effectiveness which will hopefully justify greater financial support in the future. Presently it receives a major grant from the National Endowment for the Arts which covers approximately one-third of the annual costs of AFI, and it is our continuing task to attempt to raise and generate the other funds necessary to operate the Institute and to meet the matching requirements of the Endowment's grant. In terms of policy, much of what AFI does is determined by what our grantors want done. For example, the Center for Advanced Film Studies could not have been created were it not for a special grant for that purpose from the Ford Foundation; the oral histories are a result of a grant solicited by AFI from the L. B. Mayer Foundation; and various projects such as archival rescue also operate on funds restricted for a particular purpose.

If there is one distinct characteristic which I hoped we might bring to The American Film Institute, it was to unite people from different segments of the film community into a common effort. This started on AFI's 25-member Board of Trustees through active commitment from the "established" film industry, as well as from historians, educators, archivists, and film-makers from the non-establishment who have worked together in what has clearly been an experience of mutual education. This Board has been an indispensable source of strength to the Institute's work and also a source of controversy since the AFI was founded. By two specific suggestions, Mr. Callenbach points up the problems an institution like AFI has in maintaining the right balance of skills on its Board. At one point, he suggests that *"Board members should be expected to actively support fund-raising work."* A few paragraphs later, he suggests that the Board should include *"several additional members who have done original and important thinking about film as an art (historians, teachers, critics)."* The problem is that historians, teachers and critics are not generally inclined to do fund-raising, nor is it reasonable to suggest that they are the only ones who do original thinking. I point this out because it is an anomaly that seems to escape Mr. Callenbach and because it is a dilemma that the Film Institute trustees have had to deal with from the outset. That is, to strike a balance of interested and concerned people who can provide the vision, knowledge, and leadership the Institute needs, who can at the same time help secure the financial support necessary to do the work, and who are representative of the different sectors of the film community and various ranges of age, color and sex. It is to oversimplify the matter, however, to think that the educator will always be wiser than the practitioner, to assume that they will consistently, or even frequently, disagree, or to believe that people from one or another segment of film will argue for some special or parochial interest. The policy-making function of a board of trustees is to see the whole and direct an institution to its goals. The remarkable and heartening experience that all of us have had as AFI trustees is to see how the members of the Board learned and grew from working with their colleagues and how often it became surprisingly apparent that the interests of different sectors coincided or could be accommodated without diminishing one or the other. The combined knowledge, energy, and variety of influence of AFI's trustees, staff, advisors, fellows and friends should make the Institute, to ever-increasing degrees, a constructive force for film—"a bridge," as we said in our first report, "between all elements of the film community reaching out into all areas of American life."

This is what we are trying to create for the first time in the history of cinema in the United States, a national institution through which film-makers, educators, businessmen, and critics can all bring their different knowledge and talents into constructive collaboration toward common goals. This, we have found, requires time, persistence and money. It will also benefit by understanding and support from friends, old and new.

THE AFI THEATRE

The AFI Theatre's location in Washington, D.C., is not as bizarre as it might seem from a vantage point in California.

As a national organization, the AFI has a responsibility to serve the whole country, but we had to begin somewhere. Washington has more than symbolic value as the nation's capital. It is a good place in which to demonstrate, to an audience that includes policy-makers, how irreplaceable is the American film heritage; how undervalued the work of younger directors; above all, how relevant is film—as an art, as a commentary on society, as a window on the world. These are the basic concerns of AFI; the Theatre is its permanent exhibit. It is precisely because Washington has not, traditionally, supported cinema, that the need for such a showcase is so great. The Theatre was intended from the first to set an example, locally and nationally, of how to develop the most ambitious standards of programming and presentation.

Ernest Callenbach's article contrasted the Theatre's successful beginnings with its move to a high-rent shopping center and subsequent "spectacular losses." The facts are these. Based on our enormously successful trial operation at the National Gallery of Art, it seemed a reasonable gamble to look for a larger theater and to go full-time—thus providing greater accessibility, a richer program and sustaining the momentum of our initial success.

Our present 800-seat auditorium (the only suitable one available) is superbly equipped, popular with our 7,000 members, and often attracts large houses. But the rent is high and the *average* attendance lower than hoped for. Currently the deficit is $90,000 a year. The New York Film Festival (and many others) have cost far more than that in a couple of weeks; we program 500 features a year and attract an annual attendance of over 100,000.

Our current loss *is* too high. But we're still getting known (we have to be circumspect in our advertising), and the main thrust of our program is towards the obscure or unfashionable.

What has the AFI Theatre achieved in 18 months? First, it has helped enlarge the local cinema-going audience and has encouraged local TV stations and commercial theaters to provide a far richer choice of programs. At least four local theaters offer excellent repertory programs; indeed, Washington may now be second only to New York in the choice of films publicly available.

Programs generated by the AFI have circulated to other cities, including the Mary Pickford tribute and a program of 20 new and classic Swedish films. Archive selections have played in New York, Los Angeles, and elsewhere; plans are in hand for the circulation of new Polish and Brazilian programs. We welcome new participants for such tours. Our program brochures circulate to film theaters and colleges across the country. Hopefully, they provide as much inspiration and useful information on film supply, as frequently, other programs do for us.

The Washington operation has generated useful experience and invaluable contacts with distributors and film-makers. We've provided a forum for hundreds of films that might otherwise not have been shown here or anywhere else in America.

The AFI Theatre in Washington plans to move to the Kennedy Center in late 1972. There we shall enjoy greater access to the millions of visitors from all over America and abroad who pass through Washington every year. Hopefully, this complex will serve as a generator of ideas, information, and film packages—just as the National Gallery of Art serve every part of the country with its touring programs.

Regional theaters have already been set up, in museums and on campuses, independently of the AFI. So the Institute's main task should be to assist the theaters that exist rather than duplicate their efforts. We intend to explore some of Ernest Callenbach's suggestions. We've no master plan; rather we want to draw on the advice of and respond to the needs of people who've had to struggle along for years without help.

Commercial exhibitors complain of a product shortage. Yet there are plenty of fine American and foreign films that have never been taken for distribution. Archives and production companies are sitting on a treasure trove of older titles, that only a few privileged users can play. Distributors find that many of their titles are never booked; small organizations often cannot afford the terms asked for the films of their choice. Where does a theater go to obtain a good print or clear the rights on an obscure title; where does he obtain an annotated check list of titles on a particular theme (as he might obtain a reading list from his public library)?

These are some of the problems that AFI plans to help solve, and the theater in Washington will be an increasingly valuable tool in the process.

—Michael Webb
Film Programming Manager

Ernest Callenbach replies: AFI's performance and aspirations should, obviously, from here on be

chiefly debated by members of its potential constituency. To comment only very compactly on the foregoing, then: (1) I spent around a hundred hours investigating the AFI through contacts with many employees, former employees, Fellows, and people in the field. An elephant does not look to its own brain as it looks to observers from outside. (2) The money sounds better managed now than many informants said it was six months ago. (3) I didn't say AFI was "designed by" sophisticated etc., only that such thoughts might have occurred in the process. (That such ideas *do* occur to men of power may be verified from e.g. Bundy's remarks when he finally came out against the war.) (4) My "hostility," if such it was, aimed not at production as such but at distortion of AFI budgeting and activity; to meet the *ad hominem*, I love film-makers at least as much as George Stevens, Jr. does, and praised AFI for helping them through grants; but it should help them more wisely. (5) It is, alas, true that there was little direct connection between Colin Young's proposal for an AFI and the actual formation of the existing institution; if there had been more, most criticisms now levelled at AFI would never be heard, because the Center would not exist. (6) A "theoretical rationale" about film can only be tested by expressing it in public so that colleagues can think about it; I hope Daniel pushes in this direction. (7) AFI board composition is not an either/or proposition; it should obviously include *both* industry people with easy access to money and non-industry people with easy access to ideas.

Reviews

BREWSTER McCLOUD

Director: Robert Altman. Script: Doran William Cannon and Brian McKay. Photography: Lamar Boren, Jordan Cronenweth. Music: Gene Page. MGM.

Robert Altman's second film ("a disappointment after M*A*S*H," many said) received only limited first-run showing, and it is not yet clear whether the success of *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* will persuade the distributors and film audiences to give it another chance. The film certainly deserves one: it is a brilliant, complex, exhilarating, puzzling, highly intellectual work. As rambling and apparently disorganized as it may appear at first sight, subsequent viewings disclose more and more of its tightly constructed pattern, its intricate relationships of theme and image. Everything fits—but *where* it fits is not immediately clear.

For a start, it is worth comparing the original script of the film with its final transcribed form. "Brewster McLeod's Flying Machine," by Doran William Cannon, is at best a mediocre scenario. However, in the hands of Robert Altman and his own screenwriter, Brian McKay, the one salvageable idea in Cannon's script—that of a man obsessed with the desire to fly—is transformed into a parable about freedom and constraint, about man's own responsibility for his chains or wings, and about the restrictions upon "flying" in contemporary society.

Cannon's hero is a misanthrope, a psychopath whose urge to fly is obsessional and who casually kills or manipulates anyone who interferes with his monomania. His Brewster is a heel and an exploiter whose days are spent thinking about wing-patterns, sex, murders (several of which he commits) and himself. He has so little complexity, and there are so few other threads to the plot (in fact, none) that one doubts that any film based literally on this script would have gotten off the ground at all.

One of the changes which suggests the direction of Altman's inspired divergence from the Cannon screenplay is the hero's name—significantly altered from McLeod to McCloud. And the casting of Bud Cort as Brewster, perhaps initially to satisfy Cannon's description of the leading character as a young man in his early twenties with an expressionless baby-face, must have led to some immediate variations from the original conception. Cort's adolescent, naive countenance takes us far from the psychopathic character of Cannon's story. Furthermore, Altman shifted the setting from New York to Houston—where the Astrodome becomes an entirely new element, almost a character in itself, in terms of its importance to the central thread of the film.

Cannon's screenplay is one-dimensional: the "plot" follows Brewster's casual sexual encounters with three women; a near-murder provoked by passion and impatience; reminiscences of

chiefly debated by members of its potential constituency. To comment only very compactly on the foregoing, then: (1) I spent around a hundred hours investigating the AFI through contacts with many employees, former employees, Fellows, and people in the field. An elephant does not look to its own brain as it looks to observers from outside. (2) The money sounds better managed now than many informants said it was six months ago. (3) I didn't say AFI was "designed by" sophisticated etc., only that such thoughts might have occurred in the process. (That such ideas *do* occur to men of power may be verified from e.g. Bundy's remarks when he finally came out against the war.) (4) My "hostility," if such it was, aimed not at production as such but at distortion of AFI budgeting and activity; to meet the *ad hominem*, I love film-makers at least as much as George Stevens, Jr. does, and praised AFI for helping them through grants; but it should help them more wisely. (5) It is, alas, true that there was little direct connection between Colin Young's proposal for an AFI and the actual formation of the existing institution; if there had been more, most criticisms now levelled at AFI would never be heard, because the Center would not exist. (6) A "theoretical rationale" about film can only be tested by expressing it in public so that colleagues can think about it; I hope Daniel pushes in this direction. (7) AFI board composition is not an either/or proposition; it should obviously include *both* industry people with easy access to money and non-industry people with easy access to ideas.

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Cannon's screenplay is one-dimensional: the "plot" follows Brewster's casual sexual encounters with three women; a near-murder provoked by passion and impatience; reminiscences of

past murders; and, finally, his abortive attempt to escape from the snares of law which finally catch up with him as he tries to fly away on wings he has built himself. As in Altman's version, the means and ends are given moral significance: Brewster's crash at the end of both versions suggests that there is no such convenient escape from criminal behavior and irresponsibility; and, further, that man is still unable to master the physical and psychological qualities necessary for flight.

But the real ingenuity of *Brewster McCloud* begins when Altman takes flight from Cannon's earthbound script. Altman is known to be an improviser; an observer of the filming of *Brewster*, C. Kirk McClelland, was astonished to learn that frequently actors had no prepared lines at all—only Altman's loose instructions, or outlines, for a scene. (McClelland's notes on the filming of *Brewster*, plus Cannon's original script and a transcription of the actual screenplay, are available in a New American Library paperback, entitled *On Making a Movie: Brewster McCloud*, edited by Nancy Hardin). Altman's conception of the function of the director is analogous to that of the ringmaster in a circus (an image which he uses to end *Brewster McCloud* perhaps alluding to the finale in Fellini's 8½): he is responsible for the main outline, order, and general mood of the show, but both its success and its variety depend upon his entourage. In both *M*A*S*H* and *Brewster McCloud*, Altman's casual attitude towards the written script left room for spontaneous improvisation by members of the cast. Through the dynamics of personalities, not only real but role, some unexpected combinations and ideas were generated. As McClelland observes, Altman's approach is like an improvisational encounter group; his films are the result of the collaborative efforts of the entire cast and crew, rather than the brainchild of one imagination.

The final screenplay is most sharply in contrast to Cannon's original version in two major ways: first, in the variety and aliveness of the large contingent of characters (most of whom are absent from Cannon's script), and second, in the richness and depth of themes and ideas which they enact. Both of these elements may be illustrated by comparing characters from the two versions. The "Louise" of Cannon's script, for example, is barely developed, merely a puppet manipulated to reveal Brewster's masculinity hangup. In contrast, the Louise of Altman's film (Sally Kellerman) is the most elusive and mysterious of all the characters. She has a supernatural aura, further emphasized by the scars on her back where, supposedly, wings have once been. As Brewster's guardian and benevolent protector, she is also the suggested power behind the strange strangulation murders which accumulate during the course of the film. Moreover, she is the voice of command, one comes to realize, behind the black raven whose "bird-shit" is inevitably linked with each killing.

René Auberjonois, the Bird Lecturer

Altman's roster includes many characters of his own invention, such as the unforgettable Bird-Lecturer (René Auberjonois) who becomes more and more bird-like during his discourses on the feathered world. His lectures, ingeniously interpolated throughout the film to underline the similarities between Bird and Man, form a set of musical variations on the main theme of the film. Other comic touches include Inspector Shaft (Michael Murphy), an intentional parody of Steve McQueen in *Bullitt*; and Hope, the giddy young girl whose own sexual fantasies are activated by Brewster's presence. Even Suzanne, who does appear in Cannon's version as a rather saccharine stereotype in the form of Brewster's high-school sweetheart, comes to life as an idio-

syncratic no-nonsense guide at the Houston Astrodome.

Cannon's script aside (for one must put it aside once one realizes how little it has to do with the actual film), what is Altman's *Brewster McCloud* really *about*? The most obvious idea of the film is, of course, the fantasy of flying. As the Lecturer intones at the film's opening, ". . . the desire to fly has been ever-present in the mind of Man. . . . Was the dream to attain the ability to fly, or was the dream the freedom that true flight seemed to offer Man?" This question is the "score," or major *leitmotif*, of the film—the main theme upon which subsequent variations are orchestrated. From the opening sequence, throughout nearly every scene of the film to its finale, the ideas of flight, freedom, and constraint are developed, each with its own further variations.

Immediately after the Lecturer's pronouncement, the image shifts to Miss Daphne Heap (Margaret Hamilton) leading an all-black band in a rehearsal of "The Star-Spangled Banner" at the Houston Astrodome. She assumes an air of condescending possessiveness toward the group, largely because of her part in financing their uniforms ("I want everything just exactly the way it should be. . . . That's why I bought you these uniforms!" she shouts). The singers are passively obedient under her direction, but when they are free to sing their own tune, they break into "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the Black National Anthem, with unrestrained gusto and energy. The contrast in mood is emphatic. Miss Heap's conducting had created a kind of harness for the group; when released they dance and move with uninhibited zest. Miss Heap's racial attitudes are pin-pointed even further at her home, when she shouts "nigger bird" at the raven which loosens the clasp and frees the birds from the large bird cage in her garden. Miss Heap is later found mysteriously dead near that cage—the first of the film's "strangulation murders"—her body covered with what becomes the increasingly ubiquitous bird-shit. It is worth noting here that one does not *see* Miss Heap—or any of the subsequent victims—actually murdered; the violence of Cannon's script has not only been moved from center-stage to back-stage, but it has been invested with humor as well. As in *M*A*S*H*, violence is not presented gratuitously to the audience; it is always subordinate to the main comic line of the film. In exercising an almost classic-Greek attitude towards killing on stage (screen), Altman does not cater to the current appetite for cinematic violence for its own sake.

Following Miss Heap's death, the scene shifts rapidly to the sequence involving wheel-chaired Abraham Wright (marvelously played by Stacy Keach), an invented brother of the two more famous Wrights. With the assistance of his chauffer, Brewster McCloud, the 105-year-old Wright moves from one old-age home to another (suggestively named "Blue Bird of Happiness," "Feathered Nest Sanatorium," "Tanninger Rest Home," etc.), milking rental money from aging tenants. The audience follows Wright through a bewildering agenda of money-grubbing which ends in a comic wheel-chair odyssey through downtown Houston, resulting in a traffic chaos reminiscent of the Keystone Cops' escapades. But one eventually realizes that Wright is dead (and covered with bird-shit) during the entire journey.

With these two mysterious murders early in the film, a pattern of meaning (or, what may be at first viewing, the pattern of confusion), begins to emerge. Wright's greed, avarice, and racial bigotry—the last revealed in his fears of Black Panther conspiracies and Communist agents—and Miss Heap's sense of racial superiority suggest that they survived by usurping the freedom of others; each had lived by keeping others in cages, by preventing them from using their own wings. In a kind of retributive justice which is true for each of the murder victims in the film, their own wings are permanently clipped.

Along with the deadly sins of greed and prejudice we are presented with the undisguised bigotry of Narcotics Agent Greene (Bert Remsen). A tyrant to his wife and sons, he sees the world in strict categories of "them" and "us," of (in his words) Niggers, Japs, and Jews on the one hand, and solid American citizens like himself, but excluding even his family, on the other. When he sees Brewster photographing birds at the zoo, he frames him with a dummy marijuana cigarette and presses a charge which he is willing to drop

in exchange for Brewster's expensive, though stolen, camera. Our next view of Greene is a by-now familiar one: he is dead and comically covered with bird-shit, while his wife smiles with the relief of freedom and his son takes photographs of his dead body. Greene's death releases his wife and son from their cages: later in the film they are seen as real people rather than trapped animals. That Agent Greene dies at the zoo is eminently appropriate.

From these events one moves to revelations of other subtler kinds of cages. Haskell Weeks (William Windom), the puffed-up Houston city official who preens, puts on airs, and struts with self-importance, cages his black chauffeur by treating him as a second-class human being. It is his vanity which leads to his demise; in his desire to solve the murders (and be given sole credit) he becomes yet another of the victims. The "imported" Inspector Shaft from San Francisco (Michael Murphy) is caged by his own brand of vanity, while the competition among the several kinds of authority vying for power and status elaborates further on the same theme. As the Lecturer notes, apropos of social behavior and status-seeking among birds, "within a flock composed of a single species, there is this definite order of social distinction, and between any two birds one invariably has precedence over the other"—a phenomenon known as the pecking-order.

Variations on the bird theme are nearly always humorous. The Lecturer's apt descriptions of habits of feathered creatures are juxtaposed with visual counterparts—the musical theme behind the visual image. In fact, a great deal of the density of the film comes from this juxtaposition of sound and sight impressions. Though the voice of the bird-lecturer at first seems parenthetical to what is happening on the screen, it eventually becomes clear that it is his commentary which carries much of the humor to balance against the seriousness of Brewster's obsession with flight. Altman also uses overheard and apparently insignificant conversation (which subsequent viewings show to reveal important information), as well as singing and radio announcements on the sound track which may or may not comment on the visual sequences. These intentional disparities between image and sound characterize Altman's style in *M*A*S*H* and *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* as well, but the technique is most richly exploited in *Brewster McCloud.*

Elsewhere in the film, the bird-lecturer's comments imply the likeness of Inspector Shaft to a preening peacock, while the stumbling, bumbling fat cop, Ledbetter (Dean Goss), who chases Brewster vainly through the catacombs of the Astrodome, is instantly identifiable as the awkward cassowary, whose body is "extremely heavy and [whose] wings are so short that it has no power to raise itself from the ground in flight." Moreover, each of the romantic interests—including the widow Greene's flirtation with policeman Hines, or Suzanne's romance with Haskell Week's assistant—is highlighted by analogy to bird courtship. "The low-footed Booby," the Lecturer states, "will compete for the attention of her intended by goose-stepping in front of him, raising her bright blue feet as high as she can and thrusting out her chest." Even the cars used in the chase sequences are suggestively licensed with such give-aways as DUV (though the car happens to be a Roadrunner) and BRD-SHT.

Altman finds other ways to hint at the cages within which not only his characters, but all of us, move. The Lecturer mourns that Man is trapped by his lack of wings; he has upset all the order of nature and slowly, surely claimed the whole Earth for himself and his own destruction. In addition, the film is sprinkled with references to more narrowly defined societal restrictions upon freedom: one of the early shorts in the film shows bird-shit falling onto a newspaper with the headline, "AGNEW: SOCIETY SHOULD DISCARD SOME U.S. PEOPLE." It is hardly accidental that the police lab consider sending a sample of the mysterious bird-shit to an "expert in excrement" named Agnew; or that one of the film's outstanding minor nitwits is Milhouse, the dumb librarian of the Wright Library (from which Brewster steals a priceless book on flight by the Wright Brothers).

Even granted such asides on contemporary society and its ills, it would be easy enough to dismiss *Brewster McCloud* as an entertaining fantasy. It is that, of course, but it is more

than that; the ultimate effect of the film, which emerges from the comedy itself, is serious. The fantasy of flying/freedom touches a yearning which we all share, in its promise of physical release and freedom from psychological restraint as well. Yet Brewster himself is a victim of his own cage. (Certainly the Houston Astrodome is the archetypal cage, as Brewster learns at the end. The Lecturer enjoins during the audience's visual encounter with the Dome, "It may someday be necessary to build enormous environmental enclosures to protect both Man and Birds. But if so, it is questionable whether Man will allow birds in . . . or out, as the case may be.") His obsession with flight deludes him into believing that there are no social or ethical restraints upon him—that he is a kind of superman for whom murder is no more than removal of obstacles in the way of his goal. And, beneath the social implications of the film, one finds even deeper mythical themes: the hubris of the quest for flight/freedom which Brewster shares with his spiritual ancestors, Icarus and Daedalus, along with the initiation into adulthood, with its attendant necessary restraints on absolute freedom and the fantasy of omnipotence. Despite the earnestness of his quest, Brewster is a child in many ways (Bud Cort's wide-eyed innocent look, with hardly a trace of peach-fuzz on the lip, conveys this image forcibly): his ignorance of sex is stressed repeatedly. Louise, who sings children's lullabies to him, warns him that people like Hope (the young girl who brings Brewster health foods and is infatuated with him) do not know that they can be free; sex is the closest thing they have to flying. For Brewster to be able to fly he must be "pure" according to Louise's unspoken standards; sex will taint him with earthly needs and make him turn his back on the clouds.

Inevitably, this is what does happen to Brewster. He is easily enmeshed, caged, by Suzanne (Shelley Duvall), a decidedly down-to-earth girl who is more impressed with the fame and fortune which Brewster would amass if he really could fly (limousines with chauffeurs and "a house on River Oaks Boulevard") than with the miracle of flight. Suzanne has no desire to exchange her world of things for a chance to soar above them. Brewster's initiation into sexual experience is with Suzanne, who symbolically, as well as literally, becomes the designer of his "fall." Brewster accompanies her to a Houston amusement park called "Lost World," from which symbolically, he does not return. Not only does Suzanne "turn him back to earth" through sex, as Louise had warned, but she discloses to the authorities his confidences to her about the murders for which he is responsible and the wings he has been fashioning in the basement of the Astrodome. When Louise realizes that her influence on Brewster has ceased—that the power of an idea has been defeated by the power of the body—she utters a cry more like that of a wounded bird than a human being, and walks slowly out of Brewester's life into the blinding sunlight outside the Astrodome—just before Brewster's doomed test of his wings. In being initiated, Brewster thus loses not only his innocence but his important link with the strange supernatural power Louise commands.

It is not a simple film, nor is Brewster a simple "hero" who comes to a tragic end. He is ambiguously innocent and trusting and yet immoral and destructive. He is tempted by the superhuman urge to fly and destroyed by his own human weaknesses—his physical and psychic limitations. The visual image of Brewster's first (and last) flight in the Astrodome expands the several themes of the film to their widest meanings, their greatest crescendos: even in flight, he is still inside a cage. In the mythical "fall" and in the actual fall which is Brewster's death, the audience comes to know that to destroy those who

build cages does not insure that we ourselves can fly; the quest for pure freedom can never be fulfilled because we carry within us the seeds of our own destruction. Brewster's willingness to forsake his humanity for the hope of superhuman power leads to his own demise. The lyrics to the concluding song form a counterpoint to Brewster's short-lived flight, warning that

> All of the rainfalls on the earth
> Cannot cleanse away what's been done
> And all of the winds can't blow away the curse
> Nature has provided that will come.
> These are the unnatural facts,
> his is the last of the unnatural acts.
> (lyrics by John Phillips)

As the song, and film, emphasize, there is more than a rhyme connecting flying with dying. Altman has put the enigma before us brilliantly.

—ROBERTA RUBENSTEIN

McCABE AND MRS. MILLER

Director: Robert Altman. Producers: David Foster and Mitchell Brower. Script: Altman and Brian McKay. Photography: Vilmos Zsigmond. Warners.

The most weary and overworked film genre at the moment is the burlesque—what newspaper critics like to call the "spoof." We have "spy-spoofs," "western-spoofs," and "gangster-spoofs." They are silly, nerveless things for the most part, travestying the form of a particular film convention but leaving the substance untouched—often, in fact, cashing in on the excesses they pretend to be satirizing, with their gestures of parody no more than an attempt to have it both ways. The most offensive examples I can think of are the Dean Martin spy-spoofs.

The "spoof," however, is only one form of American movies' film-consciousness. Somewhere this side of burlesque, connected to it, lies a distinctively American kind of film which also works with conventional film-styles but instead of deflating *or* inflating them tries to domesticate them. A stock plot and stock characters, even stock editing, are set forth with a wealth of gritty, sometimes squalid detail. At their best, these films set up a resonance between the ideal values of the convention and the homely ordinariness of their settings, properties, and dialogue. Their photography is purely photographic, invoking the family snapshot, the class picture, the newspaper shot. The film convention thus enclosed is not shown up, debunked, burlesqued, or otherwise patronized: it is, if a word must be found, *actual*-ized—i.e., supplied with actuality. The tone is modest, and the point is not that Achilles has a (heh-heh!) wart on his nose but that Achilles has a *nose*. Recent films in the genre include *Bonnie and Clyde* (though it does get a bit mythic), *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Little Big Man,* and Zinnemann's *The Sundowners*. Earlier exemplars are Huston's *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre,* Henry King's *The Gunfighter,* and Kubrick's *The Killing*. The style owes something to the hard-boiled comedy school of the thirties, and something to American realism: the John Ford westerns, which despite their gelatinous romanticizing strove to make their soldiers and cowboys as sweatily workaday as possible; tough-guy pictures like *The Big Sleep* and *The Maltese Falcon,* which focused not on causes or motives but simply on the *feel* of criminal life. *Things* dominate these pictures to the extent that *mise en scène* gives them their peculiar quality at least as much as story or character: Michael Pollard's baggy underdrawers in *Bonnie,* the bicycle in *Butch,* the ratty tent that the Sundowners live in, the watch-chains and derby hats of the posse in *The Gunfighter.*

The comic strain is always important in the genre, and it is always a threat to the director's equilibrium. At best, two attitudes toward the characters are juxtaposed and kept in balance in a way that informs and complicates both of them; at worst (as in *Little Big Man*) two attitudes are juxtaposed in a way that tells us the director is merely trying to have it both ways. (But then, trying to have it both ways is the besetting sin of American movies.) The hole in Fred C. Dobbs's hat may mock his pretensions to fierce, manly pride, but it dignifies them at the same time, for we cannot help but respect a

build cages does not insure that we ourselves can fly; the quest for pure freedom can never be fulfilled because we carry within us the seeds of our own destruction. Brewster's willingness to forsake his humanity for the hope of superhuman power leads to his own demise. The lyrics to the concluding song form a counterpoint to Brewster's short-lived flight, warning that

> All of the rainfalls on the earth
> Cannot cleanse away what's been done
> And all of the winds can't blow away the curse
> Nature has provided that will come.
> These are the unnatural facts,
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The comic strain is always important in the genre, and it is always a threat to the director's equilibrium. At best, two attitudes toward the characters are juxtaposed and kept in balance in a way that informs and complicates both of them; at worst (as in *Little Big Man*) two attitudes are juxtaposed in a way that tells us the director is merely trying to have it both ways. (But then, trying to have it both ways is the besetting sin of American movies.) The hole in Fred C. Dobbs's hat may mock his pretensions to fierce, manly pride, but it dignifies them at the same time, for we cannot help but respect a

man who wears so fiercely a hat so absurd. When the things are permitted merely to mock the characters, you get confusion or, at best, a "spoof." When the actuality works both ways, you get real pathos.

Robert Altman's *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* is a near-perfect example of the type. I thought his *M*A*S*H* was one of the more repellent of the recent false-burlesques—an "anti-war" spoof of war movies whose heart in fact lay nearer to *What Price Glory* than to the war scenes of *Duck Soup*. *M*A*S*H* did have Sally Kellerman, a couple of other engaging performances, and tight, fast, farce-paced editing. The attempt to dignify all this slapstick by injections of gore seemed to me heavy-handed and cheap, but the idea of playing a stylized, conventional film-genre against gritty realities and the "thingness of things" was there. I still haven't seen *Brewster McCloud,* and I don't even know if it attacks the same problem, but *McCabe* does it, and does it very handsomely.

It's the story of a tinhorn gambler, John McCabe (Warren Beatty), who arrives in the Washington mining camp of Presbyterian Church in 1902 and in those rude, all-male circles passes for a very slick and ruthless article, although we quickly discern that he is in fact naive, bumbling, unimaginative, and good-natured. He wins enough money at poker to return to the nearest frontier metropolis and "buy" three undesirable whores (one over-age and over-weight, one under-age and weepy, one toothless and homicidal) from a prosperous pander. Back in Presbyterian Church, he installs his three tarts in three tents beside the saloon he is building and settles down as the most important man in town. With the arrival of the girls, however, the first cracks appear in his self-assurance. They have needs and passions for which he is now uncomfortably responsible. (The youngest one's first words in McCabe's bleak, unfinished saloon, are "I have to go potty.") As McCabe teeters uneasily between the satisfaction and the burdens of his new estate, Mrs. Miller (Julie Christie) arrives to tempt him to even dizzier heights. Beginning, "Mr. McCabe, I'm a whore," she proposes to show him how to set up a really fine brothel, with a bath-house, classy girls from Seattle, and clean sheets. Though he tries to patronize Mrs. Miller, he recognizes that he is in the presence of a professional, and she eventually has her way—for one-half of the profits after his investment is paid off.

The whorehouse McCabe builds is as elegant as Mrs. Miller had promised and as successful, its fame spreading even to the cowboys down in the prairies. McCabe begins to feel in earnest the discontents of his success, however, as he falls mawkily in love with Mrs. Miller, compromising her professionalism as well as his own. No longer is he the principal person in a smoky saloon full of rubes—the man who reputedly but not very probably killed Will Rountree—but a man enmeshed in conflicting demands and desires. The worldly success Mrs. Miller has brought to McCabe brings him to the attention of a big mining company, which sends two men in good suits to buy him out—saloon, whorehouse, and baths—for five thousand, five hundred dollars. Full of bravado and self-importance, McCabe scoffs at their offer, plays hard-nosed, patronizes the two, until they leave and Mrs. Miller tells him, too late, that now he's gotten them in big trouble.

In a few days, three most improbable thugs arrive in Presbyterian Church to "hunt bear." An enormous Britisher with a monkey-fur overcoat and an Oxbridge accent; a halfbreed with a sad, delicate face; and a teen-aged fast gun in a Sears-Roebuck suit and a cloth cap. McCabe tries to haggle with the leader and realizes to his terror and humiliation that once again he has met a real professional, and this time of not so benign a trade. He tries to find the mine representatives to accept their offer, but they have disappeared back into the world of walnut panelling. He seeks legal help and finds a windy frontier lawyer, a would-be Bryan who fills McCabe's ear with Populist slogans and his head with fuzzy visions of fighting for justice. Back in Presbyterian Church, in the cold, silent morning, McCabe rises from Mrs. Miller's bed and goes out to fight the professional killers in the snowbound village. He discovers, and Mrs. Miller remembers, that the dreams of amateurs are

no match for the illusionless professional, while the three thugs discover that cool professional skills are no match for the passion of an amateur. The mining company wins everything from everybody.

Not that *McCabe* is a film of radical social protest. The Populist slogans are only slightly less ridiculous in McCabe's mouth than in the lawyer's, and neither McCabe nor Mrs. Miller really qualifies as a victim of the capitalist oppressor. All there is to say about McCabe is that he aspired to be something other than he was, but what he was was better than what he aspired to be. If there is anything symbolic in the film, it is Mrs. Miller's opium pipe. Perhaps it's a story about "pipe-dreams"—their comforts, and their shortcomings. It would be wrong to make too much of that, however, for, again, for it is a modest film whose "meaning" is in its details and not to be deduced from them in the form of a truth or half-truth. Every image is an homage to the "it-ness" of life, to the feel and look and use and enjoyment of physical existence: rarely has the weather and the progress of the seasons been more meticulously attended to in a film *without* investing it with some symbolic or sentimental importance, and the same matter-of-fact respect is accorded to *things* such as underwear, furniture, and hats (the hats border on the bizarre, and yet every one of them is perfectly all right, or even just right). A footbridge, a suit of underwear, the very boards of McCabe's unfinished saloon, are relished and celebrated in their ordinariness, and lend their solidity to the quirks and "ideas" and actions of the characters—especially the minor characters. There is a bartender in the film who worries about whether he should wear a beard and mustache, or mustache only. He is funny but not ridiculous. The film grants his concern its small dignity, and it does the same for every object, every place, every character, every idea, every folly and every vice. The villains of the film—the three killers and the two executives—are not bad because they are brutal, but brutal because they don't know how to enjoy, as we and the other characters are enjoying, the obvious delights. The youngest thug treacherously and sadistically murders an amiable cowhand, but the crime is done out of boredom, rather than bloodlust, and afterward he feels not villainous satisfaction, but embarrassment.

Warren Beatty, Julie Christie

This attitude toward the evil is another mark of the genre I have described. As the Christian believes that the Devil is an ass for preferring temporary self-importance to eternal bliss, these stories portray bad men as absurdly unaware of the simple pleasures. It is an attitude leading to comedy, rather than tragedy, and is the reason why films in this style often have trouble controlling their comic elements *(Butch Cassidy, Bonnie and Clyde,* as well as *Little Big Man),* for the style is not really one of comedy. However ridiculous the bully may be in some ultimate philosophical sense, at the moment he is kneeling on your chest, and your awareness that he's a fool only adds maddening unreasonableness to the situation, and it is just here, between theoretical laughter and actual tears, that these

films, when successful, must balance. *McCabe* does it more adroitly than any of the others I've named, more adroitly than any since *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre.*

Why, then, does it seem so minor and so forgettable? Taking unpretentiousness as a principle has its dangers, of course, but there have been modest and unassuming films which are great films, so modesty in itself can't be to blame. I guess the trouble is that Beatty is no Bogart. The air of commonplace madness which Bogart put into a line like, "I'll show him he can't mess around with Fred C. Dobbs, nossir!" is not in Beatty's range. One problem is that he is ineluctably handsome. They say that a really beautiful woman cannot be funny; I think the proposition is even more true of a really handsome man. It is not Beatty's comedic talents which fail, however, but his ability to be at once mildly comic and deeply serious. He is a theatrical, even stagy, actor, and this kind of gritty actuality film demands not an actor who does, but an actor who *is*: Bogart, Brando before he started reaching too hard, sometimes Sterling Hayden and Robert Mitchum. Beatty is in the line of Gable, not of Bogart.

Julie Christie, twenty pounds lighter than in *Petulia,* quick, tough, yet fragile, is excellent; to compare her whore-with-a-heart-of-gold with Jane Fonda's in *Klute* is a lesson in the animation of stereotypes. The huge actor who plays Butler, the British head-assassin, is impressive; I've never seen him before and the word is that Altman, or somebody, saw him at a cocktail party or waiting for a bus and cried, "I must have *him*!" He's good, and I expect we'll see a lot of him, smiling his grisly-complacent smile at helpless, sweating victims, successor in the giant-heavy line to Laird Cregar and Sydney Greenstreet—both of whom, come to think of it, were also Britons. The minor parts are cast with care. The whores, for once, look like whores and not like the Goldwyn Girls, and the miners are a group of people rather than a string of extras. I especially liked an officious, lugubrious, and stupid miner who looked for all the world like the poet Richard Brautigan.

The color photography by Vilmos Zsigmond is excellent, but I've gotten so used to splendid low-key color camerawork that I take it for granted these days. The script and editing are in the tough, economical Buñuel line which is a major ingredient of this style: a compact, swift-moving film, with no scene developed beyond its function and a minimum of transitional and expository footage. In an early sequence, for instance, McCabe sits in his half-finished saloon while the Irish hotel-keeper tries to wheedle his way into a partnership; as soon as the situation is established, they are distracted by shrieks outside and McCabe leaps to the window; cut to one of McCabe's whores attacking her customer with a hunting-knife; cut to McCabe's take and reaction of dismay; cut to whore stabbing customer, McCabe running up and disarming her and then standing over and looking befuddled as she collapses in sobs; cut to miners watching arrival (days, it appears, after the stabbing) of the steam-tractor which will prove to bear Mrs. Miller as a passenger. No more is made of the brawl than this minimum, and it is never referred to. The point, that McCabe has more on his hands than he wants to handle, is not sacrificed to any of the possible overloadings of the scene: sensation, sentimentality, "color." Plenty of directors can milk a scene; there aren't many who can resist the temptation.

Before I saw *McCabe,* three different friends had warned me that the sound was bad, especially on the print I was to see, but I (who refuse to return to Welles's *Othello* because of the wretched inaudibility of most of it) had no difficulty. There's a lot of dialogue-over-dialogue, and a lot of lines that trail off, but all the important dialogue—such as McCabe's story about the frog eaten by an eagle—is perfectly intelligible, while nine-tenths of the lines are not worth hearing, intended to convey no more than a vague sense of banality and inconsequentiality. It is a very filmic movie, its dialogue belonging rather to the decor than to the drama itself.

My loudest complaint is against the score. When a director wants a folk-ballad in the background, why shouldn't he find a nice Irish, Appalachian, or Western ballad? *McCabe* features a dismal, fake ballad by Leonard Cohen—one of

those concoctions of extravagant and incoherent metaphor, à la Dylan, which passes in childish circles for heavy stuff. What's wrong with "Dried Apples," or "The Frozen Girl"? Cohen's pretentiousness is totally out of key with this film. Fortunately, it is used only in transitions, the movie relying otherwise on in-scene sound, and very effectively. —JACKSON BURGESS

TWO-LANE BLACKTOP

Producer: Michael S. Laughlin. Director: Monte Hellman. Screenplay: Rudolph Wurlitzer, Will Corry. Photography: Jack Deerson. Universal.

Back in 1965, director Monte Hellman led an intrepid little band of film people out into the Utah desert to hurriedly stage and act and shoot a couple of highly eccentric Westerns, two low-budget features which have yet to be granted theatrical exhibition in this hemisphere, but are graced nonetheless with a throng of ardent underground admirers in both North America and Europe. Jack Nicholson, now so renowned, was among Monte Hellman's very small cast and crew back then, and more or less got his start in these Corman-sponsored films as a featured performer and co-producer of *Ride the Whirlwind* (for which he also prepared the scenario) and *The Shooting* (scripted by Adrien Joyce, the subsequent writer of *Five Easy Pieces*). Hellman's two heavily stylized Westerns were marked by their stifling pervasive moods of anxiety and unsettledness. With *Two-Lane Blacktop*, his newest film, Hellman has grafted his paranoic cosmic perception onto a contemporary subject and setting: a race from Los Angeles to Washington DC between two youthful car fanatics in a souped-up, old-model Chevy and a drifting middle-aged playboy in a garish Pontiac GTO.

But the word "race" is ill-advised in this context, for it connotes a sustained competition and a definite outcome. The cross-country peregrination depicted in *Two-Lane Blacktop* is no domestic version of Le Mans, but rather a kind of aimless, listless, rootless game that nobody wins, played out by people who are sadly convinced that there's nothing better to do. The racing participants occasionally talk about their lightness and swiftness and violent motion, but the feel of the film is uncomfortably quiescent: time and movement seem suspended with protracted footage of secluded, boxlike car interiors and with a sound track that stops for strange long silences between each pithy utterance. Throughout the motorized journey, Hellman insistently undermines any sense of rapid adventure, forward momentum, or scenic flux with a careful choice of roadstop locales: the ephemeral diners, cafés, luncheonettes and bars all closely resemble each other, all seem anonymous, nondescript, so much so that the prevailing atmosphere suggests that these nomads are traveling to nowhere, driving to oblivion. The random, desultory quality of the trip is reflected by the tone of Laurie Bird, a backseat stowaway in the two car fanatics' custom machine, who responds to the news that she's going East with only the slightest, most casual interest: "East . . . that's cool, I've never been East."

Hellman's exterior composition-work can be somewhat perturbing, as it tends to present human beings and material objects with impartial emphasis. In a Hellman frame, moving vehicles, inanimate matter, even empty space can steal the show from the human performers by suddenly turning intrusive and vaguely ominous, seeming to dislocate the actors and expropriate their sphere of influence. Hellman gets a weird, horrific impression from a looming floodlit silo of smooth grey concrete that rises up against a neutral skyscape, and a keen sense of desolation from the trains that sometimes happen to pass along the sides of the road. He achieves a disconcerting starkness and bareness with his graceful choreography of a small Oklahoma hinterland town in the dawning hours, a place that consists of depopulated rain-soaked streets, an abandoned garage, a vacated gas station, natives who themselves look almost threatening when emerging from their neighborhood homes. And then there's the omnipresent menace of prowling cop cars.

The popular success of *Two-Lane Blacktop* may well be encumbered by Universal's weighty

those concoctions of extravagant and incoherent metaphor, à la Dylan, which passes in childish circles for heavy stuff. What's wrong with "Dried Apples," or "The Frozen Girl"? Cohen's pretentiousness is totally out of key with this film. Fortunately, it is used only in transitions, the movie relying otherwise on in-scene sound, and very effectively. —JACKSON BURGESS

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Warren Oates, Dennis Wilson, Laurie Bird, James Taylor.

publicity campaign, by the virtual library of newspaper ads and mimeographed teasers that it dumped upon the innocent public. The entire script of *Two-Lane Blacktop* will soon be printed up as a hardcover book, and was already published in *Esquire*. To add to the nonsense, *Esquire* has since reversed itself, and publicly lamented its move: "On the strength of the screenplay, which we read with avidity and delight, *Two-Lane Blacktop* was billed on April's cover as our nomination for the movie of the year . . . We now withdraw our nomination. The screenplay was wonderful—an account of a cross-country drag race in which a '55 Chevrolet serves as a metaphor for the human condition [boy, some car!]—but the film is vapid . . ." All this seems rather silly, since movie scripts exist only as outlines anyway, and can never equal visual experiences: no one who has read the written plan could possibly anticipate the tenseness, nervousness, and uptightness of Hellman's compositions, or James Taylor's acting as the Chevy's driver. Taylor's behavior is so totally introverted that it centers on subtle facial tics like twitchings of muscles, indentions of cheeks, and tightenings of chin. The scenes with the lean, sleek Taylor and his easy, shuffling, car-cultured mechanic Dennis Wilson are almost wordless: both of them seem to be straining unbearably if they say anything at all, and only perk up when challenging rival hustlers to spontaneous pavement matches, gambling and side-betting in their cryptic auto-racers' argot. The oppressive doomsday slants of the film are leavened by the strange and clearly nonprofessional performance of the 17-year-old Laurie Bird, a performance that yields yet another sample of script vs. movie conflict. Though the written text implies a young woman of great authority and command, Bird delivers her lines with mouse-like timidity in a weak uncertain voice. She has a funny, gypsy's falling-apart appearance with her outsized khaki fatigue jacket and soiled blue-jeans. She sings along with tape-recordings of "Satisfaction" or Berry's "No Money Down" but can scarcely begin to carry the tunes.

The disquieting interchangableness of peoples' and objects' identities is stressed by Hellman's treatment of Warren Oates, the final member of the movie's nameless transient foursome, the drifting middle-aged playboy foil to the two youthful car fanatics. Hellman defines this contrasting character as much through the workmanship and maneuvering style of Oates' super-stock GTO as through the words and gestures and mannerisms of Oates himself. Taylor's and Wilson's precision-model 454 has all accessories and decorative features removed, giving the car an unassuming, stripped-down look with little pretense but much potential for pure speed. Oates's car has an overstated sheen, countless knick-knacks, a flaming yellow paint job, and always announces its presence with flashy swervings in the road, ostentatious revving of the engine, exhibitionistic skiddings to abrupt, tire-screeching halts. As are the cars, so are the men: Taylor and Wilson recede with the pensive, preoccupied nonverbal deadpan of genuinely obsessive autophiles, while Oates explodes with the manic, garrulous energy of a quixotically thrill-seeking buff. Oates, one of Sam Peckinpah's mainstay support-players, supplies some wonderful half-comic interludes as he whispers affectionate asides to the dashboard, as if his cherished GTO were some noble steed ("Whoa, big fella—take it easy, now"). Oates is an anxious, compulsive fabulist who spins off ceaseless braggart monologues, wild vainglorious lies about himself and his car, to various captive

hitchhikers he collects along his way ("The big boss in Detroit is having me test-drive this car," "I won the car in Vegas, shooting craps," etc.). The only hitchhikers who can temporarily arrest his funny-pathetic-tragic boastings are a withered old country woman whom Oates escorts to a cemetery and a somber-sounding ecology freak who believes that the end of the world is just around the next bend.

Two-Lane Blacktop is an unusually controlled movie by an accomplished, intelligent Hollywood director with final-cut privileges (Hellman even receives film editor's credit). Its flaws, as one might suspect, are stylistic effects that seem *over*controlled. Hellman has a habit of shooting facial close-ups in arty still photographer's portrait-style profiles. This irritating process causes the haggard old country woman to look like some hickster variant of Whistler's Mother and, in a different sequence, causes two mute and sternfaced Indians, solemnly seated on a bench, to look like they should be holding cigars. The sight of a motor accident's aftermath—with a mangled car and a bloody corpse surrounded by silence—is a prefab image of instant austerity that can wonder and wow in the work of Jean-Luc Godard, but here seems highly contrived: Hellman's side-tilted truck and turned-over car could stand to seem more like arbitrary wreckage and less like a piece of metalwork sculpture for the Museum of Modern Art.

But these excesses and extremes only serve to gauge the uncompromising nature of Hellman's visual style. The eco-freak remarks, "It doesn't matter—what do we have—thirty? forty years? And it will all be over." Hellman's paranoic vision is complete enough to make this otherwise apocalyptic statement come off as rational observation. —GREG FORD

Short Notices

Burn! As much of the best work in recent political film has been in the form of the film-essay (Godard's *British Sounds,* Solanas's *La Hora de los Hornos),* historical narratives in the tradition of *Chapeyev* and *Grapes of Wrath* can easily be overlooked. *Burn* traces the history of an unsuccessful revolt that occurred in the Caribbean in the mid-nineteenth century. It shows the revolt in two stages. First, at the instigation of Marlon Brando (a CIA-type agent for British imperialism) black guerrillas and white settlers join together to overthrow Portuguese rule of Queimada island. In the process slavery is abolished. Brando however makes it crystal clear that this is because wage-slavery has become more profitable than formal slavery. As time passes the settlers sell out the island to British sugar companies, and wage-slavery proves an impossible burden for the blacks, who revolt again. Brando returns to the island, this time to put down the revolt. The film thus graphically presents a Marxist view of the historical development from a bourgeois-democratic revolution to a national liberation struggle against imperialism. As Brando says at one point "very often between one historical period and another, ten years is enough to reveal the contradictions of a whole century." *Burn,* however, is far from abstract. The film plays upon our emotions, to involve us with the people and the leading representatives of the social forces: history is thus personalized—it is seen in the process of being "made by people." The leader of the black revolution, Jose Delores, is played by an amateur—Evaristo Marques—who invests the role with a dignity and humility rarely seen on the screen. The camera work contributes to this—both focusing upon him and integrating him completely with his people. Memorable faces of individuals are also prominent in the crowd scenes—an old woman, toothless jaw slack, crying for food, expressions of joy at the moment of liberation. While *Burn* is an extremely political film, it is also very human—there being for once no dichotomy between the two. Indeed its most profound message is that within the framework of historical development, history is made by people becoming conscious of their oppression in concrete situations of class struggle: "Freedom is the recognition of necessity." Eisenstein once wrote that the essence of film was "the structure of pathos." In *Burn* this is a function of history: we know that the revolt is doomed to fail, and transfer our outrage and concern to contemporary national liberation struggles. However, the film is also marred by defeatism. In part this is a result of the extreme focus on individual characters, which is also a source of its power. For during the latter half of the film we share almost entirely the perspective of Brando; the struggle is reduced to a hunt in which the forces of reaction have all the initiative. At this point Brando

hitchhikers he collects along his way ("The big boss in Detroit is having me test-drive this car," "I won the car in Vegas, shooting craps," etc.). The only hitchhikers who can temporarily arrest his funny-pathetic-tragic boastings are a withered old country woman whom Oates escorts to a cemetery and a somber-sounding ecology freak who believes that the end of the world is just around the next bend.

Two-Lane Blacktop is an unusually controlled movie by an accomplished, intelligent Hollywood director with final-cut privileges (Hellman even receives film editor's credit). Its flaws, as one might suspect, are stylistic effects that seem *over*controlled. Hellman has a habit of shooting facial close-ups in arty still photographer's portrait-style profiles. This irritating process causes the haggard old country woman to look like some hickster variant of Whistler's Mother and, in a different sequence, causes two mute and sternfaced Indians, solemnly seated on a bench, to look like they should be holding cigars. The sight of a motor accident's aftermath—with a mangled car and a bloody corpse surrounded by silence—is a prefab image of instant austerity that can wonder and wow in the work of Jean-Luc Godard, but here seems highly contrived: Hellman's side-tilted truck and turned-over car could stand to seem more like arbitrary wreckage and less like a piece of metalwork sculpture for the Museum of Modern Art.

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Mosori Monika *(Like a Waterlily)* is an anthropological film of unusual importance—both because it is made by a woman, Chick Strand, from an explicitly woman's viewpoint, and because of its structural ingenuity in relating image and sound. Shot in the jungle delta country of Venezuela, the images convey the way of life of the Warao, a river-bank people of singular beauty and grace; but they are cast by the sound track into a double and conflicting perspective. There is a Church mission in the area, and a relentless process of acculturation is going on. One of the track's voices is that of a gentle nun who believes that before the missionaries came the Warao "didn't do *any*thing—they just fished and laid in their hammocks all day." The other voice is that of an old woman, whose husband has died and who now depends upon the mission but also remembers the old days. The images convey to us how the native way of life and the mission life *look*: a girl swinging in a hammock, a man paddling toward the camera at dusk, a walk through the forest to dig manioc root, a tropical downpour with clear drops hanging from absolutely clean leaves, the neat European lines and ascetic habits of the mission. But it is the track that interprets these (after all) neutral images: it gives them meaning—or rather, two meanings which overlap and conflict, depending upon which of the voices is speaking. But Miss Strand has been scrupulous not to load the track with her own views: as she puts it, "it is *their* moral information." The sensitivity and flexibility of this approach reminds us that a powerful dissociation of image and track can be achieved without the didactic sledgehammer Godard is currently swinging.—E. C.

Skin Game. James Garner is a con man. His territory is pre-Civil War Kansas and Missouri, where the slavery question is still bitterly contested. As a ruined plantation owner, he rides from town to town selling his last valuable possession, Lou Gossett. Gossett is loyal ("Please massuh Quincy, all I needs is one meal a day"), but Garner sells him anyway. ("Did I mention he has all his own teeth?") Garner rides out of town, and later meets the escaped Gossett to split up the money, and they go off in search of a new mark. Theirs is a skin game, and the film is about role-playing. In a society of strangers, Garner and Gossett are shrewd observers of the social scene. They are neither bigots nor moral crusaders. As Garner observes, "You're the color they're buying this year." That's all. In their travels, they meet Susan Clark, a moral crusader who steals Garner's watch. She too is a con artist. It is in her role, as in Gossett's, that the film attains its level of seriousness. The black man and the woman are not mere flim-flam characters, but must play insincere roles to adapt to a society that will not accept them as they really are—as in modern society, their emotional survival depends upon their skill in managing impressions. The role shifts found in the film are many, humorous, and revealing. Garner must borrow money from his black "slave" to pay the hotel bill, but out of sight of the hotel clerk. To share Garner's scarce bath water, Susan Clark must go from a prudish woman to a sexually liberated female, dropping one role as easily as her clothing. And Gossett is beautiful in his shifting from educated easterner to "Massuh Quincy, suh," sometimes in mid-sentence. The film does suggest, however, that we are real persons beneath the roles we play. After Gossett is accidentally sold as a "real" slave, then freed, the skin game is at an end. Gossett refuses to play the role again, despite Garner's insistence, so they separate. In previous horse operas, Garner's Maverick-like roles have seemed merely a cover for cowardice. Here, he seems slightly perverse, unable to understand Gossett's reluctance to play the game. If black weren't the color they were buying this year, would Garner play the slave? I think not. Role changing has its limits, and so we see two distinct personalities emerge from under the roles within roles at the film's end. There is a certain dignity in this; and *Skin Game* comes off as more than just another comedy. —Gregg E. Whitman

Summer of 42 and **Red Sky at Morning** are the first post-*Love Story* batch of films dedicated to spreading the gospel of the New (rapidly becoming the Old) Sentimentality. Both films are resolutely geared to appease the current Middle American lust for romance and nostalgia, and their heroes, calculated to appeal to the widest possible mass audience, are thoroughly ingratiating, unaggressive, uncomplicated—their sexual encounters are clean and holy. Set in the forties, both films are variations on the archetypal passage from adolescence to manhood. Nobody in either film looks like he belongs in the forties and nobody sounds like it either; the dialogue aims for a flip quality which sounds more now than then. As it happens, the forties settings are used mostly as an excuse to get a character killed in the off-screen war, and the heroes' Saroyanesque confrontations with death, along with their first sexual experiences, are meant to constitute their initiation into manhood. The two films also use the forties as a cushion for the romantic schmaltz, the theory clearly being that

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Mosori Monika *(Like a Waterlily)* is an anthropological film of unusual importance—both because it is made by a woman, Chick Strand, from an explicitly woman's viewpoint, and because of its structural ingenuity in relating image and sound. Shot in the jungle delta country of Venezuela, the images convey the way of life of the Warao, a river-bank people of singular beauty and grace; but they are cast by the sound track into a double and conflicting perspective. There is a Church mission in the area, and a relentless process of acculturation is going on. One of the track's voices is that of a gentle nun who believes that before the missionaries came the Warao "didn't do *any*thing—they just fished and laid in their hammocks all day." The other voice is that of an old woman, whose husband has died and who now depends upon the mission but also remembers the old days. The images convey to us how the native way of life and the mission life *look*: a girl swinging in a hammock, a man paddling toward the camera at dusk, a walk through the forest to dig manioc root, a tropical downpour with clear drops hanging from absolutely clean leaves, the neat European lines and ascetic habits of the mission. But it is the track that interprets these (after all) neutral images: it gives them meaning—or rather, two meanings which overlap and conflict, depending upon which of the voices is speaking. But Miss Strand has been scrupulous not to load the track with her own views: as she puts it, "it is *their* moral information." The sensitivity and flexibility of this approach reminds us that a powerful dissociation of image and track can be achieved without the didactic sledgehammer Godard is currently swinging.—E. C.

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if your story is set in the past, you can more easily get away with being corny and weepy. Both films, consequently, are the standard Hollywood romantic tearjerker once removed through period setting and the period-flavored soft focus, family photo album photography. Despite its quivering romantic sensibility, though, its poured-on syrupiness, *Summer of 42* is likable. As he's demonstrated before, Robert Mulligan can get some very natural responses from young actors and can capture the sleepy folksiness of small-town Americana. The film has really been made for the scene in which the boy visits the woman right after she has received news of her soldier-husband's death and, to ease her pain, she sleeps with the boy. It's a risky business to carry off—the boy has been presented as a *very* young 15—but it is quite a nice scene, delicate and subdued, and it manages to cow the audience into breathless, respectful silence. *Red Sky at Morning* is a confused mixture of racial and self-consciously "literary" stereotypes. Whereas *Summer of 42* benefits from its simplicity, *Red Sky* collapses under the weight of its multiple concerns. The film recklessly throws together some poor white trash, Southern-style, a frustrated Southern matron out of Tennessee Williams, some pure rotten Mexicans (and some real dignified ones too, to make up the proper balance; for good measure, there is even a Mexican who changes without any motivation from being maniacally hostile to being a nice guy). There's also an archetypal father-son relationship, a lusty artist father-surrogate, native initiation rites (for local color), and solemnly intoned statements on the meaninglessness of war. The film is an undigested conglomeration of liberal and conservative sentiments, and in trying to pacify both kinds of audiences, it ends up speaking to neither. The mass public can sometimes separate the good commercial kitsch from the bad: people are staying away from *Red Sky* and flocking to *Summer of 42*, which is a real audience pleaser whose box-office success isn't bothersome as long as no one makes claims for it as a work of high art.

—Foster Hirsch

The Touch. An occasional audience will laugh at the "wrong" places in Bergman's latest psychological chamber-drama. But I don't think this is an indication of directorial lapse. For lurking just below the surface is what we might call the comedy of banality: what Tom Lehrer had in mind when he proposed "The Eternal Triangle" as the title for an imaginary mathematical best-seller movie adaptation, starring the other Bergman, Ingrid. The dramatic assumptions of *The Touch* are exquisitely straightforward—in fact almost mathematically rigorous. A happily married Swedish upper-middle-class housewife begins an affair with a neurotic, itinerant American Jewish archaeologist; its claustrophobic sex proves more addicting than she probably bargained for, and her lover a good deal more difficult; finally her husband won't stand it any longer and—although the ending is not unambiguous—it appears that she ends up both pregnant and separated. As Bergman says, the film is a portrait of a woman "in an everyday situation." It has a kind of cool sympathy, almost case-historical. It is done in color, and has a lot of cheery music and beautiful Swedish countryside in it. There is a slapstick female-dressing-up number, and along with one intensely sexual scene comes a lot of rather funny scenes of bumbling hesitations, sudden and misplaced lust, etc. Bergman has obtained a remarkably vivid and interesting performance from Elliott Gould—largely by forbidding him to smile, which cuts off most of his cute boyish tricks and allows the dark, miserable, Wandering Jew side of his personality to slouch out. But the basic intention and movement of the film are arguably comic: not elegantly comic as in *Smiles of a Summer Night*, but almost clinically or sociologically comic: thus do marriages end, with both bangs and whimpers. If the touchstone of comedy is statis, here nobody changes: they just get more and more screwed up. And Bergman embellishes his mess with many poignant touches. Max von Sydow as the doctor husband is relentlessly, intolerably sensitive and dull. Gould as the lover is passionately self-centered, exciting, and childish. Bibi Anderson as the wife is the solid Swedish pendulum between the two ethnic extremes. Her husband says, not very kindly, that she can never make choices; but what the film shows is that when she *does* make choices they turn out disastrously. Her alternatives seem to her purely sexual: since life with the husband is not entirely satisfying, she turns to another man. She merely changes orbits, from a slow, placid, close-in one, to a hectic, dizzying one. (Bergman takes pains to make the two men as opposite as possible: in temperament, occupation, ethnic traits, mannerisms, and even in build and coloring; and there is an element of comedy here too, as there is in real life when a spouse turns to a lover as unlike the marriage partner as can be found.) But at the end she is simply hanging in space, and we are left to wonder if she

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Books

THE AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE CATALOG of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States Feature Films 1921-1930

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A formidable undertaking, to be sure, one that even the French film encyclopedists, Maurice Bessy, Sadoul, Charensol, Ford, René Jeanne, etc., who are the best in the world at this sort of thing,* might have quailed at—a complete filmography of American theatrical films (credits and synopses) from 1893 to 1970. After a volume devoted to the beginnings (1893–1910), six volumes will be devoted to feature films, six to shorts and six to newsreels, nineteen volumes in all, an amassing of film data to boggle the mind. The first two have appeared, comprising an alphabetical listing of some 7000 features produced between 1921 and 1930, with full credits, length, release date, cast, type, literary source, synopsis, and sometimes a revelant note, plus an index volume of credits and subjects. (Each film has a list of the subjects dealt with in it.) George Stevens, Jr., under whose aegis the series is being produced, has a brief but telling foreword and the all-over editor, Kenneth Munden, lists in his acknowledgments the sources for the data in his introduction, e.g., the professional staff of the American Film Institute and the experts called in, who were the compilers and editors under his supervision.

"A truly comprehensive, authoritative and objective description of virtually every American theatrical film ever produced," is how it describes itself—and this is as far as I go with my own perfunctory remarks on what I find to be, ultimately, for all the effort that has gone into such a project, which must have been herculean, certainly not a perfunctory work, but not always authoritative and often (too often) "objective" in the wrong way, even for a catalogue. Though it *is* comprehensive—and how! If to be "objective" is to give the same weight and value to everything, good, bad, and indifferent, that is not necessarily a salutary thing nor a service to the researcher, even for a catalogue where descriptions are *supposed* to be dispassionate. Even a dictionary, if it is a good one, gets worked up over certain words in order to define them with accuracy. As for encyclopedias, their highest virtue is in the *attitude* of the encyclopedists towards their subjects so that the *essence* of the subject is presented in the most vivid (and *therefore* most authoritative) way. Hence, the attitude, for instance, of the encyclopedists who compiled the 7-volume *Filmlexicon Degli Autori e Delle Opere* put out by the prestigious house of Bianco e Nero in Rome in 1967 is a glib one, for all *their* "objectivity," relying on such lame "revelations" as that hoary old canard that the true name of Josef von Sternberg was "Joe Stern," though why they omitted to add that he was born in Brooklyn (the usual fillip to this telling disclosure) in lieu of Vienna is not only inconsistent but a mystery I cannot fathom.

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sence—describe what is lacking in some of the synopses (probably only a small percentage of them since such an all-inclusive conglomeration of films must of necessity include much junk, where attitude or essence don't matter). A news release from the publishers refers in its zeal to the "plot synthesis" of each film—a chic misnomer for "synopsis." Outside chemistry and philosophy, "synthesis" means a putting together of parts so as to form a whole, which is not done by the perfunctory synopses here. A true plot synthesis would give the *flavor* of the whole, its atmosphere, its ambiance, for that is what it is about, too. These are plot summaries and no more and that's all right, too, if they were always accurate and could be relied on.

I have said that in a compilation as exhaustive as this one can't avoid including much junk, but Henri Langlois used to say that *all* films were worth saving for the sake of history and, in principle, he's right, though I could think of some that weren't worth it even by that measure. Well, here you have them all, at least all the American ones, and here, if ever, is the American dream, spelled out—devastatingly. Buffs will find nuggets studded throughout in the notes. King Vidor's *Billy the Kid* was shown in a widescreen process called "Realife" over forty years ago, in 1930, and Cruze's *Old Ironsides* antedated even that by four years in 1926 via a widescreen process called Magnascope. And although the Catalogue was intended as a reference work, which it undeniably is, and a useful one, too, withal, it has the by-product of surprises, such tidbits as the plot summary (although I'm sure "synthesis" would be the right word *here*) of a somewhat less than deathless opera called *Jazzmania* by Robert Z. Leonard starring Mae Murray and released by MGM in 1923. It's almost worth the $55 these two volumes cost to read the incredible synopsis of this film—not quite, to be sure, but almost. Such delights are a continuous promise throughout. And the fact that the first two volumes issued cover the decade 1921–1930, the flowering of the movies' early formative years, is all to the good. (Similarly, the most interesting of *The New York Times*' five volumes of film reviews reprinted from its pages from 1913 to 1970 is certainly the one covering the period 1913–1931.) These were the blithe years and their like will never be seen again, *hélas*.

In the face of such yeoman work as has gone into these volumes, one hates to carp, if carping it is, but it is curious how, despite the combined efforts of so many experts in the field, so many *gaffes* somehow got overlooked. True scholarship in any field is a hazardous thing and film scholarship is the most hazardous of all.* In no field, other than films, can you get away with appearing to make sense and to be factually accurate while actually accomplishing neither. Even those who try to be fastidious encounter pitfalls—I have had to correct some gaffes in revising *The Lubitsch Touch* and will do the same when *Saint Cinema* goes into a revised edition. And institutional scholarship, as Ernest Callenbach wrote about the AFI's Center for Film Study, can be the most hazardous of all. But who else could afford such a luxurious undertaking save a government-financed institution created for the worthy purpose of film scholarship? This is one time, however, when "safety in numbers" doesn't necessarily apply.

What to do? The thing about a reference work is that one should be able to trust it, this is its *raison d'être*, no? And I suppose that for the most part you can. Dubious aspects of the work reveal themselves, however, when you start zeroing in on specific items in the "touchy" areas, where the true credits have often been a moot and disputed point or when the plots contain more than meets the eye. (In most plots it's the other way around, of course, which is what makes it easy to recount *them* accurately.) Or take the matter of the *genres*: melodrama, drama, society drama, western melodrama, comedy, domestic drama, etc., and sometimes comedy of manners, among them. But not once satire,

*"Strange as it may appear," said Lotte Eisner once, "it often seems that we know today more about the prehistory of the human race than we do about the first quarter century of the motion picture. Everywhere in the history of film there are blank spaces to be filled in, errors to be corrected, important personalities overlooked or wholly forgotten, whose histories should be recorded, doubtful and debatable questions to be decided, newly discovered data to be noted."

though Hollywood has produced many brilliant such. If *Forbidden Paradise* and *Beggar on Horseback* (not to mention Cruze's *Hollywood*) are not satire, what is? Of course, the plots of these films as recounted here don't sound like satire and so the researcher consulting them, who may never have seen them, will never know, will he? Lubitsch's *Kiss Me Again*, a satire of the purest ray serene, is called merely a "domestic comedy," a category which also includes films that are a dime a dozen. Could it be AFI was afraid of the word satire? Is there something subversive in the idea? I cannot believe it, I just don't understand it. Hark to Louise Sweeney, reviewing the volumes for *The Christian Science Monitor*: "This exhaustive two-part set is so full of diverting and helpful information that it seems niggling to point out a couple of flaws. But as a film critic I am keenly aware of the lack of critical historical context in which the films are listed. Chaplin's masterpiece, *The Gold Rush*, is listed in as much of a critical vacuum as *The Courage of Wolfheart*. And the reference to Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer* doesn't even mention that it was the first of the 'talkies.' "

In short, what the work lacks, if such a quality is at all possible in a dictionary or an encyclopedia, aside from impeccable accuracy (which *is* possible) is *panache*—dash, verve, spirit, call it what you will—they are all synonyms for flavor. In the matter of credits, aside from the obvious boners, there is sometimes the matter of substituting the screen credits for the true credits even if the true credits have been published and documented as to their source. What, then, makes the "expert" more "expert" than anyone else looking at and believing, because he sees them, the screen credits? Let us get down to cases. Every researcher will doubtless go through the *Catalog* checking its against his own findings. Taking Lubitsch, for example, and the matter of credits: For *So This Is Paris*, the cast names given the players are those of the operetta, *Die Fledermaus*, whose source was the same French play as the film, but they are *not* their names in the film. In his *Kiss Me Again*, the source is given as *Cyprienne* or *Divorçons*, when the former is the cast name of the leading lady in the original play and only the latter was the title of the play. It is just fussiness to go to the trouble to give a second title to the play. And if you're going to be fussy, why not an umlaut over the "a" in Kräly, Lubitsch's pet American scenarist? Likewise, the epochal *The Marriage Circle*, a milestone in screen satire, is called a "comedy of manners" although it is as much a satire on marriage and divorce as *Kiss Me Again* (which, you will note, is not *even* a "comedy of manners"). While Lothar Schmidt's real name *was* Goldschmidt, to call him that is dubious scholarship since professionally it was not his name. He wrote *Nur ein Traüm* (Only a Dream), on which the film is based. If you're going to be fussy and give the source in the original language then it must be spelled right. Another Lubitsch satire, *Forbidden Paradise*, is called a "costume comedy drama," a flat-footed description if there ever was one. This time, not only is the source given in its original jaw-breaking Hungarian but the author's name, Melchoir Lengyel, is traced to his Hungarian original as Menyhert Lengyel though even that is spelled wrong since it should be Meynhert. In *Three Women*, no source is given for the original story by Lubitsch and Kräly though the source, Yolanthe Marees' *The Lilie* is established in my filmography in *The Lubitsch Touch*. Nor was his film called *The Student Prince in Old Heidelberg* but simply *The Student Prince*. (*Old Heidelberg* was the name of the source play.)

As for *The Salvation Hunters* by Sternberg, his meager budget hardly allowed him to be able to afford to pay a key actor (Stuart Holmes) for a day's work, so how could he have afforded the *two* "production assistants" named in the credits? Assigning "true" credit is obviously a tricky business (as witness the current furore over *Citizen Kane*) but a historian is obliged to *try*, as I did in the filmography of my book on Sternberg. Many is the slip betwixt the creative work and the credit on the screen. Thus, the screenplay for *Underworld* is listed as being by Robert N. Lee and the adaptation by Charles Furthman. Actually, the adaptation from Ben Hecht's story and the screenplay were both by Sternberg. Larry Semon's cast name was "Slippery" Lewis, not "Slippy" Lewis. The credits for *The Last Command* list Lajos Biro for the story and John F.

Goodrich for the adaptation and screenplay. Not so—the story deriving from a true anecdote Lubitsch told Sternberg and the adaptation and scenario again being by Sternberg. Also, Jannings' cast name is not General Dolgoruck as listed here but Grand Duke Sergius Alexander. In *Dragnet,* another Sternberg film, Leslie Fenton's cast name is given, curiously, as "Shakespeare," when it should be "Donovan." The *Catalog* has Sternberg being replaced by Phil Rosen during the shooting of *The Exquisite Sinner* when in actuality the picture had been completed by Sternberg, then completely remade by Rosen, just as years later Nick Ray completely remade Sternberg's *Macao.* And another director almost completely remade Stroheim's *Walking Down Broadway* as *Hello Sister.*

The thing about all this is that according to the experts, the directors don't know what they're talking about, only the experts do (because they saw it on the screen). *The Case of Lena Smith,* Sternberg's last silent film, is credited as being from a story by Samuel Ornitz and a screenplay by Jules Furthman, when in truth both were by Sternberg. (It is perhaps just as little known that *The Blue Angel's* adaptation from Heinrich Mann's *Professor Unrat* was by Sternberg himself and not by Carl Zuckmayer as the screen credits state.) Also, in *Lena Smith,* Warner Klinger in the cast should, of course, be Werner Klinger. And Eve Sothern in Sternberg's *Woman of the Sea* is spelled as Eve Southern. And no one, as it says in the *Catalog,* attributed the story of that film to Chaplin. It was an original by Sternberg. Also, it was never premiered in Beverly Hills as stated, but sneak-previewed once. Since Chaplin never released it and there exist no reviews they *had* to go to my filmography for the "plot," sketchy though it is, for this one, which they paraphrased by using the same words only in different order.

Which brings us finally to *Morocco,* in the Sternberg area. Again, the screenplay is simply attributed to Jules Furthman though Sternberg has said that it was his own. And Menjou's cast name is not Kennington (how would a Frenchman be called Kennington?) but LeBéssière. Paul Bern's delightful *Open All Night* is said to derive from "unidentified stories" by Paul Morand when there actually exists a story by him about six-day bike racers (called "The Six-Day Night") in the volume, *Open All Night.* There is no indication that the film's story bears little resemblance to the source. Munden admits in his introduction that "Actual screen credits are often incomplete and sometimes suspect." He goes on to say, "Few printed and documentary sources give all the essentials . . ." but even when these sources exist, his staff hasn't always consulted them.

Inevitably we come to Stroheim. The 1921–1930 period was as much his as anyone else's:

Greed—the art director was not Cedric Gibbons (no sets having been used) but Stroheim and Capt. Richard Day, who selected the realistic locales themselves. *The Merry Widow*—photography was not by Ben Reynolds but by Oliver March and William Daniels. Curiously, no credit is given to Lehar for the music score which Mendoza and Axt adapted. *The Wedding March*—the song, "Paradise," was not by Harry D. Kerr and J. S. Zamecnik but by Zamecnik and Louis de Francesco. Nor were Ben Reynolds and B. Sorenson photographers on the film, only Hal Mohr. Nor was Richard Day an assistant director, being the co-designer with Stroheim of the sets. And Francesco, together with Zamecnik wrote the original music score, which is not mentioned. Also, the costumes were not by Max Ree but by Stroheim and Capt. Richard Day, the uniforms being exclusively the province of Von Stroheim. There is a note that Stroheim "had in mind a two-part work, the first half of which, *The Wedding March,* was completed as planned." Not so. Dividing the footage into two separate features, *The Wedding March* and *The Honeymoon,* was Paramount's idea. *Queen Kelly*—Ben Reynolds was not a cameraman on this film, as stated. The art direction, according to Stroheim, was by him and Harold Miles, not Richard Day, this time, as stated. *Merry Go Round*—Ben Reynolds is listed for the music, surely an unwitting *gaffe.* And the direction is listed as being by Rupert Julian with "added direction" by von Stroheim. Shouldn't it be the other way around even though more of Julian's footage was used than Stroheim's? No credit is given to the source of this one—an original story

and screenplay by von Stroheim, which I possess in manuscript, and which is one of the most lyrical of all scripts. The photography was by Ben Reynolds and Bill Daniels without the assistance of the Charles Kaufman, as stated. Also, Dorothy Wallace's cast name, Komtasse Gisella, is so obviously a typo that we'll let that pass. (It's more likely she'd have been Gräfin.) And, according to Stroheim, production was stopped at the half-way point, not the three-quarter's one. *Foolish Wives*—the original version was 21 reels, not 14—that was his "compromise" version. The release version may well have been the 10 reels as stated. (The Museum of Modern Art version is seven reels.) Art direction was not by E. E. Sheeley but by Capt. Richard Day and von Stroheim. The co-assistant director with Eddie Sowders was not Jack R. Proctor but Louis Germonprez. *Queen Kelly*—its milieu was not the "capital of Ruritania" (that's Anthony Hope's country) but a *real* place, one of the German Duodec princeling states before the unification of Germany, among them being Wütemberg, Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha, Mecklenburg, Prussia, Strelitz, Lippe, Hannover, Anhalt, Hessen-Nassau. Stroheim *never* used mythical locales. And the girls are not from an orphanage but from a convent. No mention is made of the false ending tacked on to the uncompleted film by Gloria Swanson in an attempt to salvage its cost, nor of the fact that it is the only time Stroheim ever wrote a screenplay expressly for a star, in this case Miss Swanson. (Did you know that Zasu Pitts was the last one cast for *Greed*? Stroheim did not know who his Trina would be till production had already started.)

So much for the credits. Let us examine some synopses:

In *Love Parade,* Queen Louise doesn't offer to make her husband King (she couldn't, he's only her Prince Consort, like Prince Philip of England). They are reconciled only when she promises to be an obedient wife to him. In *The Student Prince,* Prince Karl Heinrich is not betrothed to an "unattractive" princess—we never see the princess. She may well have been attractive but he was in love with Kaetchen. In *The Salvation Hunters,* the three flee the dredge not because of the dredgemaster's "foul attentions toward the girl" but because he has hit the child, and it is not to the city but to one of the waterfront cribs, where hunger drives her to prostitution. In *Underworld,* Rolls Royce is not fatally wounded, as stated, in Bull Weed's final encounter with the police. The whole point of the ending would be lost if he were. In *Morocco,* there is no reason to characterize Legionnaire Tom Brown as "ruthless in his treatment of women"—on the contrary he appears to have been quite a romantic success. And there is no "clamor of other suitors" for Amy Jolly, just one, LeBéssière, and that isn't exactly a "clamor." Legionnaire Brown doesn't leave his first rendezvous with her "abruptly"; *she* suggests that he go because she thinks she is beginning to like him. And he doesn't then go to meet an officer's wife, he encounters her as he is leaving. Rebuffed by him, she sets some street Arabs to beat him up (not to beat Amy up, as stated). It isn't explained that the woman he has rebuffed is the wife of his jealous commanding officer, which is why he is sent by him on a dangerous mission. And LeBéssière does *not* offer to aid Legionnaire Brown to desert the Legion so he can have Amy nor does Tom tell Amy that "if she loves him she must be prepared to be a good soldier." It's entirely her own idea to join the wives and sweethearts, the "rear guard" of camp followers who follow their men on their marches into the desert. The ending as described is not only all wrong but vitiates the point of the whole film. In *Foolish Wives,* the synopsis does not indicate that Karamzin's two "cousins" are really his mistresses with whom he lives in a *ménage à trois.* Karamzin, at his rendezvous with Mrs. Hughes in the tower of his villa, does not "wheedle her out of her money" as stated but explains the urgent note for the rendezvous he sent her, i.e., that he desperately needs a sum of money to settle a debt of honor, nor does he "begin to seduce her" there. Also, the count's maid is not so much a "victim of his lechery" but of his broken promise to marry her, which is why she sets fire to the tower (not the villa itself). While it's true that the "cousins," the fake Princesses, are infuriated with his folly, they do not drive Karamzin from their villa, as stated. Nor has he been passing counterfeit money for Ven-

tucci but for himself, Ventucci merely supplying the counterfeit banknotes on order from Karamzin. Since the original ending of the film as released is given, the synopsis might also have stated that the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Hughes in Monte Carlo is occasioned by a state visit of Mr. Hughes, who is American Ambassador to Monaco, to present his credentials to the reigning Prince Albert I. However, the ending of the film as shot but never seen (because it was cut) was described to me by von Stroheim. Through an early morning mist it showed the sewer of Monte Carlo emptying into the bay of Monaco, effluvial witness to the gay life of the pleasure capital, disgorging the refuse and debris of its "high life"—garbage, empty champagne bottles, torn streamers and dead flowers, the body of Karamzin, all churned together in a froth and disappearing beneath the waves.

The synopsis of *The Wedding March* begins by saying that Prince Nicki "begins a flirtation with Mitzi, a crippled harpist who works in a suburban wine-garden," another flat-footed piece of orthodoxy. It is not Mitzi who is crippled but Cecilia (who has a club foot), though there is no reference to this. Mitzi's leg is injured when Prince Nicki's horse suddenly rears near her, but she recovers, and, while one could legally call a *Wirtshaus* in Grinzing or Nussdorf named "Zum alten Apfelbaum," where one went *zum heurigen* (to drink the young new wine), a "suburban wine garden," it somehow just doesn't sound right for this charming Viennese institution. Nor is Mitzi "idolized" by Schani, who is a lout who idolizes only himself. Once, the synopsis melts from its computer-like rigidity in its interpretation of this threnody when it describes the love scene in the garden beneath the falling apple blossoms between Nicki and Mitzi and we are vouchsafed a rare encounter with sensitive and deeply felt writing, but the spell is soon broken when the synopsis states that "Mitzi has a vision of The Iron Man (a symbol of the declining power and position of the Hapsburg dynasty) and falls before the crucifix in fear"—when the fact is that the vision Mitzi has of The Iron Man stems from an old Viennese superstition that The Iron Man (who is a figure atop the Rathaus in Vienna dating from the Middle Ages) sometimes comes down and gathers up one of the nymphs in the Danube and whoever has this vision (as Mitzi does after her seduction by Prince Nicki in the wine garden) will have bad luck. She then goes to St. Stephens for confession. (What, according to the synopsis, did Mitzi fear when she "falls before the crucifix in fear"? "The declining power and position of the Hapsburg dynasty"?)

Finally we come to Chaplin's historic *A Woman of Paris*. Jean Millet is not an art student but an artist. He comes to Paris with his mother not to study art but because his father died. Marie's commissioning him to paint her portrait does not lead to a renewal of their "love affair" but to a problem for Marie, who is faced with deciding between a life of poverty with her old country sweetheart, Millet, her true love, and the luxury she has gotten used to with Pierre Revel, who is keeping her. (Marie has posed for Jean in her new finery but he paints her in the simple country dress in which he first knew her.) Marie does not renege on Jean's proposal to marry him because she believes he proposed "in a weak moment," as stated. It's because she overhears Jean's mother's opposition to his marriage to a kept woman, whereupon Marie returns disillusioned to Pierre. Jean follows her and Pierre to a restaurant (not a cabaret) where he confronts her bitterly for having returned to Pierre. He creates a scene and in despair shoots himself. The ending, where Marie and Pierre pass each other on a country road, he in an automobile, she on a haycart, and do not see each other, is not at all "symbolical" as stated—it means no more than what it says: they pass without seeing each other.

A film's plot is usually the least interesting thing about it, the treatment is everything. Plots are mere pretexts for the director to make statements about the human condition, what Balzac called "the human comedy"; they are a structure upon which to devise a true film. The proof is that anyone who hasn't seen a film whose plot has been synopsized in the AFI catalogue has no real idea of the quality of the film. But, having said that, it still remains to be said that, for all that, the catalogue has its place as a useful and handy reference work for those seeking the in-

formation contained in it in the special areas covered by it. I have, for instance, spot-checked a number of other titles—*City Girl, Hallelujah, White Gold, White Shadows in the South Seas, Other Women's Husbands, Dream Street, Service for Ladies, The Magnificent Flirt, A Gentleman of Paris, Laughter, The Grand Duchess and the Waiter, The General, Isn't Life Wonderful?*, etc., and found them "right as rain," as the old saying goes. It may be that I had just touched on a precarious handful that I knew presented hazards, and I was not mistaken.

So to the cinema buff, to whom these remarks are addressed, I say that if the cinema is your "bride," as indeed she must be, if you're a true buff, it means that you love her, even if she is just the tiniest bit cross-eyed. (Did you know that Petronius reports Trimalchio as saying, during one of his feasts, that Venus was cross-eyed?) As one takes a bride, you take her for better or for worse, and love her "for a' that."

That's how I feel about this book.

—HERMAN G. WEINBERG

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