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(Canadian National Film Board).

Editor's Notebook

CINEMA OF SECESSION?

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Despite its commercial decline, the cinema became a recognized force during the sixties. It had heroes—directors who struggled in the toils of a profit-hungry and cost-heavy industry. Through the work of devoted scholars, museums, critics, reviewers, it gained a sense of its past, of the immense scope and variety of the medium. Film schools grew explosively, and developed a new sophistication. Through archives here and abroad, film's physical past was largely secured against further disintegration and dispersion. Late in the decade, with higher admissions and the belated appearance in American movies of the great themes of the sixties (the war, racism, militarism, civil strife) the industry found itself stabilized under the overt control of giant oil and communications corporations, but confronting an unpredictable audience almost exclusively under 25.

It hardly seems wild-eyed to guess that in the seventies most of these apparent achievements will be subjected to the centrifugal forces of the social whirlwind. The notion of the heroic artist has been under derisive attack in every other art form precisely during the years when the "auteur theory"

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became a catchphrase in film circles; the new film artists may be more on the almost anonymous lines of television film-makers, or workers with the wry modesty of a Fred Wiseman; they may come out of collectives like Newsreel or Godard's Dziga-Vertov Group. Decentralized, small-scale, almost anarchist cultural forms may come to undermine and oppose the apparently impregnable mass media everywhere. The very notion of film history itself may shrivel under the hail of thousands of films—often regional, special-purpose, fugitive—passing before our gaze on the new UHF channels (a fragmenting force within TV itself), or in cassettes or 8mm cartridges; the possibility of preserving a serious national criticism under such conditions seems as remote and chimeric as TV criticism itself. And as the continuing war lengthens its shadow into 1972 and 1973 and perhaps forever, the divisions and abrasions it has revealed in American society will deepen, spread infections of every kind—so that even the supposedly monolithic youth audience may split into factions not easy to satisfy.

In the sixties we could envision a general film culture, founded upon reasonably regular showings in the major cities of important foreign films, new American films, a decent repertory of older films, and more specialized but still nationwide showings of experimental work. Publications like FQ could chivvy importers and distributors, try to plug gaps, stir up relevant support. It made sense to work, as Colin Young did in proposing an American Film Institute in 1961, toward national cultural ends through national institutions.

Now it seems clear that "the center cannot hold"—ideologically, organizationally, culturally, or artistically. Thus a whole new range of critical questions is looming up. What are the relations between politics and film in an era of profound social disagreement, perhaps revolution? What are the new forms developing out of the aesthetic pressure that TV, day by day and hour by hour, exerts on the structures bequeathed by the fictional film drama and the traditional documentary? What are the key questions to be asked about the "cartridge revolution"? What does it mean to be an "artist" today? How do we distinguish revolutionary artists from cultural carpetbaggers (in Andries Deinum's phrase)? How do we answer the questions so agonizingly raised, and so tentatively if dogmatically answered, by the recent evolution of Jean-Luc Godard? In short, what do our subcultures want

[*continued on page 26*]

AT THE 'R' MOVIE

'That's not a photograph,' I said,
like the toothless woman
who sat behind us at **Bonnie and Clyde**
saying 'that's ketchup,' to remind herself
no need to cry—
too many tears already shed
over real blood:
'that's not a film of war hunger
shot-from-the-hip freedom, not
young-man-praised-by-all splintered like wood
over the neon globe,
not once-at-last-for-the-blue-hurricane-moment
love
split at its cunt-wet seams,
but celluloid forests of sound makeup
mannikins posed nudes canned heart-beats
jammed
into our skulls.'

Like the old wrinkled audience of one
who questioned all because all needed
questioning,
I sent my mind out like bats' dark cries
and heard the echoes track:
'don't drown my child in blood
who softly sleeps
beneath your bombs'
'don't slay my woman's joys
with death
from random guns'
'don't gas my house
with cash-green wind'

But when they riddled Bonnie
soft in her steel nest, I screamed out
'fucking bastards!' and would have sent
a Molotov cocktail flaming into the scene—
everyone sat gawking waiting for Manager Death
to evict me from the cave.
And when they stained the pig-slop streets
with Sundance blood . . .
oh, Captain America!
So easily moved to hate . . .
say it: to kill
by screen phantoms riding a pale blue ray

—CHARLES FISHMAN

fect to what he believes to be the truth of his experience. It must have been very tempting for Wiseman to have edited that sequence much shorter and cut when he had gained our sympathy for the doctor. But Wiseman holds and holds the sequence. As the conversation continues, punctuated by the doctor's "Miss Hightower," we reach that ambiguity sought by Wiseman. Knight in shining armor the doctor certainly is, but what can welfare officer Hightower do? She as much as the doctor is a victim of institutional rules. Miss Hightower, unseen, unheard, wins our sympathy too.

"I'm going to do other documentaries. There are a number of other subjects which are important to me and I'd like to use this technique. I'm trying to be very selective because I don't want to repeat myself in the sense that after *High School* I had offers for twenty educational films and also thirty films on hospitals! But I'm trying to complete an institutional series and at the same time, I want to see if I can adapt the technique of the documentary film-making to feature film-making and see if you can make a feature film with the same kind of look. To approach the problem, the same problem from the other end. In documentary, you're trying to wing it and capture reality and give it a form which is your final film. You're at a place for 400 hours and in the 400 hours you shoot about 40 or 50 hours of film and in the 40 or 50 hours, you have an hour and a half of film which has a sense of immediacy; like it's there and you're in the midst of it, and you're feeling it. But I'd like to approach that same problem from the other end, which is trying to recreate reality and give it the same kind of look as a film where you're really shooting it and capturing it on the wing. So in essence, it's a question of writing a story, a contemporary story which will be shot in the same kind of way but where everything is fictional. You use actors and use sets and everything is recreated, but the ultimate look is as close to the documentary as you can make it. *The Battle of Algiers* did that superbly, but it's the only film I've seen that has done that well."

Wiseman is currently writing the script for the feature, which will be an adaptation of a novel about a young man who goes AWOL from the army. The film will not be produced by OSTI but in Hollywood. Hollywood has not been noted for its kindness to the filmmaker who would be an auteur. It will be interesting to see how Wiseman, who has produced, directed, and edited all of his last four films will fare in this new situation.

NOTES

1. This quote is from an interview with Frederick Wiseman which took place in June, 1970. All subsequent unidentified quotes are from this interview.
2. Forsyth Hardy, *Grierson on Documentary*, (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966), p. 225.
3. Pauline Kael, "The Current Cinema" in *New Yorker*, Oct. 18, 1969, P. 204.

The films of Frederick Wiseman are distributed in the United States by OSTI, 83 Rogers Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142. and in Canada by Marlin Motion Picture Ltd., 47 Lakeshore Rd. E., Port Credit, Ontario.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK, cont'd.

from the cinema of the future, and what organizations, ideas, and techniques will they need in order to get it? Partly in direct response to the works of individual film-makers, and partly in more general yet still concrete ways, we must begin to work out answers for the seventies. We invite participation by both critically and programmatically oriented writers.

BRYAN GINDOFF

Thalberg Didn't Look Happy

OR, WITH ANTONIONI AT ZABRISKIE POINT

To begin with I was a bit nervous—in fact downright scared—as I approached the door. I'm not the timid, nervous, reticent type, but it's not every day you're about to meet one of your gods. You can kid your brain for a while, but the stomach doesn't lie. "Bryan," it said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." There was that involuntary hesitation and the finger rang the doorbell. The customary eternity later Michelangelo's woman, Clare, let me into the Beverly Wilshire suite.

A ridiculous set of coincidences brought me there, and the idea was we were just gonna rap for a while. Slowly the conversation loosened up; I got progressively better at lighting my cigarettes and not dropping them on the floor. We rapped film and art and music and politics. "Is MGM letting you do everything you want—do you have total freedom?" Clare and Michelangelo exchange a long glance. "I would like twenty thousand young people for a scene in the middle of the desert, but they'll only let me have two thousand." "What about a rock festival," I suggested. "Yes, certainly, I've thought of that; do you think you could help me?"

I said I'd sure as hell like to try, and he said he thought maybe he could get the Stones and the Beatles, and I said I was positive we could get twenty thousand people. It was a year before Woodstock and two years before Altamont, and we were pretty excited about a Zabriskie Point rock festival.

The next step was to talk to Harrison Starr, executive producer. "Can you imagine it," I said still excitedly, "thousands of people in the middle of the desert, all the extras Michelangelo needs, the greatest rock festival in the history of the world, a film within a film, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera." He could imagine it: "I'm getting tired of this desultory, dilettantish attitude—do you have any idea of the logistical problems involved?" I offered that we'd need a lot of toilets and water.

He agreed and we compromised. If I could find a piece of desert, aesthetically suitable to Michelangelo, logistically feasible for twenty thousand people, and economically plausible, then maybe we could have a rock festival. And by the way, I could forget about trains because the railroad had heard something nasty about the movie and they weren't interested, and nobody had enough busses, so we needed a damn big parking lot.

Parking lots weren't really the problem, various MGM executives explained to me the next day. The real culprit, it turned out, was the extras union. With the aid of a wall map and a compass, a giant circle was drawn with LA in the center; it looked like one of those things that tell you how far away you should be when the bomb hits. As best as I could make out, Hawaii and Heber, Utah, both looked safe. Anywhere in between, the cataclysm amounted to twenty thousand people times $29.15 a day plus meals and penalties and overtime; it was more than I could multiply in my head. Irving Thalberg, up on the office wall, didn't look happy.

Time was becoming valuable, so rather than refer the matter to committee, they gave me an office and a telephone. "Maybe you can dig something up," somebody said. Then they went to the commissary.

"Hello, I'm Bryan Gindoff with MGM studios in Los Angeles, and we're looking for a location where we can shoot a scene with twenty thousand people." The chambers of commerce in Riverside and San Bernardino counties were duly impressed; civic leaders are natural-born

head multipliers. I was promptly invited to "come on out and have a look around."

Meanwhile, back at Zabriskie Point, Michelangelo had begun shooting. And I was flying around in little planes looking at lots of desert. Intercut, it might have made an exciting scene: "Would our hero find the location in time?"

I found two huge dry-lake parking lots, and some adjoining desert that just might work, took a lot of color slides, and scampered off to Death Valley. It was too late. The decision had been made to shoot the "Love Scene" at Zabriskie Point with only two thousand extras. But everybody looked at the slides and commented that I was a good parking lot finder.

"Just the man for the job," Harrison Starr said. I guess he figured anybody who could find parking lots in the middle of the desert could find "hippies" in Las Vegas. We needed a couple thousand bodies, and a couple hundred "uninhibited bodies" to work with Joe Chaikin's Open Theatre. What ensued must certainly be one of the ghastliest incongruities in the history of movie making—assembling the *Zabriskie Point* "Love Scene" in Las Vegas. As the fates would have it, Las Vegas is the only city remotely near Death Valley—a simple three-hour drive if you don't run out of gas.

At the Las Vegas airport, you're confronted by a large billboard (small by Vegas standards, but big enough that you can't miss it): "In Nevada Don't Gamble with Marijuana—Twenty Years." The message has not been lost on the local law; long hair is probable cause to stop and harass. With carefully chosen words, the following appeared in the Las Vegas *Review Journal*. "MGM Studio looking for extras to appear in a film to be shot near here this weekend. Men and women between ages 18-25 preferred . . . no acting experience necessary."

The expected throng showed up at the appointed time and place. First in line were three officers from the Special Investigations section of the police department. "Just here to make sure you don't have any problems," they said, and then they sat down. We began casting. They watched. They could understand it when we started rejecting middle-aged housewives; they nodded knowingly when we shook our heads to out-of-work truck drivers, and they too were almost embarrassed when we had to say no to cowboys with spurs. But with each chorus girl who didn't get hired, their incredulity grew and it grew and it grew.

Finally it was too much. Sotto voce: "Why didn't you take *her*?" "Well you see, Sergeant, we're looking for a certain *type*, and if we could describe just what *type* it is we're looking for, then we wouldn't have to sit here and look at so many people; it's a matter of intuition." The explanation made no sense, so it was readily accepted. Soon rejectees began asking the same question: "Just what type are you looking for?" they would ask indignantly. Sally Dennison, Michelangelo's assistant, developed the perfect answer: "Only *I* know." It was brusque, but when you're trying to find two thousand "hippies" in Las Vegas with the Man looking over your shoulder. . . . After the um'teenth chorus girl was rejected, the Special Investigators decided the whole thing was incomprehensible and hardly worth wasting any more time on. They left.

More than a year earlier, Michelangelo had seen the Open Theatre perform "The Serpent" in New York: bodies intertwining, mingling, and in convoluted crescendo, spiraling to the sky—flowing energy in corporal form. Jean Van Itallie had loosely adapted "The Serpent" from the Book of Genesis. The "Love Scene" was in part born of "The Serpent." There would be a nucleus of a few hundred people (the "uninhibited bodies"); they would touch, feel, love, and in waves of energy, that love would flow out to the thousands. This nucleus would be composed of the Open Theatre actors and two hundred extras—carefully selected from the large casting.

This was the plan. Joe Chaikin came to town with fifteen of his actors. Theirs was a gargantuan task. First, they had to survive Las Vegas. At the same time they had to take two hundred Las Vegas kids, break down their inhibitions, and turn them into a glob of loving energy. Rehearsals began. Each Open Theatre actor

worked with a small group—touching, feeling, holding, squeezing, breathing, loving, playing. It was incredible—perhaps the first and only time "touch therapy" sensitivity-group techniques had ever been used to prepare extras for a picture. A couple hundred kids, almost all raised and weaned in the womb of Las Vegas neon, were responding with a hunger that perhaps only Las Vegas could have nurtured.

Everything was falling beautifully into place. The Open Theatre was imbuing love into the "Love Scene." The two thousand extras were chosen and assigned busses and departure dates. If the army had been running itself as efficiently, the war would have been over by then. And the Law, they were staying away. Obviously things were at a point where they could only get worse.

Then a girl started to scream. It seemed that the room was spinning around and she didn't know where she was. Pretty soon there were a lot of people on good trips, but this poor chick was on a definite bummer. A room full of Dick Tracys were quick to figure out that somebody had spiked the punch. Outside the rehearsal hall, Joe and I were doing our best to talk her down. Her bummer was becoming a major crisis at an alarmingly fast rate. Her head was coming together and she was becoming coherent. She managed to explain that she'd never had any drugs before. "You've smoked marijuana?" Joe asked. "No." "Ever been drunk?" I tried. "Never had a drink," she giggled.

She was nice, a thoroughly stoned virgin, and I was thoroughly pissed at whoever was responsible. "I'd like to call my boyfriend," she said. She couldn't do it herself, so someone went to do it for her. "What's your boyfriend like?" I asked. "Oh, he's nice; he's running for Congress." She was so damned naive, the repercussions were totally lost on her. "Democratic?" Joe asked. "No, Republican," she giggled again.

So that was it, just what everybody was worried about, and now it was happening. MGM was on less than firm ground at Zabriskie Point. Harrison Starr had implored us: "Stay out of trouble—the National Park Service can kick us out any time they want to—for God's sake be careful." Joe and I just looked at each other. It was a few days before the national election and we had visions of becoming a reform candidate's front-page exposé.

For the next few days we held our collective breath. Nothing happened; the rehearsals continued. And then it was finally time for the "dress rehearsal." Everyone piled into the busses and we headed for Zabriskie Point. The midway "rest stop" is Lathrope Wells, a truck stop with gas stations and whore houses. The girls stood in their doorways and stared, then everybody waved at everybody else and the busses took off. There were a lot of people trying to sort their heads out by the time we got to the Point.

In the film Mark runs down the side of the mountain, and a few moments later Daria emerges from around the side of a hill. If you don't run down the mountainside, or can't splice yourself into position, it's a half-hour trek down an overworked Indian trail. It was a hundred degrees and everybody trudged down. That's when it turned out that somebody had forgot to tell the caterers to expect an extra two hundred guests for water. Thirst has a way of dulling all the other desires, so nothing much happened until a jeep managed to get down with some water.

Rested and watered, the troops reported for duty. The sheer exhaustion of getting from Las Vegas to the bottom of Zabriskie Point had become a somewhat dehumanizing ordeal. Two hundred people spread out around the landscape and endeavored to love one another. From the outset it was apparent that things were not going well. The ground was hard; it hurt to roll over. Grips and electricians gawked. It was so very different from the comfortable dark carpeted rooms that everyone had gotten used to. Joe Chaikin had wanted to work with the people outdoors, but it had never been possible. And now all those inhibitions had come back.

Art was reproducing life, or vice versa. For

six hours these people had been herded in and out of busses, told when to piss, where to drink, filled out forms, marched and ordered about. And now they were being told to be spontaneous and love one another. It wasn't working and it wasn't anyone's fault. In a few minutes Michelangelo had seen enough. Everyone could go home.

We were walking back up the gorge. Michelangelo looked around and shook his head. "It's just too big." "What?" I asked. He gestured at the enormity of the valley. "I was right; I needed twenty thousand." I looked around; he *was* right. Two hundred, two thousand, it wouldn't matter. "An actor is no more important than a tree," he had once said. This "tree" was all-imposing.

"The Serpent" was dead, a victim of geography and the rigors of movie making. If the canyon was a giant womb that needed twenty thousand bodies to be sated, it had within it thousands of "sub-wombs"—ridges, frills, cavities, crevices—all perfect repositories for scattered couples. No coherent nucleus could exist; and ultimately the "Love Scene" became an orchestration of individual lovers, no more able to get it together en masse than the revolutionaries at the beginning of the film.

Special delivery letters went out informing two thousand presumably disappointed extras that their services would no longer be required. The individual love scenes were shot almost entirely with Open Theatre actors. The dénouement came late in the afternoon of the third day of shooting. The two hundred took the place of the two thousand who were to have stood-in for the twenty thousand. Everyone was carefully positioned over square miles of land. A half mile from the camera a couple moved a few feet to the left and everything was ready. The cameras rolled. The wind machines began to blow the dust.

> After a bit, a light breeze springs up. Then it blows harder and harder. All the boys and girls have to quit their love-making. They stand up. The wind is blowing so hard now they have trouble even standing up. Great gusts of dust blow into their faces so they can hardly breathe. They struggle away through the dust, towards any shelter they can find—hand in hand. They have their arms around one another as they push ahead. The hot desert wind is a force of nature, destructive as a whiplash—a screaming curtain of black dust against which the young couples are seen battling desperately, as they appear now and then in the distance.

That's the way it had been written once upon a time. But now there was no way for the individuals to come together. And alone, they were too weak to struggle. The dust simply engulfed everyone.

CHUCK THEGZE

"I See Everything Twice"

AN EXAMINATION OF CATCH-22

"I had a very hard time reading *Catch-22*. I started it about five times and then finally got all the way through it. It's hard work. It's thick —like eating fruitcake."

This first impression of a man who has just completed Joseph Heller's novel is typical of the reaction of most people to that long, complicated work. Unlike most contemporary novels, *Catch-22* is massive. It is over 400 pages long and it has almost 50 characters, with a profusion of detail about each one. And worse still, Heller has structured his novel in loops or circles, making characters appear for a page or two and then vanish during what seems like one long, incoherent nightmare.

Catch-22 is set on the island of Pianosa, a tiny dot off the west coast of Italy between Elba and Corsica, where the Army Air Corps maintains a bomber squadron during World War II. More specifically, *Catch-22* is the story of bombardier Captain Yossarian who is really the only sane member of the squadron (or crazy member—depending on one's point of view). Dead tired from flying endless missions (the required number is always raised, every time he becomes eligible for stateside leave, by the evil Colonel Cathcart) Yossarian one day decides to go crazy. He checks with Doc Daneeka, the flight surgeon, who agrees that he has to ground anyone who is crazy; all one has to do is ask. "And then you can ground him?" Yossarian asks. "No. Then I can't ground him." "You mean there's a catch?" "Sure there's a catch," Doc Daneeka replies, "Catch-22. Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn't really crazy." Yossarian, deeply impressed by the pure simplicity of it all, observes, "That's some catch, that Catch-22." "It's the best there is," Doc Daneeka agrees.

The whole novel is filled with this type of crazy, scrambled episode about Yossarian's herculean efforts to keep from getting killed. And Yossarian uses any means he can—defiance, cowardice, caution, deceit—faking a liver condition, standing naked in formation, marching backward in parades, putting soap flakes in the officers' mashed potatoes—just so he can avoid that all-pervading catch, and stay alive in the process.

Yossarian's companions on Pianosa include Colonel Korn who is Colonel Cathcart's echo; Chaplain Tappman who keeps Yossarian company in the hospital; Major Major Major Major (the last three are names, the first is a rank) who will only "see" people in his office when he is not there himself; General Dreedle, who gives Yossarian a medal for dropping bombs in the ocean; Yossarian's pilot, Nately, who falls madly in love with a young whore he meets in Rome; Snowdon, Yossarian's gunner, who dies in his arms, besplattering his guts all over like the entrails of a sacrificial lamb; Milo Minderbinder, the mysterious mess officer who operates a purchasing syndicate which covers the whole European theater; and numerous other wild individuals.

This great number of characters typifies the problem the reader has to face as he chews through Heller's nutty "fruitcake." And the problem of just reading *Catch-22* is almost hopelessly compounded when one begins the task of adapting the novel for the screen. *Catch-22* is now a film, and the two men responsible for digesting the work are screen writer Buck Henry and the reader quoted in the opening epigraph—director Mike Nichols.

"I was fascinating by *Catch-22*," says Nichols, "but I didn't think about it as a movie for quite

a long time. Then in 1965 or 1966 I got together with producer John Calley; and Buck began work on the screenplay while I was shooting *The Graduate*."

Writing a screenplay from Heller's novel proved to be a difficult task, especially because of the great number of characters, the unusual looping structure of the book, and the sheer mass of *Catch-22*: "It is just very hard work," says Henry. "And then, of course, what really gets hard is when you've got a first draft out of which you know you have to cut 100 pages. And it is so constructed that you have a closed circuit, and you start pulling a plug here and a wire there and the whole fucking thing falls apart—which happened a number of times."

The sheer number of characters in Heller's work proved to be one of the greatest problems in the process of adaptation. Henry had to compress Heller's work; of necessity he had to be selective in his choice of characters from the novel, and even then his first draft of the script was almost 150 pages longer than the final shooting script, which itself is very long—187 pages. In the process of adaptation he had to eliminate more than 17 characters, including General Peckem, an officer who was General Dreedle's rival; Corporal Whitcomb, who made an art out of harassing poor Chaplain Tappman; and Lieutenant Scheisskopf, master of the parade ground, whose admiration for efficient formations made him scheme to screw nickel-alloy swivels into every soldier's back for perfect ninety-degree turns.

But even after Henry eliminated these characters, he and Nichols still had to coordinate 28 individuals in a film that was only two hours long. "We had terrible difficulties," says Nichols, "because Buck and I discovered that you have to introduce a character. You just can't come into the middle of a scene where he is. And yet, as the first two or three scenes in the picture are over, you have to begin to move it along. You can't just keep introducing people. It drove us crazy." The problem here is really a problem of time: to read Heller's novel takes something like 16 hours, depending on one's reading speed; but to see the film takes only 120 minutes. With this great collapse of time it was inevitable that Nichols and Henry had to sharpen the character portrayals for the film or else face the disaster of an audience not retaining in their minds any of the characters at all.

Henry needed a principle by which to work. He found this principle in placing an even greater emphasis on Heller's main character—Yossarian—and using the revealing of Yossarian's character as the criterion he would employ to determine whether a given event or character would be in the film. As a result, the focus of *Catch-22* is sharpened, and Nichols's film becomes even more a study of Yossarian than Heller's novel. It is interesting to note that of the 17 people Henry eliminated, only one—Clevinger—had much to do with Yossarian at all in the novel; and Clevinger was included in Henry's first draft of the script, only to be eliminated later for reasons of compression.

The other 17 eliminated characters fall into one of two categories: either they were autonomous, appearing only in their own special chapters (for example, Lieutenant Scheisskopf or Captain Black) or they served to enhance other minor characters, not Yossarian (e.g., General Peckem, or Corporal Whitcomb).

Henry also used this same principle of the revealing of Yossarian as the determining factor in his choice of events. In all the events of the film, Yossarian plays an important if not a major role, whereas in the novel Heller leaves Yossarian and returns to him periodically throughout the book, until his final emphasis on Yossarian in the last few chapters. This criterion for events used can easily be observed by a comparative overview of the film and the novel. In every event in the film, and especially in the major ones—the beach scene where McWatt kills Hungry Joe, the briefing scene where Dreedle's WAC shows off, the bombing scene where Nately is killed, the Snowden scenes, and the night scenes in Rome—in all of these Yossarian plays an important role. He watches helplessly as Hungry Joe gets slaught-

ered; he moans at Dreedle's WAC; he stares appalled as Milo directs the bombing; he vainly tries to save Snowden; and he staggers numbly through the streets of Rome.

Another problem besides the sheer massiveness of *Catch-22* is the problem of style. In *Catch-22* Heller created a surrealist nightmare; Yossarian lives in a closed system where death must constantly be confronted and nobody except him seems to mind. *Catch-22* is an existentialist comedy. Instead of the draining despair before death that one finds in Camus, one finds hilarity. "You're crazy, Yo," yell his friends, and they laugh. But this young bombardier feels no humor as the flowers of flak burst around his plexiglas coffin. *Catch-22* is hilariously funny and Heller intended it to be, but beyond the laughter of the pilots on Pianosa there is nothing. Beyond the world of *Catch-22* there is only an existentialist void, and Yossarian is fighting desperately to avoid falling headlong into it.

The problem for Henry and Nichols was to create in some way a cinematic equivalent for Heller's literary style. That is, Henry and Nichols had to define the film as Yossarian's nightmare—a task which they found to be very difficult because as Nichols says, "If you went too far with the nightmare aspect, with the lack of reality, it would fall apart. If you didn't go far enough, that is, if it was simply natural or ordinary—and I hadn't anticipated that problem—then it would also fall apart because it would be literally insane."

"I had to find a style," says Nichols, "which would permit the things that would happen later to happen naturally. You had to find a way for people to behave—odd as it might seem to an audience—that would make it possible later for someone to bomb his own base, or that would make it possible for someone standing right next to Doc Daneeka to say, 'Doc Daneeka is up in McWatt's plane, too,' or that would make it possible for Milo and Cathcart to continue talking naturally as a plane crashes right next to them. The style was very hard to find and maintain. If people chatted naturally, suddenly you began to question everything; if they ranted, it was just hollow. It was a tightrope."

One of Nichol's first practical problems of defining the style of *Catch-22* occurred during the shooting of an early scene where Yossarian is speaking with Doc Daneeka just before he boards his plane on the first mission. The scene is a long and difficult one as the camera follows the two characters out of Doc's tent, all the way along the field and up to the plane. When the scene was first shot there were over 300 extras working in the background in the customary manner of war films—fixing equipment, running and jumping out of planes, and driving jeeps and trucks.

"We never liked that scene," says Henry, "and we kept not liking it the more we looked at it. So one evening we got to talking about the concept of nightmares, and what nightmares look like, and what makes them look different from real life. Part of it, we thought, was the presence or absence of extraneous people. You select in a nightmare; when you dream about an event you don't think about the numerous faces of extras. And subsequent to that discussion, we reshot the whole scene with no one in it except the two principals, Doc and Yossarian. There are planes moving and there are trucks moving, but you never see another person." In effect, Henry and Nichols were defining the style of the film, and they tried to maintain that style of a nightmare throughout every scene.

Catch-22 is a very funny book: humor is essential to the style. Without it, the novel would simply not be the same, and it is impossible to imagine Heller writing without a wry grin on his face. From the double-jarred soldier in white, to the mysterious moving bomb line, to the patient who saw everything twice—Heller's comic eye gleams in every chapter. Much of the hilarity of *Catch-22* comes from Heller's descriptions, and the novel contains much literary humor such as the following passage about a whore whom Yossarian and Hungry Joe ran into in Rome:

"She was a real find. She paid for her drinks,

and she had an automobile, an apartment and a salmon-colored ring that drove Hungry Joe (the squadron photographer) clean out of his senses with its exquisitely carved figures of a naked boy and girl on a rock. Hungry Joe snorted and pranced and pawed at the floor in salivating lust and groveling need, but the girl would not sell him the ring, even though he offered her all the money in all their pockets and his complicated black camera thrown in. She was not interested in money or cameras. She was interested in fornication."

This passage is typical of Heller's carefully crafted style. The paragraph is paced precisely, beginning with a short phrase, "a real find," and ending with the key word of the paragraph, "fornication." The inner sentences are long and built up by several series ("she had an automobile, an apartment and a salmon-colored ring . . ."); and in addition, Heller blows up the bubble of humor with overstatement ("Hungry Joe snorted and pranced and pawed at the floor"). Finally, Heller achieves the hilarious POP! in the paragraph with the dry, technical, and piercing word, "fornication."

But a screen writer and a director have to develop an entirely different style. The literary humor of the previous passage is simply untranslatable to the screen, and Henry and Nichols had to develop the humor of the film either visually or dramatically. Dramatically there was little difficulty because much of Heller's novel (including the dialogue) is dramatic in nature and can readily be adapted for a film. (One example is the briefing scene where Yossarian and his buddies groan at Dreedle's top-heavy WAC.) For the visual humor of the film Henry, who is himself a gifted comedy writer (television's "Get Smart" and "That Was The Week That Was") added several scenes of his own such as the one where the pilots are awaiting their turns for take off, and Yossarian gives the finger after the pilots give thumbs-up.

Henry and Nichols have retained much of the humor in Heller's original conception. Nevertheless, the comic aspect of the film is quite different from that of the novel partly because Nichols and Henry simply didn't have time for all the humorous incidents in the novel and partly because they didn't want the film to be as funny as the novel. "There is a coolness and aridity in *Catch* which we wanted to convey," says Nichols. "The film is really unique with that combination of toughness and feeling. And it is that combination which we were most concerned with."

In other words, Nichols and Henry designed *Catch-22* so that the laughter of the film slowly fades as the horror of the film grows. "There are really only a few funny scenes in the picture," says Nichols. "A man receiving a medal naked is one of them. A girl with huge tits in a roomful of guys who haven't seen any women for a long time is another. *Catch-22* is designed to be funny and then not at all."

One example of how the humor slowly fades in the film is the scene where Yossarian stands naked in formation to receive a medal from General Dreedle. As Nichols says, "You're laughing your ass off during that scene, but then Sergeant Towser says 'He has no clothes because a man got killed in his plane over Avignon and bled all over him.' " Thus the audience has come full circle from laughter to deathly silence.

Nichols and Henry came upon another aspect of Heller's style in the ending of the book, a section that has come under stiff criticism as the weakest part of an otherwise consistently strong novel. The problem occurs in Heller's sentimental treatment of the scenes in which Yossarian speaks to Danby and Tappman in the hospital and then runs away to Sweden.

"You must understand," says Nichols, "that throughout the novel, Heller's style covers over all problems and all things that don't quite mesh. He just slathers this brilliant manner over it, and it gets him out of any technical problems. At the end, you take this prose style away and you're into what seems to me suddenly a kind of Nichols and May parody, that is, the scene in the hospital where Yossarian finds out about Orr. He says, 'Don't you see, you

fool. All that time he was practicing being shot down. Oh, I'm nuts; give me my clothes. I'm getting out of here.' It's like a gag."

Henry agrees with Nichols about the stylistic problem at the end of Heller's book. "The ending of the novel," he says, "is very abrupt because you go along for 300 or 400 pages building up an environment in which man simply cannot survive, and in the last five pages Yossarian *can* make it. This seems very arbitrary and superficial in its execution." Consequently Henry rewrote the ending and inserted a scene after the final one in the book (in which Yossarian simply runs from the hospital). At the end of the film, one sees Yossarian paddling desperately in a tiny yellow raft and succeeding in getting only a few feet off shore. However, Henry's new ending did not solve all the problems because the sentimental dialogue of the hospital scene still remained.

Nichols explains that when they got to that scene they shut down production and rehearsed and improvised for five days. "I was desperate," says Nichols. "And then I found what I considered to be a solution—that Yossarian jumps out the window and starts running at the beginning of the scene and then he and Tappman say all the diologue, that is, while they are completely separate. It's an unreal situation. It's a conversation that could not be held and it seems right and feels right when you're watching it because it says: We're not talking about something literal here; we're talking about a moral decision."

Thus Nichols and Henry have strengthened a stylistically weak section of *Catch-22* while developing their own overall cinematic style for their version of *Catch-22*. The style, however, was something which would be worked on as the film evolved, but even before production of *Catch-22* began Henry had to develop a viable structure for the film which would enable the story of *Catch-22* to progress swiftly and completely. In other words, out of the profusion of detail in this massive novel, Henry had to achieve some sort of unity and that could only be accomplished by creating a structure for the film. "After reading the novel," says Henry, "I asked myself, 'How the hell are we going to make a movie out of this?' "

Following *Catch-22* and trying to get an idea of the structure is no easy task because Heller has fused his writing style with his theme of absurdity so well that the book reads like a transcribed record of a nightmare, with events and people flashing back and forth in one long, frightening experience. For Yossarian and his buddies on Pianosa, life does not flow in a regular unfolding rhythm, rather it teeters round and round in a continuous stalemate. "I see everything twice!" screams a patient next to Yossarian in the hospital; and like this patient, the reader too has the sensation of seeing everything twice in the mixed up world of Pianosa.

Although Heller's structure seems dislocated, after a careful mapping of Yossarian's ordeal the design of *Catch-22* becomes quite clear. One of the most trustworthy guides to follow in the novel is the periodic references to the number of missions Colonel Cathcart requires his Pianosa squadron to fly. The book begins at fifty missions which are upped throughout the novel by units of five until they reach a final level of eighty near the end of the novel. This pattern is actually fairly simple as long as one keeps an eye on the mission clues as they occur in the mess hall bull sessions and in Yossarian's monologues.

But Heller has planned an overall pulsing variation which counterpoints the rhythm of the novel. In Yossarian's mind throughout the book is his recollection of the shocking death of his gunner Snowden. His death serves as a haunting theme in the story, and references and recollections of the event occur with increasing regularity beginning with Yossarian's *ubi sunt* on page 25:* "Where are the Snowdens of yesteryear?" There is a certain symbolic innocence in the character of Snowden, and the name itself is appropriate:

* Citations are to the Simon & Schuster clothbound edition of 1961.

"snowden," meaning "new whiteness." Thus Snowden is the sacrificial lamb representative of the innocent who are smashed by wars and, in a larger sense, representative of the mortal fate of all mankind:

> Man was matter, that was Snowden's secret. Drop him out a window and he'll fall. Set fire to him and he'll burn. Bury him and he'll rot, like other kinds of garbage. That was Snowden's secret. Ripeness was all.
> "I'm cold," Snowden said. "I'm cold."
> "There, there," said Yossarian. "There, there." He pulled the rip cord of Snowden's parachute and covered his body with the white nylon sheets.
> "I'm cold."
> "There, there."

Sitting on the steely floor of his B-25, Yossarian now knew the carefully preserved secret once and for all: man is a hopelessly fragile creature and death is simply the stopping of temporary metabolic processes. Yossarian has now faced the cool moistness of death as Snowden bleeds slowly all over him. And it is this event—the reality of Snowden's death—which is to change Yossarian and shock him out of the numbing insanity of normal life on Pianosa. This event is always in the back of his mind; it is what one might call his touchstone of sanity. When the reader first meets Yossarian, the incident over Avignon has already transpired and he and his buddies on Pianosa have already flown almost fifty missions. Thus the reader is thrown *in medias res* in *Catch-22*; he is not yet aware of the details or the importance of Snowden's death, whereas Yossarian is very much aware—though at times subconsciously—of the death of his fellow flyer. The Yossarian one meets at the beginning of *Catch-22* is, one can be assured, a permanently changed Yossarian.

"You must understand," says Nichols, "that *Catch-22* is about a character blocking out a traumatic event, coming in contact with it, and finally collapsing as a result—just like a classical analysis of a hysterical, psychoanalytical situation—and coming out of it able to make a decision.

"Buck and I kept asking each other: why does Yossarian run at the end? He could have run at any point. What does he know that he didn't know before? Why does he draw the line when he couldn't draw the line before? It all has to do with Snowden, that is, with fully understanding another person's death, which is in fact the thing which changes life when you understand it, and makes you decide to live your life differently. Because it means that you fully understand that you will die, and time spent not living your life as you feel you should becomes more and more expensive because you've understood that you will die. And that's what happens to Yossarian."

Thus Snowden's death serves as the key to the structure of *Catch-22*, and once one is aware of the references to that event, then the rest of the novel falls readily into place. Heller has carefully planned his slow revelation of the death of Yossarian's comrade. The first reference is the hint by Yossarian early in the story: "Where are the Snowdens of yesteryear?" The remainder of the references (there are, I think, nine of them) are actual flashbacks to the early Avignon mission which Yossarian and Snowden were both flying. The main reference to Snowden is the complete five-page description of his death which comes late in the novel (pages 426–430). In many ways, this can be considered the climax of the book; it is the entire fulfillment of the previous eight Snowden flashbacks. Thus, over a span of 443 pages the reader is made more and more aware of Snowden's death until he reaches the final shocking account at the end of the novel:

> Snowden kept shaking his head and pointed . . . with just the barest movement of his chin, down toward his armpit. Yossarian bent forward to peer and saw a strangely colored stain seeping through the coveralls just above the armhole of Snowden's flak suit. Yossarian felt his heart stop, then pound so violently he found it difficult to breathe. Snowden was wounded inside his flak suit. Yossarian ripped open the snaps of Snowden's flak suit and heard himself scream wildly as Snowden's insides slithered down to the floor in a soggy pile and just kept dripping out . . .

CATCH-22

In *Catch-22* the reader is really watching a man develop as Yossarian slowly and regularly recalls a deeply buried memory; and, as the reader sees in the end, Snowden's death is the crucial explanation for Yossarian's fear and anguish. He has finally fully recalled the death of his comrade and this stark reality forces him to make the only decision he can make under the circumstances: he must leave Pianosa.

Buck Henry, in writing the screenplay, took note of Heller's carefully wrought patterning of Snowden's death. In the film, the audience's growing awareness of Snowden's death parallels the reader's gradual understanding which happens in the book. In the film there are five scenes in the bomber where Yossarian is aiding his gunner and each scene reveals to the audience a little more than the previous one. The first is where McWatt calls to Yossarian to help Snowden. In the next, Yossarian is simply kneeling before Snowden; in the third, Yossarian looks for morphine to ease Snowden's pain. Yossarian then tears away the leg of Snowden's pants, and one is given a hint of Snowden's abdominal wound by the stain which appears on his flak suit. And finally, the last scene with Yossarian and Snowden is analogous to Heller's final full revelation quoted above.

Thus the audience now experiences the horror of Snowden's death which Yossarian has kept buried within his subconscious throughout the film. As in the novel, Snowden's death forms the spine of the work—the central horrible event which counterpoints the hilarity of the Pianosan situation. Thus in Nichol's film, the death of Snowden follows the full circle around which the audience is spun from laughing to weeping. The story of *Catch-22* is not a funny one. It is a patently vicious tale of war and its stunning psychological effects.

"Everything Yossarian does," says Nichols, "is because of and about Snowden. The thing that hung Arkin up was he said, 'I know all of Snowden from the moment the movie starts. How can I act as if I don't know what happens at the end of Snowden, just because the audience doesn't know?' And not until he asked

CATCH-22: *The unconscious horror.*

that question did I realize that that isn't true. For the guy playing Yossarian and for Yossarian himself, Snowden has to be thought of as an analysis. As in a psychoanalysis, Yossarian keeps getting closer to a memory and then forgetting it and cutting it off. That's what the movie is. He does not remember the end of Snowden, and he's trying to and it gets cut off and when he does fully remember Snowden he breaks down and is reconstituted and makes his decision. It is exactly parallel to psychoanalysis."

Besides the carefully planned Snowden episodes, however, Buck Henry has added an entirely new element in his structuring of the film. He has changed Heller's story by taking the near-fatal stabbing of Yossarian and the death of Snowden and fused those events at two points in the film—at the end, as in the novel, and in a new way at the beginning.

"I began the film with key moments of death," says Henry, "Yossarian's, which is the framework for the bulk of the film; and Snowden's, which is the very spine of the film." In the opening scene Yossarian is stabbed by a soldier and there immediately follows Yossarian's recollection of McWatt's pleading for Yossarian to help the gunner.

So, with the fusion of deaths at the opening of the film, Henry unites the souls of these two individuals and, in so doing, begins the large circular loop around which the audience will travel through all the events on Pianosa, seeing life as "crazy" Yossarian sees it and finally looping back again toward the end, when ev-

erything is over, to the fusion of Yossarian and Snowden. The "co-death" scene at the end is like the opening scene, yet with subtle but important differences. The "soldier" who stabs Yossarian is now seen as Nately's whore, disguised. This raises several interesting questions about the whole film. Is *Catch-22* within this large loop perhaps all in Yossarian's mind? This seems to be the case, especially when one notes that at several points within the loop, Yossarian seems to awaken as from a dream. Is *Catch-22* just a horrible nightmare, or is it a nightmare which Yossarian is actually living?

"Everything in the film," says Henry, "except for the last scene where Yossarian leaves the hospital and goes to Sweden, is inside Yossarian's mind. And maybe certain things in the film happen, and maybe they don't. I don't mean to be Robbe-Grillet about it, but since it is all a fantasy generated by Yossarian's delirium, then some parts of it may be true and some parts may not be. Who knows? That's for the audience to decide." Within the giant story loop of the co-deaths (Yossarian's and Snowden's) at the beginning and the co-deaths at the end, will be the stream-of-consciousness chain of events remembered by Yossarian. Thus Henry has changed *Catch-22* from a third-person account of the events on Pianosa to a first-person dream account with Yossarian as the dreamer.

This looping, remembering structure is strongly suggested by Heller. Nichols realized this and emphasized it to Henry in their early work on the film. "The first thing I knew and I told Buck," says Nichols, "was that the important thing in the book should be the important thing in the movie; and that is the going around in a circle, coming back to Snowden over and over again, with each scene a little longer. The movie had to be a circle."

Nichols knew that circularity is an integral part of Heller's book, with Yossarian, Nately and their friends going up and down endlessly flying mission after mission. The give-away to the circular nature of *Catch-22* is in the dialogue itself. As Henry says, "The structure of *Catch-22* is circular, that is, the way the dialogue keeps going around and around in that maddeningly sophist way." Yossarian says to Danby as they talk about why Yossarian doesn't want to fly any more missions: "You know, I have a queer feeling that I've been through this exact conversation before with someone. It's just like the chaplain's sensation of having experienced everything twice." To see everything twice implies that one loops around and comes back on it again. This is really what the chaplain meant when he asked Yossarian, "Have you ever been in a situation which you felt you had been in before?" Poor Chaplain Tappman has thus put his finger on one of the key elements—both structural and thematic—of *Catch-22*.

Henry knew that for *Catch-22* to be faithful to Heller's novel this continuous looping and reversing was essential. "I felt that same circularity of the novel should happen inside every scene and between the scenes, and ultimately in the form of the film."

Another manifestation of the circularity of Heller's novel is in the characters themselves and their continuous reversal of roles. There is always a man on top and a man on the bottom. "For the actors," says Nichols, "all the scenes individually broke down into hunting scenes. It was very clearly divided into foxes and rabbits and the actors had to know which they were, where in the chase they were, and what their tactics were if they were rabbits, and what their tactics were if they were foxes. It simply has to do with function. The foxes chase the rabbits to the end of the field, and then a wolf comes and chases the fox, and then a bear comes and chases the wolf and so on and so on back, I suppose to Super Rabbit in the Sky." In the film, McWatt kills Hungry Joe on the raft and then kills himself; Dobbs tries to kill Colonel Cathcart then he is killed in a mid-air collision; and Milo, who as mess officer is supposed to be helping the base, ends up bombing and strafing it.

Once the circular structure had been established, however, it was really a tactical problem for Henry how the events went in the middle. He had quite a baffling task for there

are so many wild events in Heller's work that it seems impossible to keep track of them all and try to re-order them into an artistic whole. But on closer examination Heller's work does yield many subtle wavelike rhythms which work their way slowly and inevitably to the climax of the novel, i.e., Yossarian's total recall of Snowden's death. In this sense, *Catch-22* resembles a jazz improvisation with several melodies established early in the work which are lost, found, lost, and found again as the work progresses.

What are the subtle rhythms of the novel? The primary one has already been discussed—Yossarian's gradual recollection of Snowden's death. However, another strong rhythm in *Catch-22* is the growth of Milo Minderbinder's octopus-armed purchasing syndicate. Heller has used Milo to symbolize the capitalist nature of any war and of society in general. Milo and his syndicate slip in and out of *Catch-22*. At first, Milo's conniving to buy eggs in Malta for seven cents apiece and sell them at a profit in Pianosa for five cents seems perfectly harmless. After all, Milo is working for his fellow fliers. It is Milo who brought them "savory hunks of meat, cherries jubilee, and fresh coffee with Benedictine brandy."

But slowly the Minderbinding monster appears, and Heller plans Milo's ascent carefully. At first a plane joins Milo's syndicate, then a pilot, until Milo controls a whole squadron of bombers and virtually runs the economy of Europe. And in chapter 22, lowly Lieutenant Minderbinder is revealed as the Vice Shah of Oran, the Caliph of Bagdad, and the Sheik of Araby. Quiet, helpful Milo is suddenly on his way to becoming lord of the economic universe. And in chapter 24 comes the stunning blow—in order to avert financial disaster for his syndicate, Milo contracts with the Germans to bomb and strafe his own base. Thus Milo's innocent efficiency has turned into an unbelievable horror.

In the film one can see that Nichols and Henry, like Heller before them, carefully planned Milo's rise to power; and in a crescendo similar to that in the novel, Milo's syndicate grows through four separate scenes, until it reaches the horrible climax of the bombing. "Working together," says Nichols, "Buck and I deliberately emphasized the thread of Milo—even more than Heller did. I wanted to take Milo as far as he could be taken. You see, Milo is not a person; he can't be a person. He is only there to emphasize the central idea of *Catch-22*. The movie, I think, more than the book is about people making money from the deaths of others; and that theme is much stronger in the movie because I take Milo *insanely* far, much further than blowing up the base which is where Heller takes him. Milo is taken on into myth, especially when you see him in Rome with his M&M Enterprises whorehouse."

As part of this increased emphasis on Milo, Henry linked him closer to Yossarian than Heller did. In the film Milo's bomb run is directly responsible for the death of Yossarian's best friend, Nately. (In the novel Nately was killed in a mid-air collision.)

"When you come right down to it," says Nichols, "my movie is really exclusively about capitalism, and nothing but capitalism. That is to say, in a war under capitalism the decisions, especially the moral decisions, begin to be made by the money—not the people who have the money, but the money itself. And that's what happens in this picture. Rules like Catch-22 are generated by the morality of the money, and everything serves that."

Once one understands how Nichols and Henry decided to increase the importance of Milo Minderbinder—both as a character and as a symbol of wartime profiteering, then one can see how the film takes on a structure different from the book. By re-drawing the character of Milo, Nichols and Henry now have two central themes—two interwoven spines which support the body of *Catch-22*. Snowden's death, which was a primary theme in the novel, is also a primary theme in the movie; but added to it is the theme of capitalism. Wartime profiteering, which was important in the novel, is now crucial to the film. Nichols increases this emphasis on capitalism not only,

as he says, "by taking Milo *insanely* far," but also by carefully intertwining the character of Milo with the character of Snowden in a way Heller never did.

The most outstanding example of the fusion of Milo and Snowden occurs in what Nichols called "the clearest moment in the whole film." It is the scene where Yossarian and Milo watch Snowden's burial. As Milo is trying to convince Yossarian about another of his capitalist ventures—the chocolate-covered cotton—Milo suddenly looks down from the tree where they are both sitting and says, "That looks like a funeral." Yossarian says, "Yeah, they're burying that kid who was killed in my plane the other day." And Milo replies, "Oh, what happened to him?" Yossarian's only reply is, "He got killed."

This scene is a crucial moment in the film. Milo the capitalist monster looks down on one of the innocent victims of the war; and suddenly Yossarian sees before himself two realities: Snowden is dead, and there is no way that Yossarian can bring him back. And Milo, who is the embodiment of all the crass stupidities of the horrifying situation Yossarian finds himself in, will continue to grow and prosper as the god-like force on Pianosa. As Yossarian says to Milo for the second time, "He got killed," he realizes that this fact has *no* meaning for Milo. This is indeed, as Nichols says, one of the clearest moments in the film because here Yossarian gradually begins to formulate in his mind the resolution to scream out in defiant anguish, "No! I will go no farther!" This decision (in the film) is the result of the two forces which are affecting him—Snowden and Milo. It is these two forces which push Yossarian to make the only sane decision in an insane world.

In all this critical analysis of the book and the film, the ultimate question arises: what is *Catch-22* about? Part of this answer can be found in what Henry calls the prophetic nature of Heller's novel. "There are a few books in this century," says Henry, "that seem, when we first read them, to be almost surrealist in their approach to human behavior—*1984, Lord of the Flies,* and *Catch-22.* I don't think Joseph Heller realized he was predicting the future, but there is just one thing after another in the novel which in the past seemed to be outlandish and insane extrapolations on normal human behavior, and now have become par for the course. Thus, a lot of *Catch-22* is hardly as radical as it was. It has been removed from the framework of fantasy and tied to things that really happen—like Vietnam."

In other words, for Henry the story of *Catch-22* is not a humorous one; it is a stunning and terrible experience through which Yossarian and the audience must pass. And the film is more than just a personal experience: it is an artistic reflection of the Catch-22 state of affairs of the modern world.

"I agree with Buck absolutely," says Nichols, speaking of the anti-capitalist nature of the film. "The quality of a monster without a head, of an aggressive act without the decision being made by any individuals to aggress, which is characteristic of Vietnam, is characteristic of everything in *Catch-22.* Of course I'm oversimplifying, but I'm allowed to. I'm not making a Marxist statement; I'm making, I hope, a poetic statement, and therefore I can be simple."

This wider social dimension of the tale of Yossarian is underlined by a story change for the film which Henry feels is very significant. In the novel, Heller's Yossarian receives a medal for destroying a strategic target—the bridge at Ferrara; whereas in the film, Henry's Yossarian aborts a bomb run which was scheduled to destroy an innocent Italian town:

YOSSARIAN
Nothing's in it [Ferrara]—no Germans, no munitions, no railroad crossing, no harbor . . . Just people. Italian people. And a monastery.

NATELY
Yossarian—maybe it's some kind of strategy thing.

YOSSARIAN
What the hell are we doing?

NATELY
Yossarian, it's not our business to ask.

YOSSARIAN
Whose business is it?

Henry explains that he changed the targets to give Yossarian a chance to make a decision about not killing other people. And he also changed targets for another reason: "For instance, what are they told to do in Vietnam? A guy gets in a plane and they say, 'Drop this ton of napalm in that field over there.' Why? Who knows why? Just drop it on the field. There may be some peasants there, or there may be some Vietcong—it doesn't matter whether there is a good reason or not. And when he does drop a bomb, he's going to kill something besides his target, even if it's a turtle. There's an entire kind of nightmarish quality to it."

In other words, the film *Catch-22* is about a single crazy fool who, in all the nightmarish senselessness he was experiencing, finally decided to draw the line. Driven by the presence of Milo ("Nately was the victim of certain economic pressures") and by the memory of Snowden ("Man was matter, that was Snowden's secret"), Yossarian decides he can no longer continue. He says, "Beyond *this* point I will not go." And in the world of a nightmare, that is what insanity is. "You're crazy, Yo," say his friends. And he is—because a crazy man in a nightmare is one who knows where to stop.

Thus, in the film, Yossarian aborts the Ferrara mission and drops his bombs in the ocean —for which he ironically but (in the larger view of the film) perhaps rightly receives a medal.

Undoubtedly Mike Nichols and Buck Henry would be the first to give a medal for "killing fish," as Yossarian refers to his act, in the Gulf of Tonkin.

DONALD E. McWILLIAMS

Frederick Wiseman

"I'm interested in normal behavior, what passes for normal behavior. I'm interested in how the institutions reflect the larger cultural hues, so that, in a sense, it's like tracking the abominable snowman; in the sense that you're looking for cultural spoors wherever you go. You find traces of them in the institutions. High School *is a reflection of some of the values in the so-society. So is* Titicut Follies. They are. They *have to be.* —FREDERICK WISEMAN *1970*[1]

In 1958, the Raquetteurs (snowshoers) of Quebec held their annual congress in Sherbrooke, Quebec. National Film Board of Canada film-makers Gilles Groulx and Michel Brault went along to make a film. The footage they brought back was not thought by some to be worth the expense, labor, and time of making into a film. This attitude was not surprising. The weekend had been notable for its paucity of snow, the lack of interest in the event by the citizens of Sherbrooke, and the Saturday-night-in-the-local-boozer appearance of the dance held to celebrate the event. Brault and Groulx, however, believed that they had the makings of a film of some significance and they edited the footage into a fifteen-minute film called *Les Raquetteurs.* They were right. The two film-makers had used recently developed portable sound and camera equipment and had been able unobtrusively to get very close to their subjects. The film is a series of delightful vignettes of "normal behavior" and was one of the first of the films shot in the

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technique later known as *cinema-vérité.* (The word technique is used advisedly for, despite the claims of its enthusiasts, *cinema-vérité* was not really any new philosophy of cinema.)

Two decades before, John Grierson, one of the fathers of the documentary film and the man who introduced the term documentary into the English language said, "In one form or another I have produced or initiated hundreds of films; yet I think every one of them has been one idea, that the ordinary affairs of people's lives are more dramatic and more vital than all the false excitement you can muster. That has seemed to me worth spending one's life over."[2]

Socially concerned documentary film-makers like Grierson had always been seeking better ways of bringing the "ordinary affairs" to the screen, but there were major problems. Movie equipment was bulky, the sound recordist had difficulties in dealing with extraneous sounds, and film-makers worried that their very obvious presence, particularly if they had a sound truck with them, grossly affected the behavior of their subjects. The problems were often evaded by silent shooting with dubbed narration, the easy way out, or by post-synching, a method which offered all sorts of opportunities to the imaginative film-maker who could then juggle sound at will. The development in the late fifties of more portable and sensitive camera and sound equipment (as well as film which could be used in very dim light) finally enabled film-makers to capture more closely people in their everyday life, and to make films in which people acted by being themselves, in which their dialogue took the place of script or interview, and in which the director concerned himself with the camera and let the characters take care of themselves.

Les Raquetteurs, slight though it is, was one of the films that showed the way and it was not long before film-makers were tackling subjects of more social import than snowshoeing. The National Film Board continued to make films in the *cinema-vérité* technique. *Things I Cannot Change,* made by a small crew that spent several weeks with a poor Montreal family, is typical. *Cinéma-vérité* became for various reasons the province of the independents and the range of subject matter tackled has been very wide. We have films such as Pennebaker's *Don't Look Back,* a study of Bob Dylan on tour; King's *Warrendale,* shot in a home for emotionally disturbed children, and the Maysles brothers' *Salesman.* The *cinéma-vérité* film has even influenced the feature film: Cassavetes's *Faces* is an example of a feature film which gains much of its conviction from its *cinéma-vérité* style.

Frederick Wiseman uses the *cinéma-vérité* technique to examine the institutions which are his windows onto "normal behavior."

Wiseman has directed four films, *Tititcut Follies* (1967), shot in the Bridgewater Institution for the Criminally Insane run by the State of Massachusetts; *High School* (1968) which was filmed at North-East High School, Philadelphia; *Law and Order* (1969), a study of the Kansas City, Missouri, police; and *Hospital* (1969) which was shot in a New York hospital. The films have won all sorts of critical plaudits and prizes. His films led Pauline Kael to write in the New Yorker that "Wiseman is probably the most sophisticated intelligence to enter the documentary field in recent years."[3]

But it is not sophistication and intelligence alone which make Wiseman's films important as documentaries of our age. There is heart as well as intelligence, and his films draw us into the lives of the people in the institutions he examines. Wiseman by profession is a lawyer who graduated in 1954. Forty years of age, he is slim and slight, but forceful in manner and speech. He is, to use a cliché, a dynamic personality and obviously completely wrapped up in what he is doing. I had assumed, prior to meeting him, that he was a lawyer who had become concerned about social problems and who saw film as a means of motivating social change. I found the truth more complex than that. Wiseman has always been interested in social problems but he'd also had a passion for films from his teens, and in the early sixties he decided to become a film-maker. It is not surprising, however, that the first film he be-

came involved in, *The Cool World*, dealt with delinquent youth in Harlem.

"I read the novel of Warren Miller and I wanted to make a movie out of it and I hadn't any experience of directing at that point. I felt that I should go to someone who did. I liked *The Connection*, so I asked Shirley Clarke to direct it. In restrospect, I should probably have done it myself." (This conclusion does not arise out of any dissatisfaction with Shirley Clarke.)

"I think there is a lot of mystique about making movies. The only way to know whether you can do it is to try. There is certainly no fun in producing movies. The fun is in directing and editing."

In 1966, OSTI (Organisation for Social and Technical Innovation) was founded. It is a non-profit research and consulting corporation which works to bring about social and institutional change.

"OSTI got started when a friend of mine, Donald Schon, and I talked over the idea of setting up a new kind of company concerned with what was going on in society; and in some way trying to figure out ways of not just doing reports, but getting involved and intervening in some of the problems in a way that might be useful to make some contribution to their understanding at least, and in some measure to their solution."

Wiseman, apart from his background in law, brought his interest in film to the organization. *Cool World* was a fiction feature, although the shooting of the film in the streets and tenements of Harlem with the new mobile equipment certainly gave the film a documentary sheen. Wiseman decided that his future films would be directed by him and would be documentaries.

"I have always been interested in my assessment of what is going on. What interested me in documentary was the fact that you could make films about what was happening or even a view of what was going on as opposed to the typical Hollywood films which were people's backlot fantasies. That's what got me interested in OSTI. I was concerned to find out what was going on in particular kinds of social settings like public housing, police—those kinds of issues—and OSTI was a way of educating myself and also trying to figure out ways some of those things might be changed."

As a result of World War II experiences, sociologists were spurred to study the effect of media on attitudes and values. A goodly amount of academic research was carried out in the late forties and into the fifties. Media were found to be relatively less important as an influence when compared with other factors in the environment such as group beliefs. Media could cause people to do things, but only on a superficial level. Media could only change the values and attitudes of a person if other factors in his environment were already causing him to change. Media, therefore, were only likely to "reinforce" attitudes.

On this assumption, if Wiseman's films cause any change it is because the groups who are spurred to action already hold his viewpoint or are moving in that change direction anyway. These theories, of course, run strongly counter to the beliefs of men such as John Grierson whose lifework has been based on the concept of media as a powerful influence. (Without such a belief, there would be no "Challenge for Change" programme at the NFB.) These researches and theories, however, did not really come to terms with the ways in which the media are used. Further, the probes of McLuhan point to areas of media effect about which little or nothing is known. Clearly more research needs to be done into the form of the relationship between media and other factors in the environmental mesh, and into the nature of the media themselves.

"I am interested in social change but I'm not really sure I know what it means; nor am I sure of the use of films in social change because I'm not really interested in propaganda films. In a sense the films are more like natural history. There is an awful lot of bullshit about social change and effecting social change. It's kind of in the air. One of the current forms of language is to talk about innovation and

change or to be a change agent and similar such clichés. The thing is I really don't know what all that means except that you start with the very simple-minded view that there are things you don't like and would like to bring about a greater correspondence between things you don't like and things you do like; but when you get into these things, you realize how infinitely complicated they are, and how they are tied into so many other aspects of the society. Frequently, the kind of intervention—which is another one of the words that is used—is one that could make the situation worse, because you really do not have any kind of comprehensive view of the whole scene. This brings you into the whole systems analysis business which obviously has problems in space technology. It can be well structured, but when you try to apply the same kind of thinking to social problems, it hasn't been demonstrated that it works with any degree of sophistication. I think if you are going to talk about films in terms of social change, you've got to have more modest goals. In my view, the films I've been trying to make are my view of the particular situation I've gone into and the final film—apart from any considerations of whether it's art or sociology or whatever it may be—the film represents a report on what I've found, a very subjective report, I must tell you; for I wouldn't know how you'd make an objective film, that's all bullshit.

"So then, what does the film do? You cast the film out into the world, arrange for its distribution, maybe on television, maybe 16mm, occasionally through threatrical distribution; but you can't really—and you don't want to—control how people respond to your films. So if the film does anything, it initially conveys information, which many people have in some degree already, but the final film is a theory about the event, about the subject in the film. So that you're throwing out your theory to compete with millions of theories before, at least the other theories that exist on the same kind of subject matter. So you're competing in that other great old bromide, the market place of ideas. And if the film does anything at all, it contributes to a sharing and then a process of discussion about the issues, out of which different people will evolve different solutions. Some people may not evolve any solutions, any alternatives, because they may not think anything is wrong. I think that one of the things that happens when one is dealing with films that are based on reality, on real people in unstaged situations, is that there is ambiguity, or there is some aspect to them that is ambiguous; because the audience's attitude is very dependent on the values with which they assess the subject matter. For example, all the scenes with the dean of discipline in *High School*: if you think that's the way to handle those kinds of problems with students, you think that the dean of discipline is doing a tough and difficult job, that he's representing the kind of values you want upheld. If you disagree with these kind of values you think differently about the dean of discipline. That's not to say the film doesn't have a point of view—because I think that the film has a very definite point of view—the reaction of different audiences will be different both to the total film and specific scenes in it."

Wiseman, thus, takes a somewhat modest view of the social power of his films, and would be skeptical of claims of widespread influence. This does not, however, alter the fact that he is interested in the change consequences of his films, although a touch of irony sometimes creeps into his remarks when he speaks of the changes.

"Take *Titicut Follies*, for example. There were substantial changes at Bridgewater where the film was made. Three hundred inmates were sent to other institutions, people who had been kept naked for years got clothes, fifty nurses were added down there. I think there's a pretty good connection between the existence of a film and these changes. I don't know ultimately what impact those changes have on the institution, but they weren't changes that I directed or suggested. They were in part a consequence of the controversy

over the film and the fact that people were very aroused by it."

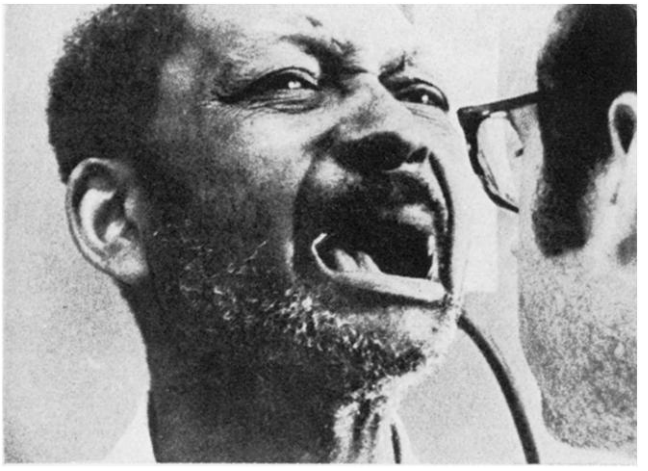
What of change at North-East High School in Philadelphia?

"I'm not privy to that. I do know that one of the vice-principals made a speech at Harvard Graduate School of Education, where he said that there had been many changes at North-East since the film had been made. But the film has not yet been shown in Philadelphia, except to the school board. Some of the faculty members have seen it—I've been told a lot of changes have been made. But I really don't know."

In actual fact, the film has not been shown in Philadelphia because the threat of a court injunction hangs over any attempt to do so. Wiseman has, however, had some opportunities to judge the reaction firsthand of some people from the institutions where he has made films, but with rather mixed results.

"I sat down with the superintendent of Bridgewater afterwards. And he told me he liked the film, he thought it was terrific, and a fair representation of the institution. Then three months later, he got an injunction along with the attorney general that has so far prevented the film from ever being shown in Massachusetts. So that's one example of sitting down and talking about it. On the other hand, I showed *Hospital* to the administration and staff at Metropolitan in New York, just before it was on the air. They loved the film and thought it was fair and they are using it for their own internal teaching and training purposes. They thought I picked up a lot of stuff they were interested in knowing about."

Titicut Follies is a paradox. It is a film which is probably causing more social turbulence by not being shown than if it were. It exposed the state-run institution as a chamber of horrors. I read one writer who referred to it as a mediaeval institution, but it is best to avoid the use of the word mediaeval, with its suggestion that the sins of Bridgewater are more common to other ages than ours. Even allowing for the fact that the film is a subjective document, the facts of Bridgewater could



A man being examined in the clinic: HOSPITAL

not be denied. In fact they weren't, but the "establishment" typically attempted to change the issue. There was a legislative investigation, not of Bridgewater, but of why Wiseman was given permission to make the film. Later there was a month-long trial during which the judge stated that the film was "a nightmare of ghoulish obscenities" as though the events at Bridgewater were the invention of Wiseman the dramatist. Ultimately the judge decided that Wiseman had breached an oral contract—that is the right of the institution to censor the film—and that the film was an invasion of privacy.

"There were a lot of crocodile tears about the privacy of the inmates; but it was the first time anyone had expressed an interest in the inmates. There were at least 300 men who had never been tried of any offense."

An appeal was made to the Massachusetts State Supreme Court. The court ruled that the film had value but could only be seen by professionals, i.e., doctors, lawyers, judges, legislators, people interested in custodial care, and that Wiseman can only show the film to this restricted group if the Massachusetts court is given a week's notice and an affidavit that the audience will be of the class as described. This marked the only time in American constitutional history that the decision in a non-obscenity case has been a restriction of free speech first amendment rights, so that one group may see the film but not another. Wise-

man made a further appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. At the time of writing, it had just refused to take the case.

Nonetheless, the case has aroused a lot of people and Wiseman has seen his reputation and career benefit from the publicity. He does not, however, see himself as a David looking for Goliaths. For, if he were, one could legitimately ask him what specific solutions he has to offer to the problems of the institutions.

"I'm interested in the change consequences as a product of the film, but one of the temptations I try and resist is being an expert in the instant solution, so I don't have any particular bromide for that. I can conceive of all kinds of solutions, but my view of the institutions and their problems is really expressed in the films and I just think it's really not appropriate for me to say, 'If you only did this . . .' That's where my interest as a natural historian parts with my social change interest."

A Wiseman film, therefore is a document of one man's discovery, a highly subjective document . . .

"Sure, they have to be, they're subjective. That's a real phoney-baloney argument, this subjectivity-objectivity argument, but it is one that some people get very agitated about . . . I think nothing matters unless the film works as a film, because I've a horror of propaganda and I've a horror of didactic films. If as a consequence of making a good film, you bring about social change—great! But I would hate to make a lousy movie about the city council because my formal sense and my interest in film would be somehow diminished by this."

Wiseman weds his love of film to his curiosity about the world around him. Through the documentary film, he educates himself and shows what he has learned to that world.

"I like the final film to represent my experience of making the film and not my prior stereotype. I didn't start off *Law and Order* with say, 'I want to build a bridge between the community and the police.' In fact I probably started off with the view, 'What a great chance to get the cops. I've been given permission to run around with the cops for however long I want and I'm really going to show what bastards they are.' But the experience was very different than that. I have as little information as the general public. I don't have any special knowledge about police or hospitals or anything; but I have an idea, a theory and the theory may be a cliché. What I try and do is set down my initial thinking, my initial point of view about the subject, which I generally do with about a three- or four-page outline. This I don't mind because the people I'm asking permission from to make the film want a statement of it, for you still have to deal in words! This may have no relationship to the final film because, particularly in documentary, you don't know what you are going to find out there; all you can do is give your illustrative examples. So what I do is set out a theory and give illustrations of the kind of material I expect to find, but in no way commit myself to finding out; for God knows—you don't know what's going to happen in advance; you don't know the principal is going to stand up and read a letter from a soldier in Vietnam or that a cop is going to try and strangle a prostitute.

POLICEMAN: *Go ahead, resist. I'll choke you till you can't breathe. Who in hell do you think you are anyhow? . . . one of our officers. Ready to calm down? Okay. What's your name? Can't talk. Why can't you talk?*

"In your outline you might say, 'activities of the vice squad' or 'faculty meetings.' So that's what I do. But then really, from the moment you actually begin to have contact with the people who are going to be in the film, your views change. For then your theory and little stereotype about the events begin to butt against the reality as you experience it and it's really out of the tension—that's too dramatic a word—out of the working out of the contrast between what you felt before and what you observe and your attempt to make that conscious to yourself that you initially begin to change your view of the material, assess what's going on, figure out what to shoot and ultimately how to cut it together. The process reaches its ultimate kind of intensity, where it gets very intense, in the course of the editing. The editing generally takes me anywhere from four to six months; but the last three months are really, you know, seven days a week, 12 to 15 hours a day—mainly because I like to work that way and because you get very involved in the material. You're really thinking your way through the material and you're beginning to see connections and relationships and development of themes that you only kind of half-sensed before."

To say, however, that a Wiseman film is about the institution or is primarily about the institution is to be superficial and ignore the complexity of his films. There are many levels at which his work can be examined. This arises in good part out of the non-narrative structure of his films, which makes his films both more complex and open to many interpretations. Repeated viewing of his films underlines the importance of structure. To take *Law and Order* as a case in point, one is aware that time is passing, but it is not chronological. The film does not seem to have any beginning and development to a climax. Yet the film has unity. Throughout the film, there are recurrences of voices on police radios and discussions between two policemen in parked patrol cars. The structure of the film becomes circular, a series of overlapping circles. One is drawn into the circles of experience and there seems to be no escape from the problems that occur within these circles. Nor, because of the juxtaposition of incidents and behavior that Wiseman places within those circles, is it easy to arrive at any black-and-white conclusions about the police or even the lawbreakers. One becomes aware that only at a superficial level is the film about the institution. There is violence throughout *Law and Order,* but it is not large-scale. Two policemen discuss a riot, but we see no riot. Wiseman ignores the sensational and concentrates on the everyday—husband-wife quarrels, lost juveniles, car-stealing, prostitution, drunkenness. Whilst there is physical violence in the film, it is between individuals. In fact, for me, the most lasting impression is the verbal violence, both deliberate and thoughtless. Whilst some film-makers film riots, Wiseman concentrates on person-to-person relationships; for the riot is a symptom of the malaise. It is only by zeroing in on the individual that there is any hope of understanding the causes. *Law and Order* at the deepest level is not about police at all, but about individuals, what they do and say to each other and the ambiguity of behavior . . .

". . . because life would be much too simple if it were all one way and I think what makes the films work, when they work, is the fact that there is that kind of ambiguity which exists in all our lives. Why should you make pictures about real people if you made them one-sided? The film-maker in my view becomes suspect if he doesn't find any ambiguity. The structure of *Law and Order* is a circle for when the guy runs off at the end of the film he's running off to the beginning of the film . . ."

The opening of *Law and Order* shows a series of mug shots, and at the end of the film a young man who has had no prior contact with the police runs off in frustration when his problems can't be solved; Wiseman leaves us with the suggestion that crime grows, in part anyway, from our inability to resolve our person-to-person problems through the institutions.

"That's what I meant before, that the structure of the film is a theory about the events,

about the subject matter of the film, because the police are in a very ambiguous position. For instance the film ends with the guy in the street, with his wife and a baby and another man and the cops, very deliberately, because this ending raises not all the problems, but many of the problems. Here's the police; they're called in on a family fight—which is the way police spend most of their time, on family fights. What are they supposed to do, they can't get the guy a job, they can't reconcile the husband and wife.

"The woman is probably living with the other man, they can't arrange for them to get welfare payments, they can't arrange for them to get a lawyer so he can get some kind of alimony or whatever and to see the kid . . ."

POLICEMAN: *All right, then go downtown and get your lawyer and file for divorce, if that's what you want. That's the only way you're going to be able to handle it. We can't give you this child.*
MAN: *I don't have the money to do that now. Meantime she won't let me see my kid no more.*
POLICEMAN: *Looks like it's going to be the way it is.*
MAN: *And this has been three months, and I just had my kid for the first time in three months.*
POLICEMAN: *I'm sorry, there's not a thing I can do about it.*

". . . they don't know how to deal with his frustration. His cheek twitching, the guy says "I've never been in trouble before in my life but now." So when he's running off—whether he's running off in fact to commit a crime symbolically, you see so much of the origin of some kinds of problems that end up in some kind of criminal behavior. And that's really what the film is about and it's the role of the police to provide a minimum kind of restraint —which is not to say there are not excesses and police brutality, because obviously there are—but it seems to me a much more complex issue to try and get into the whole question of why you need police in the first place and the kind of minimum task they are called on to perform because of people's inabilities to deal with their own problems in a social structure. It is this inability that creates the kind of problems you see in the film, and that's why I thought it was a circle. It's endless and there was nothing that summed it all up."

The structure of *High School* and *Hospital,* whilst also non-narrative, might be called sequential. *Hospital* begins with voices on a PA calling doctors to emergencies; it leads us through a series of intense experiences with doctors and patients and ends with a sermon in a chapel which suggests that suffering is a basic condition of man's relationship with God.

PRIEST: . . . *for everything that exists come from him, everything is by him, everything is for him. To him be glory forever. Alleluia.*

Everything in *High School* leads to that intensely emotional letter scene in the school auditorium in which the principal reads a letter from a young serviceman about to be dropped behind enemy lines in Vietnam.

"I thought it was appropriate in *High School* in that the final product not only of the high school, but of the value system which is represented in the high school—this guy who writes a letter saying he's only a body doing a job—and then I deliberately cut that together with the opening of the film where you see all the row houses and high school that looks like a

General Motors assembly plant. Your Chevrolet is this guy saying he doesn't know why he's there, he's only a body doing a job; so that's it brought together. But the police experience, it's like a red line which goes around and around. At least that was my view of it; whereas the other experience built differently."

It is when one tries to find out what Wiseman sees as the value system represented by the high school that one becomes aware that the film is not built just on a series of sequences which cut together well in visual and rhythmic terms or on a series of sequences that make a number of well-founded points about education; but that sequences are often very closely interrelated. An individual sequence might interrelate with that which follows it or hark forward or backwards to other sequences in the film. The final sequence ties the film up.

One must always be aware that Wiseman's films are very much "the creative interpretation of actuality." One must not let the realistic appearance of *cinéma-vérité* fool one into forgetting that Wiseman's films are interpretations of his experiences. Nonetheless, despite his manipulation of the elements of his experience, Wiseman cannot be accused of a lack of integrity; he makes no bones about the fact that he does not seek an objective rendering. Nonetheless, despite the subjectivity, Wiseman tries very hard to make sure that the events shown are "normal behavior."

"I think you get very sensitive to when somebody is saying or doing something he wouldn't ordinarily do. Obviously there are mistakes and you might not get it all the time, but by and large 90-95% of the time you're aware of it, you become aware of it, and if you're not aware of it at the moment, surely you've become aware of it when you're looking at it the 800th time in the editing room! You learn to trust your instinctual reaction to what's going on. By and large, people don't look at the camera, which amazed me when I first got started doing this; but if they're involved in a situation which is meaningful to them—it's not that they don't know you're there, of course you are, because your mike is probably stuck under their nose and the camera is never more than seven or eight feet away. But my view on it has changed from what it originally was. I think if anything, people will react more characteristically in the presence of the camera and the equipment than less because, if the equipment makes them uneasy, people are more likely either to say no, which happens occasionally, or they're liable to break their pattern and retreat to forms of expression and feelings they're comfortable with. In which case, you're getting more characteristic rather than less characteristic events, which is really what you want. You want to get the attitudes and views people are more comfortable with, that they really feel and the chances are that they are not going to try something strange and uncomfortable in a situation that may give them some kind of discomfort to begin with because of the presence of the movie camera. That's my present view of it. Anytime I'm aware, I feel that people's behavior is changing because of the presence of the camera and tape recorder, I don't use the scene. I wouldn't say I'm 100% accurate. None of us have that wide repertory of gestures or speeches or views that we can change them that readily. It's more likely we'll break the patterns completely rather than be able to improvise something totally new. If I wanted to be Laurence Olivier now, I couldn't be that! You have to be a great actor, you have to be a good actor to convincingly break the pattern and become somebody else."

One sequence in *Hospital* which illustrates this point very well is the psychiatrist's telephone call to the welfare office. The sequence uncut was an hour and a half. Apart from the fact that the doctor is obviously oblivious to anything but the agony of that phone conversation, one could hardly expect him to maintain a sham of interest in his patient for that period of time. His sincerity is no more apparent than at the final moment when he puts down the phone, looks up, becomes aware of Wiseman once more, and in despair says "She hung up on me." This scene also serves as an example of Wiseman's artistic self-discipline—that is, the willingness to sacrifice dramatic ef-

fect to what he believes to be the truth of his experience. It must have been very tempting for Wiseman to have edited that sequence much shorter and cut when he had gained our sympathy for the doctor. But Wiseman holds and holds the sequence. As the conversation continues, punctuated by the doctor's "Miss Hightower," we reach that ambiguity sought by Wiseman. Knight in shining armor the doctor certainly is, but what can welfare officer Hightower do? She as much as the doctor is a victim of institutional rules. Miss Hightower, unseen, unheard, wins our sympathy too.

"I'm going to do other documentaries. There are a number of other subjects which are important to me and I'd like to use this technique. I'm trying to be very selective because I don't want to repeat myself in the sense that after *High School* I had offers for twenty educational films and also thirty films on hospitals! But I'm trying to complete an institutional series and at the same time, I want to see if I can adapt the technique of the documentary film-making to feature film-making and see if you can make a feature film with the same kind of look. To approach the problem, the same problem from the other end. In documentary, you're trying to wing it and capture reality and give it a form which is your final film. You're at a place for 400 hours and in the 400 hours you shoot about 40 or 50 hours of film and in the 40 or 50 hours, you have an hour and a half of film which has a sense of immediacy; like it's there and you're in the midst of it, and you're feeling it. But I'd like to approach that same problem from the other end, which is trying to recreate reality and give it the same kind of look as a film where you're really shooting it and capturing it on the wing. So in essence, it's a question of writing a story, a contemporary story which will be shot in the same kind of way but where everything is fictional. You use actors and use sets and everything is recreated, but the ultimate look is as close to the documentary as you can make it. *The Battle of Algiers* did that superbly, but it's the only film I've seen that has done that well."

Wiseman is currently writing the script for the feature, which will be an adaptation of a novel about a young man who goes AWOL from the army. The film will not be produced by OSTI but in Hollywood. Hollywood has not been noted for its kindness to the filmmaker who would be an auteur. It will be interesting to see how Wiseman, who has produced, directed, and edited all of his last four films will fare in this new situation.

NOTES

1. This quote is from an interview with Frederick Wiseman which took place in June, 1970. All subsequent unidentified quotes are from this interview.
2. Forsyth Hardy, *Grierson on Documentary*, (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966), p. 225.
3. Pauline Kael, "The Current Cinema" in *New Yorker*, Oct. 18, 1969, P. 204.

The films of Frederick Wiseman are distributed in the United States by OSTI, 83 Rogers Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142. and in Canada by Marlin Motion Picture Ltd., 47 Lakeshore Rd. E., Port Credit, Ontario.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK, cont'd.

from the cinema of the future, and what organizations, ideas, and techniques will they need in order to get it? Partly in direct response to the works of individual film-makers, and partly in more general yet still concrete ways, we must begin to work out answers for the seventies. We invite participation by both critically and programmatically oriented writers.

GORDON HITCHENS

The Way to Make a Future

A CONVERSATION WITH GLAUBER ROCHA

Rocha was in New York recently for the opening of* Antonio das Mortes *(Grove Press Films) and discussed with Gordon Hitchens the analysis of his film which appeared in FILM QUARTERLY, Winter 1969-70 ("Comparative Anatomy of Folk-Myth Films:* Robin Hood *and* Antonio das Mortes"). *This article argued that, far from being a revolutionary film,* Antonio das Mortes *was in fact "Wagnerian, romantic, and philosophically idealist" and "formulated the antagonism between oppressors and oppressed in a symbolic and static way, rather than in a process-oriented material way." In the following comments, Rocha rebuts this view in a spirit of friendly debate, and explains his viewpoint as he feels it is manifested in the film. His remarks have been translated by Elliott Stein and edited by Gordon Hitchens.

Although *Black God, White Devil* is, of all my feature films, the one which has had the most critical success until now, for me *Terra em Transe*, made in 1966 in Rio de Janeiro, is my most important film, in which I deal with politics and political reality in South America in the most contemporary way. For me, it is my most significant film to date.

I find that the Ernest Callenbach study of *Antonio das Mortes* in *Film Quarterly* is intelligently written but I myself am not in the least in agreement with Lucaszian and Gramscian Marxist philosophy. I find that Callenbach has used the way of thinking found in the work of Lucasz and Gramsci to analyze my film, and I find that this way of thinking by Callenbach is a rather oversimplified way of looking at realities outmoded today, and I find that it is basically idealistic rather than dialectic.

This analysis by Callenbach I find to be academic in method, rather than having to do with contemporary reality—although it's interesting as a theory. Antonio was created—the character in the film of *Antonio das Mortes*—was created for completely different reasons, not for the reasons expressed in Callenbach's article.

Antonio, the figure Antonio, may be symbolic, but he emerges directly out of the previous film, out of *Black God, White Devil.* The film-going public liked the character of Antonio. The character was very popular. The social problems dealt with in the picture had not been done away with, it was still contemporary. I wanted to make another film about the Northeast of Brazil, a contemporary film taking place in the psychology and the reality of the 1960's.

Note *re* Roche's *Black God, White Devil:* In *FQ's* review (Winter 1969-70) it was mistakenly reported that a truncated version was to be distributed in the U.S. New arrangements have been made, with New Yorker Films, and a version prepared by Rocha himself will be available. Rocha also points out that, though Allan Francovich meant to praise him by noting that his political rights had been rescinded by the Brazilian regime because of his films, in fact he was jailed (for two weeks) because of political activity, not film work; and his political rights were never rescinded.

As far as the problems evoked in Callenbach's article—about the role of the army in a revolutionary context, and seeing Antonio as a symbol of a possible turning, a possible shift in the army or the police in different countries, whether it's Brazil or elsewhere, turning against the power whose interests it is protecting, to go over to the side of the people who are being oppressed, in a rather Robin Hood way—it is true that in certain countries, in Peru and Bolivia and Colombia, it has been noted by several students of the current political situation in South America, by writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marques in Colombia. In Peru, it is evident that changes are taking place in the ideology of the military caste, which until recently was the traditional upholder of rightists and reactionaries. But the Peruvian military now takes a more liberal stand, especially on questions of foreign policy. In Bolivia, for instance, it's the very same people who killed Che Guevara who now are taking rather leftist positions, in terms of the political realities of their own countries.

But the conflict in Antonio, the conflict in my film, does not have these direct symbolic overtones in terms of international politics. They are conflicts along the lines of professional and moral obligations that get their possessor into trouble. Antonio, in my film, reverses his own past, he goes against the man he once was, against the class which he has served in the past, to create his own future. His only way to make a future is to cut himself off from the alliances he had in the past. The question of whether or not Antonio has read Marx, has understood Marx or not, is totally gratuitous in the context of my film.

Antonio's change is a profoundly personal and mystical change. It is not abstract. The mysticism in my film is a part of everyday reality, a part of the people in the Northeast of Brazil whose everyday realities, whose everyday way of life, is involved in mysticism. Antonio is a primitive person. He could not have Marxist views on the world because he is a primitive person who has not had such an education. The true revolutionaries in South America are individuals, suffering personalities, who are not involved in theoretical problems. Latin American peasants have not read Marx. The intellectuals, the literate intellectuals in the big cities who have read Marx and who have been aware of all the different currents and ideologies of modern history and world events, they can influence these Latin American peasants, but the provocation to violence, the contact with everyday bitter reality that may eventually produce violent change in South America, this upheaval can come only from individual people who have suffered themselves and who have realized that a need for change is present —not for theoretical reasons but because of personal agony.

At the end of my film, Antonio says to the professor, "I fight for moral reasons!" And these moral reasons are personal, not Marxist. Any attempt to identify Antonio with a Marxist dialectic is doomed to failure because the film was not conceived, on any level, in this context.

The professor in *Antonio das Mortes* is symbolic of the left-wing intellectual from a middle-class background who is capable of liberating himself from the vices of his background. He can liberate himself for political activity, which would free himself from his background. He is the liberal middle-class intellectual with a Marxist intellectual background. Perhaps he serves only as a kind of auxiliary to the Antonios, who are the individuals.

There is a scene in the film when they're in the car and there's some music in the background and the words to the song are "Shake off the dust, rise up and liberate yourself." This, to a certain extent, is the sort of advice that this left-wing intellectual from a middle-class background is taking, or that it is necessary for him to take. He is shaking off his past. He is freeing himself from the dust of his bourgeois way of thinking. Thus he is able to become effective in the struggle for the people. The professor is typical of a person who must pass, must go from irony and skepticism to action, must move over to action. For me, any careful attention paid to *Antonio das Mortes*

Glauber Rocha (left) directs a scene in CABEZAS CORTADAS, *with Francisco Cabal (center) and Pierre Clementi (right). The film was shot in Spain.*

will reveal this, because it is not just in the action, but the message is reinforced by the words of the song.

What do I think of Callenbach's interpretation of *Antonio das Mortes* in which Callenbach says that, according to him, young American radicals who embrace *Antonio* as a revolutionary film are wide of the mark? He, Callenbach, sees in my film despair and gloom and a lack in interest in actual political processes. According to Callenbach, my films are not about politics but about the punishment of symbolic father-figures. Although Callenbach's article is extremely intelligent, his basically Lucacsian point of view, his critical attitude, recall an old-fashioned intellectual way of dealing with reality. He takes as his point of departure a catalogue of philosophical views which then interprets works of art—whether it's a film or a work of literature—and then sticks them into these pigeon-holes.

When Callenbach speaks of the South American reality he is talking about a situation that he doesn't know very well. The reality in my films is close to despair perhaps—but it is true that Latin American reality is not theoretical but tragic. The situation down there is tragic and it can't be dealt with, *it can't* be dealt with, even in a fictional film, in terms of standard Marxian theory. The attitude of Callenbach—interpreting the mode of dealing with father-figures in my films and speaking of them in terms of punishment of symbolic father-figures, is a kind of false Freudianism.

The father-figure in my films is power. South American dictatorship has been traditionally,

not only in Brazil but elsewhere, paternal. And to this extent some of my characters may be considered as father-figures, but not in any Freudian way. These are political paternalists, demagogic figures, who have posed traditionally in political terms as messiahs. And any revenge that my characters take upon them, any punishment of these symbolic father-figures, has not been due to any personal existential revenge on my part against any supposed father-figures. Instead, these are *political* actions, not personal actions. My films are not existential films but social-political films of analysis. These father-figures are conceived only in political terms. This entire Freudian analysis of my films is completely beside the point.

In *Antonio*, there is a strong admixture of traditional religious symbols, used in a current contemporary political context. To understand this, one must realize that all of Latin America is marked by mysticism. Above all in Brazil, there is a very strange mixture of Christianity and African religions. It is a very complex situation. The popular culture, the popular music, the popular theater in Brazil—all are based on an emotional Dionysiac behavior, which comes from this mixture of traditional Christianity, especially Catholic Christianity, and these African religions. This mixture is more emotional than critical. There are faults and qualities, good points and bad points, involved in such a situation, especially that involving the alienation of the people from everyday reality. But the energy—which is found in the people—this energy will eventually resist oppression. It draws its sources from this mysticism, which results from this fusion of religions all over Latin America.

Current-day artists in all the arts, not only in films—by attempting to psychoanalyze the people to find the sources of their energy, and by attempting to channel these sources as artistic means, and to analyze their true characteristics—are faced with this problem. Because the psychic states of these people are influenced by this admixture, which is also called syncretism, in which elements from Africa and from the Christian and western religions are mixed. This relationship, this background, this symbolic background is at the heart of my film. It's the veritable discourse of my film, of *Antonio das Mortes*.

I could not treat my characters in any sort of western traditional Freudian way as is known in Europe and America, because this would be false to their reality. This Afro-Catholic element is at the basis of their behavior. Traditionally, St. George in Brazil is the warrior who struggles against the dragon, who frees the people. He is the veritable saint. He is the saint with whom the people identify. He is the sacred warrior who defends the people from oppression. All over Brazil you find pictures, in the most humble of homes, in the highest dwellings, of St. George struggling against the dragon. It is perhaps no accident, it is a very striking fact noted all over the world, when the current political situation in Brazil is reported, the avant-garde in the political struggle against the governmental oppression in Brazil has been coming from the new Catholic Church, from liberal people in the Catholic Church who are raising their voices against the government, against political oppression, against the tortures. And they have in turn themselves been persecuted because of this. And all these elements are mixed up in my film. These elements are at the heart of my film.

I think that nowadays, in struggling for a theory of cinema that can be of political value, we must be able to conceive of people all over making films in any form, in any shape, in any manner, in 16mm and in 8mm, in every different way, so that true revolutionary cinema must develop in many different ways all over the world, so that political liberation can take place. This diversity in my recent work is a reflection of this diversity in the revolutionary means of cinema.

JAMES ROY MacBEAN

La Hora de los Hornos

When the first explorers from Europe sailed along the southeastern coast of South America, they reported seeing fires by the hundreds blazing out from the dark silhouette of the land. To one particular stretch of coast at the southern tip of what is now Argentina, the Spanish explorers gave the name Tierra del Fuego—the land of fire.

What they saw from their ships were the *hornos,* or cooking fires, of the Indians who inhabited the region; and the sight of those fires blinking on, one by one, in the evening darkness, until they blanketed the horizon like a strange new constellation, struck the imaginations of those first explorers, curious and apprehensive as they undoubtedly were about the inhabitants of this new continent. Throughout the centuries, the expression "la hora de los hornos" (the hour of the cooking fires) has been used by the historians and poets of Latin America, and it has recently become an anti-imperialist rallying cry taken up by Che Guevara; in calling for a socialist revolution to sweep Latin America, he proclaimed "now is 'la hora de los hornos'; let them see nothing but the light of the flames." (Guevara was, of course, an Argentine.)

Under the title *La Hora de los Hornos,* two other Argentines—Fernando Solanas and his coscenarist Ottavio Getino—have put together a remarkable film that is *in, of,* and *for* the revolutionary struggle which they see as imminent and urgently needed in contemporary Argentina. Traveling all over the country, Solanas and Getino made contact with, discussed with, and eventually filmed most of those who are actively involved (clandestinely as well as openly, outside as well as within the "legal" institutions of Argentina) in the struggle for a revolutionary transformation of Argentine society.

At various stages in the film's growth, Solanas and Getino showed some of the footage to the different militant groups with whom they were working. On some occasions, this brought about an invaluable exchange of information and discussion between far-flung and very diverse groups that had never gotten together before—or sometimes had not even known of each other's existence. Thus, the film inserted itself in the revolutionary *praxis,* and the revolutionary *praxis* inserted itself in the film, causing the film-makers to rethink again and again their conception of the film and their conception of the revolution. The making of the film and the making of the revolution became inseparable.

For those of us who are striving to come up with a working definition of revolutionary cinema, *La Hora de los Hornos* (along with Godard's latest films) may be the most fruitful subject we could focus our attention on at this moment. I say this not only because the very existence and structure of *La Hora de los Hornos* are rooted in the day-to-day practice of making the revolution, but also because such a tremendous variety of cinematic styles and materials have gone into this film. Solanas and Getino have, in effect, created a remarkable film-mosaic, in which each individual piece, as they conceived it, "demanded its own particular expression that would transmit the intended ideological sense. That is to say, each sequence, each individual cell has a different style of photography or a different form. There are small cells which are little stories or narratives of their own; there are others which are free documentaries; there are some which are made up entirely of montage and counterpoint; others are absolutely descriptive scenes; others are direct cinema; still others are something like a cinematographic carnival-song. The only way to unite all this material without it all falling apart, without falling into complete chaos,

was to give each individual part its own form. So, from the camerawork to the montage, it was necessary to find that form."*

Whether they succeeded in finding the proper form for each individual cell—or even for each major section—is debatable. But it is already a major step forward that Solanas and Getino had the courage to pose themselves such a difficult problem and had the courage to disregard normal distribution requirements (of length, among other things) in order to give a presentation of the political situation in Argentina that faithfully renders its complexity.

Four hours and twenty minutes long in the original version shown at Pesaro in June, 1968, *La Hora de los Hornos* is divided into three major parts: the first (95 minutes) is titled "Violence and Liberation"; the second, "Act for the Revolution," is subdivided into two segments—a 20-minute "Chronicle of Peronism" on the ten-year reign (1945-1955) of Juan Peron, and a 100-minute sequel on the post-Peron period (1955 to the present), titled "The Resistance"; and, finally, a third section, shorter than the others (only 45 minutes), titled, like the first, "Violence and Liberation."

The first section of the film consists of 13 "Notes on Neocolonialism" in which are presented various aspects (historical, geographical, social, economic, political, cultural, etc.) of Argentina and the way the world looks to an Argentine. Blessed with a relative abundance of natural resources, Argentina, we are reminded, has always attracted a great many immigrants from Europe, and has often been called "the great melting pot" of South America. With indigenous Indians numbering only 60,000, and *mestizos* (people of mixed Spanish and Indian descent) accounting for only 10% of the population, Argentina, more than any other Latin American country, is overwhelmingly composed of white European immigrants. In addition to the Spanish, Argentina also has an enormous population of people of Italian and German descent, as well as significant numbers of immigrants from other European countries and Great Britain.

Moreover, far from it's being the case that political independence from Spain (in 1816), brought any real economic independence to Argentina, on the contrary, this merely threw the country into the waiting arms of the British imperialists, who gobbled up huge chunks of Argentine land (as well as huge chunks of Argentine beef—the supply of which they monopolized); they built, owned, and operated Argentina's entire railway system; and they quickly assumed indirect control of Argentina's national economy.

Finally, add to this already complicated "melting pot" phenomenon the leaden weight of American economic imperialism in the twentieth century, and one can begin to understand why, as the film emphasizes, the ordinary Argentine has little sense of national identity and has a way of looking at the world that is not really his own, but rather is—and always has been—a worldview imposed on him by whichever colonial or neocolonial power happened to have Argentina in its clutches. And for the Argentine masses of workers and peasants, it hasn't really mattered who was calling the shots in Argentina, for the shots—live bullets—have always been aimed at their heads, as one ruling class after another resorted to violence and repression to keep the masses in their place and protect the power and privilege of the exploiting class. In short, as the French say, "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose": whether the ruling class in Argentina was Spanish colonialist, British or American neocolonialist, or simply local bourgeois oligarchy, the experience of the Argentine masses has always been the experience of violence and repression.

The film gives a rundown of the myriad forms in which violence manifests itself in Argentina—the omnipresent police; the brutal repression of strikes; the innumerable military coups; the feudalism of the great *latifundia;* the oligarchies in industry and commerce (5% of Argentina's population "earns" 42% of the national revenue); the neocolonialism that per-

*Quoted from interview with Solanas, *Cahiers du Cinéma,* n.210, March 1969, p. 64.

petuates economic dependence (America owns 50% of Argentina's giant meat-packing industry, England owns 20%) the neoracism that goes hand-in-hand with neocolonialism; the Pentagon-trained and financed "anti-insurrectionist force" which literally occupies certain parts of the country; and, last but not least, the cultural violence carried out systematically by the communications media, controlled by the local bourgeoisie, which imposes the consumer-ideology of the advanced capitalist countries of Europe and North America on the illiterate and impoverished masses of Latin America.

Again and again in the film examples are given of the way in which aesthetic attitudes are geared to mirror the capitalist ideology of the imperialist ruling classes. European styles in painting, in literature, in film, in fashions; British and American styles in popular music and creature comfort: the only models of behavior held up to the Argentine masses are the models offered "for sale" by the neocolonialists. Ideologically, the masses are inculcated with the cultural values that lead them to desire the very things which serve to perpetuate their state of dependence, neocolonization, and exploitation.

But while showing Argentine neocolonialism for what it is, Solanas also presents an alternative—*revolutionary struggle*. And precisely because neocolonialism—unlike direct colonial rule by a single "mother country"—is such an amorphous, many-headed monster, the revolutionary struggle has to be waged *not* against a foreign aggressor, but rather *on class terms* against the Argentine bourgeois ruling class and the capitalist system and ideology* which, regardless of what particular national or ethnic group is in control at a given moment, perpetuate the exploitation and repression of the proletarian masses of Argentina. The struggle, then, is a *class* struggle for a socialist revolution in Argentina.

Intensely lyrical in its presentation, this first section of *La Hora de los Hornos* is a rather flamboyant but impressive exercise in montage, in which the viewer's emotions are manipulated quite sophisticatedly by the rhythmic cutting. Again and again, serving as a counterpoint to the neocolonialist reality in Argentina, short powerful quotations from Frantz Fanon force their way onto the screen as if hammered out, letter by letter, by some invisible typewriter, literally chasing from the screen the images of imperialism and proclaiming the urgent need for revolutionary struggle. Other quotations from various Third World sources (Fidel, Mao, the North Vietnamese, and numerous Latin American revolutionaries) serve to punctuate the various "notes on neocolonialism" and to call for liberation movements to spring up everywhere that imperialism rears its ugly head.

In one sequence, Solanas's slick montage juxtaposes flashy zooms on a long-haired Argentine hippy playing a rock song on his guitar and singing in American slang (an image, which, in this context, demonstrates that even the models of "protest" and "dissent" in Argentina are models provided by the imperialists) with austere, grainy documentary footage (shot by Joris Ivens) depicting the day-to-day struggle, determination, and dignity of the North Vietnamese people, whose response to western imperialism has been the courageous taking-up of arms. And, finally, the revolutionary example closest to home and closest to the hearts of the Latin American people—Castro's Cuba—makes its entry on the screen of history and jolts the viewer with an emotionally stirring and at the same time reflection-provoking shot—held for a five full minutes—of the body of Che Guevara, whose electrifying presence, even when dead, is the clearest and strongest reminder that "the task of the revolutionary is to make the revolution."

The second part of *La Hora de los Hornos* begins with an attempt at confrontation between the film-makers and the audience.

* For an excellent Marxian analysis of the rôle of ideology in the bourgeois capitalist state, see "Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'état," by Louis Althusser, in *La Pensée* n. 151, June 1970, pp. 3-38.

Solanas and Getino are seen opening up a dialogue with the audience at a screening of *La Hora de los Hornos*, and Solanas's voice —booming out from the amplifiers of the theater where we ourselves are sitting—invites us to consider ourselves *not* as spectators of this film-act, but rather as protagonists in an action that must be perpetually renewed. And on the screen, in huge letters, we read these words from Fanon:

EVERY SPECTATOR IS A COWARD OR A TRAITOR.

Then the screen goes dark and there is a moment of silence "in homage to Che Guevara and to all the patriots who have fallen in the struggle for Latin American liberation"; after which the film opens up a new dimension of the social and political reality of Argentina—a "Chronicle of Peronism" which, utilizing for the most part actual documentary footage of the important events in the ten-year reign of the controversial Juan Peron, not only serves to inform the viewer (especially the badly misinformed or uninformed European or North American viewer) about this extremely important epoch of Argentina's recent history, but also invites the viewer (Argentine or foreigner) to join the authors of the film in a critical re-evaluation of the politics of Peron and of the significance of Peronism to politics in Argentina today.

And here (perhaps surprisingly, depending on one's familiarity with Argentine attitudes towards Peron) is where *La Hora de los Hornos* has really stirred up a confrontation with its audience and has detonated an explosive debate on a subject that most Argentines—whether on the right or the left—have invariably preferred to bury in embarrassed silence. It is interesting to note, however, that the violence of the reactions of many Latin American (and some European) viewers to this film, seems to be in an inverse ratio to the degree of audience-manipulation which the film's authors have built into their handling of the material. No one seems to have objected to the first and third sections of the film, which are constructed on a principle of rhythmic montage which is strongly manipulative of the viewer's emotions, playing on them with an ever-increasing rhythmic urgency, which, at the end of the film, culminates in the ecstatic "climax" of the singing of the incendiary song entitled "Violencia y Liberación" (composed by Solanas himself expressly for this film), while in the image we see the flaming torches waved by the impassioned Argentine masses (who, whether they have been "staged" or not in this particular shot—and it seems to me that they have—nevertheless have already been established as "authentic" by their presence in the clearly documentary footage we have seen earlier).

In the presentation of the Peron material, the voice of the commentary seeks only to raise questions, not to answer them, and asks only that the viewer face the reality of a period of Argentine history that the powers-that-be have tried to efface and to discredit. And when Solanas and Getino show the extraordinary footage of the Peron "charisma"—of his, and particularly of his wife Evita's, electric "touch" with the masses—it is not that they use this footage to glorify Peron or to stir up anew the incredible personality cult that surrounded him, but rather it is an effort to get the viewer to face the evidence, as they express it in the film, of "the first appearance on the stage of history of the Argentine masses as *masses!*"

In other words, the film's authors are simply saying "look . . . those are masses, Argentine masses . . . rallied together as a political force. Anyone who wishes to understand the political reality of Argentina—and especially anyone who seeks to formulate a political program in accord with the needs and will of the Argentine proletariat—must necessarily confront the existence of this phenomenon, analyze its constituent parts, and see which, if any, are usable in the political situation in Argentina today."

And the authors find that the phenomenon is much more complex than we have been led to believe by the people who have a vested interest in the reflex-identification of Peronism with Nazism or Fascism. What, in fact, were the policies of Peronism? The film

LA HORA DE LOS HORNOS

delineates them. From its beginning in 1945, the Peronist movement set forth a program aimed at putting an end to Argentina's traditional economic dependence on colonialist and neocolonialist powers. Peron, of all people, was one of the first to speak of "The Third World" and to seek to raise Argentina to a position where it could stand on its own feet. Breaking Argentina loose from the British neocolonialism (which dated from 1823 when Argentina signed the first accords granting management of their national economy to the Baring Brothers British Bank), Peron in ten years nationalized Argentina's banks, introduced foreign currency exchange controls, nationalized all public services, established government direction of the national economy, develeoped Argentina's infant industry, rendered Argentina competitive on the world market, built up Argentina's woefully inadequate educational system, gave women the right to vote, and passed Argentina's first social legislation protecting the rights of workers and peasants. Moreover, as an internal political phenomenon, Peronism rallied the Argentine proletariat, which found in Peronism the expression of their needs and will which they had never been able to find in the various political parties tied to the liberal wing of the bourgeois oligarchy or in the moribund Argentine Communist Party headed by Victor Godovila.

In short, as the authors of the film explain, the ten years of Peronism, whatever their faults, marked the highest point achieved by the Argentine masses in their attempt to bring about a class-based transformation of the country. And if Peronism ultimately failed, it is not because the movement was headed in the wrong direction, but because it simply did not go far enough, and *could not* go far enough, given the movement's own internal contradictions: given, for example, that it was a movement with mass popular appeal, yet entirely directed by the bourgeoisie; and that precisely because the movement had a bourgeois leadership, it failed to identify clearly the class nature of its struggle, and therefore failed to recognize, until it was too late, just how dangerous an enemy was the local bourgeois oligarchy. The latter, seeing itself held in check by Peronism but not directly attacked, simply took the offensive itself, and with the help of the army, toppled the Peron government, which, although it had broad appeal among the masses, had failed to build—in, of, and for the masses—an organization capable of consolidating political power.

The fundamental class nature of the struggle is dramatically revealed in the images of the documentary footage: when the army bombs the presidential palace, it bombs as well the central thoroughfares of Buenos Aires where the proletarian masses are spontaneously demonstrating their support of Peron. Then, once Peron is deposed, the same streets are filled by the jubilant bourgeoisie, dressed up in their Sunday best (and accompanied by a conspicuously large contingent of the clergy), whose first act is to burn books in an attempt to efface all trace of Peronism from Argentine history.

But although Peron himself was forced into European exile, Peronism was by no means forgotten among the Argentine masses—as we see in the "notes and testimonies" on the post-Peron period in the next part of the film, entitled "The Resistance." Forced into clandestine activities and labor union struggles, the members of the Peronist movement—a movement now without a leader—begin to develop their political consciousness and to speak with a voice of their own. One by one, in front of

Solanas's camera, unionists, workers, peasants, students, and intellectuals all testify to the need to continue the struggle for liberation begun by the Peronist movement, and to utilize the positive aspects of Peronism as the groundwork for that ongoing struggle.

In presenting this panorama of the evolution of Peronism from the time of the fall of Peron in September 1955 up to the moment of the making of this film in 1966, Solanas and Getino emphasize the intensification of the struggle in the last few years, which have seen numerous general strikes and massive occupation of factories and the holding of "bosses" as hostages, as well as increased revolutionary terrorism and sabotage (1400 acts of political terrorism and sabotage in 1964 alone). Finally, denouncing strikes that remain at the level of opportunistic self-aggrandizement, and denouncing as well the myths of "legality" and "nonviolence" which the bourgeoisie promulgate as a way of repressing the proletariat on the level of ideology, an activist in the Tucuman uprisings—Andina Lizarraga, the leader of the Peronist Youth Movement of Tucuman—sums up the new revolutionary consciousness of the Argentine masses: in spite of their spontaneity and their spirit of opposition, if the Argentine masses do not systematically take up the arm of *violence* in their struggle for liberation, the initiative will inevitably remain on the side of the enemy. What is needed is positive action leading to the seizing of political power by armed force—and this action must be organized and led by the avant-garde of the proletariat.

On this powerful note, the middle and longest section of *La Hora de los Hornos* comes to a close, inviting the audience to pause for a few minutes and to discuss the issues which have just been presented. Then the lights dim once again and the third and shortest section of the film begins. Functioning as a finale in the musical sense—but taking care to emphasize that there is and can be no end to this film-act until and unless it is the making of the revolution itself—the third section of the film presents two long interviews and the reading of a number of letters which Solanas and Getino received in the course of gathering material for the film. (One of the letters, proclaiming that "the only path . . . is armed struggle," comes from Camillo Torres, the Colombian priest who shed his collar to join the Colombian *guerilleros,* and was subsequently killed by government troops.)

The first of the interviews is with a marvelously optimistic and determined octogenarian, who, stepping out of his shanty-town cabin, begins by excusing himself for his poor education and then recounts all of the horrors of repression he has witnessed in his lifetime—repression first by the British, then by the Argentine oligarchy. He recounts the killings in Patagonia, the massacres of peasants, the brutal repression of strikes; but, spirit undaunted, he clenches his fist and affirms his conviction that the hour of victory for a socialist liberation of Argentina is drawing ever closer, and that the fight for that victory must be carried on against all odds.

The second interview, quite a bit longer than the first, is with Peronist labor organizer Julio Troxler, a soft-spoken and intelligent man in his late forties, who, revisiting the spot where he was captured by the Argentine military shortly after the fall of Peron, tells us of the tortures enacted on him, one after another, by some of Argentina's top-ranking military figures, and of the mass execution from which he miraculously escaped. Still pursued by the military, forced to move clandestinely from place to place, Troxler implacably vows that the struggle shall go on until the socialist liberation of Argentina is won.

Solanas and Getino then remind us again that this film-act is open-ended, that it remains to be completed by the revolutionary praxis of every one of us, that new material will be added to the film as new chapters of the revolutionary liberation of Argentina make their entry into history. For the time being, projection comes to a stop with the dithyrambic song, "Violencia y Liberación," as flaming torches fill the screen.

Confronted with a film of such scope, such

thoroughness, such courage, and such conviction, the viewer finds it difficult to hazard an appraisal of its aesthetic merits—especially when the film's aesthetic and political merits are so inextricably intertwined. Suffice it to say that if Solanas and Getino, in seeking the proper form for each individual cell of the film, intended each of the major divisions (and major subdivisions) to be capable of standing alone, then they did not fully succeed, for it is doubtful if any of the film's basic parts could be considered wholly satisfactory on their own. (And, in fact, when for one reason or another only the first section has been shown, critics in Europe have acknowledged that in spite of its insights this section is a bit too flashy to be considered anything more than a brilliant but inconclusive *tour de force.*) But this is not a major flaw, for *La Hora de los Hornos* is not made to be seen in separate pieces. In fact, the greatest strength of the film is precisely in the juxtaposition of so many different styles and so many different types of material. Placed side by side, they give us an idea and a feeling of the complexity of the situation in contemporary Argentina. And this is an excellent starting-point—both for making the revolution and for making revolutionary cinema.

Fernando Solanas: An Interview

Can you tell us something about the conditions under which you made your film: time, material means, financial means, personnel, etc.?

Since our goal was to create a cinema not conditioned by the system, a free cinema, a decolonized cinema, a class cinema, a militant cinema involved ideologically and politically in and for the revolution, we had to provide for ourselves the economic resources, the means of production that would permit us to make a film just as freely as a writer producing an ideological essay. With the major difference that a writer, when he writes, doesn't have to lay out much money, whereas the film-maker is profoundly tied to the economic conditions of his work.

Consequently, one of the greatest problems we had to overcome was that of the production of the film, and, at the same time, that of making a revolutionary film in a non-revolutionary country whose system is neo-colonialist, capitalist, and bourgeois. Our case is actually quite rare in the history of cinema. It's perhaps the first time, in fact, that one actually attempts to create a revolutionary cinema *with* and *about* the forces of liberation—and in a country that has been neocolonialized. A subversive film made clandestinely.

In these conditions, we had to limit ourselves to whatever economic means we could muster up ourselves. In fact, we made the film little by little as money came in from the other film work each of us was doing. We worked on making commercials—right in the heart of the commercial-industrial system. That work enabled us to obtain the money to make our revolutionary film—and also to gain valuable technical experience. So the solution we found was to make a few commercials in order to be able to make *another cinema.*

Nonetheless, our possibilities remained fairly weak, as a break occurred pretty quickly, a break with all the notions of capitalist production we had been subservient to up till then. To create a free cinema presupposes that one bring about a revolution in production itself: in other words, that one make "a cinema of film-makers." Even the notion of film-maker as "author" isn't enough, because it gets bogged down in

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the capitalist system, where a "director" is one who gives orders to others, a "boss."

So we were obliged to learn for ourselves all the different aspects of film production, to learn how to handle all the difficulties involved in making a film. I'm convinced, as a result of this work, that the possibility of making a new cinema completely outside the system depends on whether or not film-makers can transform themselves from "directors" into a sort of *total film-maker.*

And no one can become a *total film-maker* without being a film technician, without being capable of handling the production and handling as well any of the technical problems involved in production. I don't really assert this as an absolute principle, no; it depends on circumstances. In our case, there were three or four of us who were able to handle things. Octavio Getino and I had to be able to do all sorts of things, and fast, as we were obliged to work on two films—two different types of cinema—during the same day. And 24 hours often wasn't enough.

But these limitations, on the other hand, offered some very great advantages: a wonderful experience of decolonization and of total liberation at every level. So much so that we named our production unit "Cine-Liberación." not so much in the sense of a political liberation, but first of all in the sense of a total liberation of the film-maker, of the film-"author" who writes with his camera without being conditioned by the economic and technical artistic integrity just as much as a writer does confronting a sheet of paper or a painter confronting his canvas.

Of course it's true that in the European cinema, the majority of film-makers are considered as *authors,* since the cinema, in Europe, occupies a considerable place in the domain of culture. But when they are making their film, they are *conditioned* by the industrial exploitation of cinema in the capitalist world, and their narrative and thematic possibilities remain confined within the limits of the system. I refrain from saying "ideological limits" because I suppose that the exercise of "bourgeois democratic freedoms" is real; but in this case it's the majority of the people who constitute the limitation. It's the middle classes who consume that type of ideology that is petit-bourgeois or bourgeois, definitely right-wing. And in capitalist countries, it's consuming which makes the rules.

Therefore, even if the film-maker isn't conditioned by overt political censorship, he's conditioned by the consuming habits of the majority, of the middle classes who consume sex, violence, and art. And this produces a cinema that is alienated and alienating, a cinema of the needs and insufficiencies of man, one forged in a society where the individual is king, a cinema which develops and perpetuates the neuroses of—and in—an alienated society, neocapitalist society. So the man they call an "author" is actually conditioned at every stage of his work.

What we want is to create an independent cinema: we call it *"The Third Cinema."* Why? It's neither a commercial cinema nor a "cinéma d'auteur" with all sorts of cultural intentions, conditioned by the consumer society and its political and economic structures. It's a cinema that is created within all the limitations and all the possibilities inherent in a setting loose of the revolutionary forces. We thus have the opportunity of creating with our own resources a nonconditioned cinema. We have to carve out a new path, as there hasn't been much done in this area, but the newness of this experience is one of its great strengths.

Then, too, improvements in the technology of cinema have helped to demystify that technology. Today there are some extraordinary cameras, very light-weight. And a certain type of cinema really costs very little. The experiment we threw ourselves into was really that of a cinema made with absolutely nothing. With just the little bit of money we could make day to day, we were able to make *La Hora de los Hornos*—utilizing almost exclusively a 16mm Bolex without sync-sound. After the shooting, we had to spend a lot of time post-synching the interviews and commentaries. But today there are 16mm cameras with auto-

matic diaphragms, lightmeters, sync sound; and it's child's play to do some filming. This is so important if a man is going to be able to think in terms of cinema, to think with a camera. It's absolutely necessary to demystify the difficulties of production.

[. . .]

Instead of making a cinema of fiction, which is very exciting for the personal satisfaction of the author, who filters the external world through his subjectivity, his fantasies, we tried to make a *cinema of ideological essay* which is based in the concrete reality.

Do you think there can exist such a thing as revolutionary cinema of fiction?

I would answer: *yes,* obviously. Because the problem of the opposition *document/fiction* is a function of what we are trying to *express,* of the objectives we are seeking in the film.

The cinema of Eisenstein, for example, is a cinema of fiction, it re-creates; it's not documentary material shot at the time of the events depicted. *Strike* and *Potemkin* are not documentaries.

In our film, we have re-created some of the situations. A lot of the sequences which seem to be documentary are in fact re-created, *mises en scènes;* for it's just not possible to be on the spot all the time, at the right time, to capture the violence of a situation. Unless it happens that one is there more or less by chance, at a confrontation, when the repression occurs.

So to answer your question about a revolutionary cinema of fiction: *yes,* if we use this term to designate a film-document that re-creates reality. *No,* if this term means a cinema of fictional characters and thus forms a tie with old literary forms such as the novel or short-story. The danger inherent in this type of cinema—and the reason it must be avoided—is demonstrated by the fact that by far the majority of European "films d'auteurs" have failed to develop any revolutionary ideology.

In reality, the problem is not to know whether one will construct a total fiction or not, but rather to know just *what* we want to express and what we can express by the means of total fiction. For the majority of themes we have inherited are themes that come from the European cinema and are related to the crisis of the bourgeoisie, to the decadence of the bourgeoisie, to the consumer-society, to the impossibility of communication, in short to the psychological problems of the middle classes of the highly developed countries. One doesn't find in the European cinema the problem of revolutionary masses or the challenging of the system. It is impossible to find films that are not made with the eminently characteristic language and technique of bourgeois culture.

For example, if I wanted to make a film here in France, one that would be a sort of reportage and at the same time a fiction film on what happened here in May 1968, a film about the reasons why the movement failed to sustain itself, I would use as a starting point the situation of a young worker or student who took part in the movement, and, of course, starting with one character a whole world can be revealed. But the main difficulty with this sort of fiction cinema, or plot-cinema, is that it always (or nearly always) ends up with a subject matter which is not revolution, but rather the decadence of the dominant classes, and it has its foundations in the techniques, the culture, the language, and the forms of the bourgeoisie. The European "cinéma d'auteur," even if it proclaims itself revolutionary or sympathetic to the progressive forces of liberation —which may, of course, be true at the level of individual sincerity—nevertheless falls back upon the language and the technique of the dominant classes. This borrowing from the expressive tradition of the enemy is demonstrated by the subtlety of the way language is used.

It could happen that Europe might develop a cinema that would be capable of criticizing the forms of expression of the enemy, a cinema that would take over for its own uses the resources of expression of the progressive classes. But the efforts in this direction are always short-circuited by the presence of the "aesthetic"; because it's at this level that irrationality persists and that the continuation of notions of beauty, art, and purity crop up once again;

and it's also here that mystification occurs—that falsifying of the real world which is so useful to the dominant classes of capitalist society in maintaining their dominant position. Walk or drive along one of the beautiful boulevards of Paris, look at the store-windows, the elegance of the displays, read any of the fashion magazines, take a look at the way people in the street are dressed, all of this will help you to understand the aesthetic forms by which a fully developed capitalist society imposes its domination upon us. We are not only subjected to the machine-gun fire of advertising, but also to that of the *beautiful*, of the *admirable*, of the *eternal*, of the *sublime*, of the *good*—all of which tends to bring us back to a position of *nonviolence*, of *non-conflict*.

The aesthetics of the bourgeoisie which is reflected in the department stores and the magazines, appears as well throughout the whole western cinema. In other words, the "auteur cinema" is perfectly capable of satisfying the needs and wishes of the consumer-society. Therefore, the author, even if subjectively he is a revolutionary, continues to create works which are objectively bourgeois.

His efforts are short-circuited. He wants to criticize the bourgeoisie but he remains essentially bourgeois in his aesthetic position, in his very conception of things. If a left-wing "author" criticizes the bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie still is able to recognize itself in the author, and it exclaims: "Oh it's so beautiful! This Italian film is so beautiful!" Ultimately, everything reduces to the following: Mister Such-and-Such has ideas which are the opposite of my own, but Mister Such-and-Such expresses himself so beautifully with my language! In the end, we get along quite well together, because Mister Such-and-Such, while he turns the ideas around, doesn't change his means of expression, nor his subjectivity, nor his irrationality. He continues to express himself in a style and a world-view that belong to the bourgeois consumer-society. He can easily be co-opted.

In this type of cinema one often finds a sensualism that is downright alienating. To put it briefly, if there doesn't exist a revolutionary fiction cinema, it's not because such a thing is fundamentally impossible, but because the cinema remains tied to capitalist exploitation. So one turns out films which are "beautiful," films which will please the public. This is the way things are because this is what satisfies the tastes and the ideologies inculcated by the dominant classes. It's a vicious circle. But where Latin America is concerned, I think one could make a revolutionary cinema using any of the different genres, whether related to the novel, the short story, or the ideological essay; but what is essential is that the guy who's going to make this film must ask himself the following questions before he starts out to work on the film: why am I making this film, for whom and with whom, from what point of view? And he must do this, not in the name of some sacrosanct universality of culture, but in relation to the ideological interests of a particular class of society—and of which class?

What is important, when a cinema becomes ideologically radicalized and begins to concern itself with revolutionary subject matter, is that it must have a revolutionary content which fits in with its historical mission. The fact that today, in French cinema, one talks about nothing but love—even if one goes quite far—this illustrates the profoundly reactionary attitude that exists. For all during this time, one is not talking about precisely what one should be talking about—the revolutionary movement. This amounts to a way of fooling the spectator and of censoring oneself.

If the author of a film treats some of the great contemporary problems from a revolutionary point of view, that is, from the viewpoint of the revolutionary masses, then the content and the ideology of his film are just, are correct. He makes a film which transmits an experience in terms of class. And culture is a class phenomenon.

The problem of form is therefore inseparable from that of content. Make a film on a strike (or, if you absolutely insist, on the impossibility of loving one another in a capitalist society), logically, if you don't destroy the old notions of beauty on which all bourgeois art rests,

your film ends up as another case of alienated expression, completely short-circuited, tamed like a wild animal kept in a cage. The cage, the chain around your neck—it's nothing other than "beautiful expression."

But take Cuban films—Cuba is a revolutionary country, after all!—they're not revolutionary, with hardly an exception. They remain prisoners of the Hollywood or Moscow forms. While Fidel Castro has succeeded in liberating the country from the Yankees and from the neo-Stalinist influence, Cuban cinema continues to express itself in the forms of bourgeois culture. What do you think of this?

One isn't able to change one's form of expression or one's ideology the way one changes his shirt. The taking of political power in a revolutionary process is a very important qualitative leap forward. But since various structures of production continue to co-exist, the changes can't all be made in 24 hours. In other terms, the process which leads to a socialist or communist society, which process of transformation must start with the taking of political power, doesn't by any means complete itself within 24 hours. And it's all the more difficult to change sentiments and habits of expression of a man who has lived his whole life during a period of colonialism. The fact that a whole people can move from illiteracy to literacy is already a giant step forward. But the transformation of man into a new man is more complex and is going to take longer. And it necessitates a much more profound struggle than the one which transforms the economic production of a society. The problem is that all the subjectivity, all the vital experience of a man who grew up in a capitalist context is alienated. Consequently, his psychology and his language are alienated as well. He hasn't yet made his real entrance into History.

The revolutionary process in the colonialized or neocolonialized countries of the Third World is difficult, because the problem is for them to make their entrance into History. The revolution itself—the taking of political power—doesn't make much change in the population, in its habits, in its customs, in its psychology. But the taking of power by revolution gives these people a revolutionary political consciousness. At the level of knowledge, what changes first is *the knowledge of the external world,* and it's through this that *one recognizes who one's enemies are* and the necessity of the revolution. But one's private life and one's subjectivity are much harder to change.

Let's understand this carefully: the only way to change man and his culture, is to get on with the task of changing the distribution of political power. But in those countries where the revolution has already come on the scene, there still exist a considerable number of social groups which hold onto a religious sort of mentality they've inherited from tradition. The rôle of the revolutionary avant-garde is to penetrate into the mass-culture, but many of those masses are difficult to awaken. If a liberated country maintains itself on a revolutionary path, then it's the generations who have been educated in this new world who are going to find the new language, the new forms of expression that are appropriate for the new man.

In *La Hora de los Hornos,* I see that having been formed under neocolonialism, I can't reach a stage of really deep ideological understanding unless I succeed in transforming myself; if not I run the risk of operating with models I learned under the oppressors. The most difficult thing is surely to attain a liberated personal expression. And that's one thing that will never be obtained by legislative decree. Not even with the good will of Fidel or of any other revolutionary in the world, people are not going to transform themselves when given the order. Even once the revolution will have taken power, there will be a time when different forms of culture will co-exist. In the cinema, as in Cuba, the cultural influences persist, up until the time when new forms, a new culture, are developed—and this is especially true of a country which never had a strong national culture of its own. Because in the neocolonialized countries of the Third World, not even the bourgeois culture is national; it was imported by the oppressor. So much so that the Argentine cinema, for example, is impregnated

with the baroque world view of a foreign culture. At the same time that they colonized us, the countries of Europe brought us their ideologies. Our bourgeoisie is educated in the big cities of the Continent and returns to Latin America with models of art which are then presented to us as both indigenous and universal, but which in fact are European, bourgeois, and capitalist. When a painter in France or a French film-maker immerse themselves in their own personal creative intuition, they express themselves in French, their art is French. It may be bourgeois, or it may not be, but that's not the issue for the moment. But in a colonialized country with a colonialized culture, the artist has to make a double effort: to try to get beyond alienated expression (alienated by the fact that the culture itself is alien), and try to discover new bases of departure that will be indigenous and national.

But then, too, just like the European film-maker who wants to radically oppose the system, he has to rid himself of the bourgeois language, of bourgeois aesthetic attitudes. In fact, what it really boils down to is placing oneself in the realm of the *"ugly"* in opposition to the realm of the "beautiful." In opposition to an aesthetics, one has got to set up an *anti-aesthetics:* I don't necessarily mean of ugliness, but rather of that which, according to bourgeois notions of aesthetics, could not be considered beautiful. To be an artist means, in this case, to proceed from the anti-aesthetics of the forms one utilizes and to find the corresponding new language, new expression.

What revolutionary film-makers in the Third World (and elsewhere) have to do, is to rid themselves of all Culture, of all Art. I see too many Mona Lisas, too many museums, too many temples. Culture is so powerful that it is now being distributed in every product of the consumer society. It doesn't make much difference if we have political disagreements with the enemy, when all along we get on so well together when it comes to aesthetics and culture. And this way the enemy co-opts everything we are able to say. That's why we, from Argentina, trying to create a new cinema, a cinema of poetry and polemical essay, call for *works in progress,* for unfinished works of art, for imperfect works of art. It's no longer the time for artists to create perfectly finished and polished works of art. We are at a moment in History where one no longer can spend years and years sculpting a statue or building a column or painting a delicate portrait. We are constantly assailed by all the information media that are controlled by the system. We are literally victims of aggression.

Instead of finished works of art, we are seeking a *praxis.* Our courage consists in confronting the unknown, in rethinking all our aesthetic and ideological hypotheses. We are thrown back on our heels and forced to create, to invent. Because whatever is not radically different from the system doesn't give the system any trouble; it's nothing but the same language speaking basically the same words. Therefore, our courage has got to consist in creating something entirely different, a new aesthetics. And even if a film-maker's attempts don't reach a pinnacle of success, they still lay the foundations for his successors to follow. In a way, success may have to be renounced. Because at the heart of each one of us, due to our individualism, there undoubtedly exists the desire to create an individual masterpiece: one wants nothing less than to be another Leonardo or Dante; but if we spend our time trying to achieve this, we are betraying our primary, communal program of action. While we spend our time trying to leave our personal imprint on the world, there's a merciless battle taking place, in which there are deaths at every instant. Under these conditions, working alone as an artist means that much time lost in the struggle against the forces that oppress us. This kind of complicity by abstention is a serious political error.

So it's high time we started building cinematographic cathedrals, anonymous works of art like the gothic cathedrals whose architects and sculptors left no signatures behind hem. We have to renounce ambition, personal glory,

prestige, status, beauty, youthful innocence. We have to accept the limitations imposed on us by the historical process of the liberation of of man. We should think in terms of the limitations imposed on a Vietnamese man—menaced by napalm, with little time and little space in which to live. And nothing shall bring us back in line with the aesthetics of the past!

[Translated by James Roy MacBean]

Reviews

WOMEN IN LOVE

Director: Ken Russell. Script: Larry Kramer, based on the novel by D. H. Lawrence. Photography: Billy Williams. United Artists.

Over the past ten or so years, there's begun to be a change in the caliber of the people writing for the English-speaking screen. Movies have become respectable, academic even, and the people who work on them aren't the breezy illiterates who used to be in charge. Educated—and more often, semi-educated—people are now the controlling and the creative forces in filmmaking, and they've brought a fair number of changes along with them. There was a time when all that anybody who cared about films worried about when a great book was turned into a movie was whether the movie-makers would have any idea as to what the book in question was about. For a long time, mangled adaptations were one of the mainstays of the film market; they never seemed to go out of style. Books were denatured right and left, their themes twisted up so badly that they sometimes came out as symmetrical opposites of the authors' original views. Hollywood's literary community wasn't exactly the Bloomsbury Group, and neither, for that matter, was the coterie of scriptwriters that used to supervise many of the British-made instant classics. The roster of subverted literary masterpieces is a mockingly familiar one; it should hardly require another look. Everyone knows how, thirty years ago, *Wuthering Heights* was turned into a story about the evils of class discrimination, without even the meagerest hint of a love that was too hot and too powerful to be housed by the universe. And how *The Great Gatsby,* a decade later, became an indictment of high living—nobody involved with it seeming at all aware of the idea of a country that had forgotten its roots. And how, in the fifties, it was the same thing, as the themes of writers from Tolstoy to Faulkner were passed by almost reflexively and replaced by ignorant platitudes, some of them unconsciously funny.

But now the question that comes to mind when a great book is taken to the screen isn't so much "Will they understand it?" as it is "Will they be able to do it?" It's a reasonably sure bet today that the sorts of people who turn important works of fiction into movies will be familiar with their sources. Usually, they've read all the famous criticism and boned up on the author's life, and right before their film goes into production, they can usually be found telling reporters from *Life* magazine how much they love the original, that when they first read it in college they went wild over it, that it's the story of their lives, the key to the twentieth century, and the greatest novel ever written. Very often, the upshot of it all is an awkwardly cryptic movie like *Dr. Zhivago* or *Ulysses.* Or. one like *Women in Love.*

The people who made *Women in Love* know what they want to do, but they don't know how to do it—and what they want to do might be impossible. Larry Kramer, who wrote the movie's screenplay, and Ken Russell, who directed, are obviously conscious of all the big themes in the D. H. Lawrence novel. They know enough, for example, not to try to turn the book's four main characters into long-faced twenties equivalents of Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice. The usual gibberish about Lawrence as the mahomet of the sexual revo-

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lution is ignored, and all the pivotal issues that the book draws its power from are made at least some note of, somewhere. Kramer and Russell very definitely haven't ignored Lawrence scholarship: their movie wants to be about the same things that Lawrence's most articulate partisans say the book is about. Mental sex is deplored, the end of the world is speculated over, the purity of a thoroughly balanced love-partnership is longed for, and there's a constant, if very murky, current of wills clashing and desire emerging. Contact between Ursula and Birkin is presented as something healthy and full of promise; contact between Gudrun and Gerald is seen as being deadly. The ideas are there, all right, but in the form that they come in, they might as well not be, because Kramer's adaptation isn't very much more than a scrawny bird's-eye view of the book's main events, an entry from *Masterplots of the World's Great Literature* in screenplay form. Everything about it is partial and insignificant, a string of slivers from the original scenes that don't make very much sense when they're stacked up back to back. The characters are always lecturing one another, pouring out their responses in neat digest form. Some of the debates are staged well—a few of them have the erratic, rumbling quality that's so much a part of Lawrence's way of doing things—but they seem strangely pointless. The actors talk on about their aims and their quests and their obsessions, but they're never seen trying to work them out or make peace with them. All that there seems to be time for are their succinct little spiels about what they want, so there's never any indication of how their drives influence them in their everyday lives.

As a result, the characters seem like a very crazy group of people. Seen in the wrong context, the abstractions that hound them mean nothing; and the wrong context is any set-up that prevents these men and women from acting out their fixations, from showing why they feel about themselves and about one another as they do. The novel gives them innumerable outlets. It's a mass of long, subtly detailed confrontations, each one somehow related to one of the themes, and every time one of the characters rubs up against another, something else about him is cleared up. Taken individually, the self-analyses are confounding, but as the surrounding facts pile up, the convoluted comments that the book's people are always making about themselves become progressively more intelligible. The characters perform, and the themes explain themselves. This cumulative method of illustration is banished from Kramer's screenplay. His scenes are all breathy fragments, with none of the participants being permitted enough time at any one point to simply relate to one another. They either have to be saying something enormous, or they can't be allowed to say anything at all, and that makes for a lot of very empty enormity. Birkin might talk about wanting a perfect relationship with Ursula, but if he's never shown pursuing that bond, never shown having a decent-sized normal conversation with her, there's not much of a chance that the nature and the importance of what he wants is going to get through. To have any impact, Lawrence's themes have to be incorporated into the characters' behavior. If the themes are just blurted out and then forgotten, deserted for some idea that's explored with equal haziness, the characters have to become opaque, and that's what happens here. None of them seems to have any sustained goals or beliefs. They just float.

The question of *why* there's no room for even one solid scene in the whole of the movie's two and a half hours isn't very rough to answer. To begin with, Kramer and Russell spend way too much time on dance sequences and on musicales, on things that look nice and sound nice. The scenes involved are all in the book, but they're hardly central to it, and they're among the first things that should have been done away with. A good ten minutes must be lavished on the Russian ballet improvised at Breadleby—and the scene isn't even done right. There's nothing erotic about it, and not even anything baffling—it's just played very broadly and for laughs. There's also a lot of time spent on the dance at the Swiss resort *and* on Gudrun's dance with the deformed little wart

Loerke *and* on her burst of interpretive dancing at Gerald's lawn party. When critical dialogue scenes are left in scarecrow shape, with hardly enough said in them to make five coherent sentences in a row, it's not good policy to devote time to the fancy stuff on the story's periphery. But, in a way, that's what Kramer and Russell do all through the movie. Rather than spend time developing a few segments of the novel and working them up into something unified, they try to cover a little bit of everything. About the only long sequence in the book they do without entirely is the outing to London; otherwise, there's nothing important from the original that's not touched on (except for the striking chapter that has Birkin hurling stones at the reflection of the moon in a lake). Many of the scenes they include are necessary to the conception of the novel, but they wouldn't be necessary to a sane screen adaptation; to make an intelligently compressed version of the story, they could very easily dispense with some of the book's most brilliant scenes. The fame of things like Gudrun's cock-teasing act before the cattle and of the whole Crich party scene just isn't enough reason for keeping them in. There's also no need for the scene when Gerald's mother sets her bloodthirsty watch-dogs on a troup of beggars or for the nude wrestling contest between the two heroes. None of these things helps make the movie's meaning any more apparent, as it's almost impossible to tell how they hook up with the themes. They just waste precious time, and because most of them are done as incompletely as the movie's other, more essential scenes, they only add to the over-all scantiness and confusion.

The Kramer-Russell adaptation is a self-defeating thing. It's so fragmented and so skimpy that it works against any continuous effect. It doesn't condense the novel, it castrates it. By the end of the film, it's almost impossible to keep track of what's supposed to be going on. Conceivably, force could be gotten out of a movie of Lawrence's material, but what was shown would have to be very carefully picked out, since in order for the film to come up with a definite tone and have some organic meaning, deletions would be unavoidable. Exposure to these characters isn't a question of how many different situations they can be shown in or how much ground they can travel. It's a question of how much they show, and the best way to get them to show themselves would be to present them in a *limited* number of situations—situations that could be presented fully, done in depth. Maybe *Women in Love* can't be made into a movie at all, but if it can, then the only plausible way to do it, the only way to say something concrete about the characters involved, would be through simplification and a scaling down in scope.

Of course, Kramer and Russell had one other alternative: they could have made a four-hour movie. Actually, that wouldn't have been a bad idea (though they could never have gotten the financial backing for it). It would certainly have allowed them to flesh out their scenes and improve the continuity. Then again, maybe it wouldn't have been such a good idea. Four hours of the cast they've gotten together would be extremely tough going. Their five leads don't make an especially exciting ensemble, partly because of what they have to work with, partly because of their own natural defects. As always, Alan Bates is limber and energetic, and he's more knotty and complex as Birkin than he would probably be expected to be, but, for a man whose main objective in being alive is to connect with other people, he seems awfully cold and remote. He's also too persistently jolly, not anguished enough. As Gudrun, Glenda Jackson does many crafty things, yet for some reason that's hard to pin down, she's just not sexy enough. She's the only person in the movie who looks the way a character in the book is described as looking, but she has no allure. Lawrence describes Gudrun as having small breasts and a Dutch-boy haircut and a square face, but he also makes her sound appealingly mysterious. Glenda Jackson has all those features, but she's not appealingly mysterious; she calls up images of Jeanne Moreau in *The Bride Wore Black*, a sulky, burnt-out curmudgeon. Added to that, she's too obviously crazy, too

WOMEN IN LOVE: *Oliver Reed and Glenda Jackson*

eager to destroy herself and take everyone else with her. On the outside, Gudrun is meant to be a nice middle-class girl, a shabby-genteel Bohemian; it's only on the inside that she's frenetic and destructive. Jennie Linden plays Ursula against drastic odds. She's almost totally miscast, and considering that, she does an uncommonly fine job, the most sensitive work in the movie. Temperamentally, she seems almost uncontrollably perky and combative, whereas Ursula is supposed to be, has to be, sedate and unflappable. The character, as Lawrence wrote her, is something of an ox, the sort who takes a long time to catch on, and there's always something flukey about Jennie Linden's bounciness in the role. Still, she does have the most powerful scene in the movie—the bit in the woods when Ursula blows up at Birkin. She plays that argument with vehement conviction, and she can't be blamed if it seems as though, at any minute, Bates is going to smile down on her and tell her she's cute when she's mad. She's evidently a fluffy little thing, a starlet with a brain, and that's part of the package; it can't be helped, disconsonant as it might be with the original portrait of Ursula. Eleanor Bron makes an ass of Hermione, extinguishing the character's intellect with a hideously patronizing interpretation. When that unworldly, hollowed-out voice comes straggling out of her, it's very depressing, a sign of gross insensitivity on somebody's part. There's something gallant about Hermione, for all her foolishness, also something mighty, and it's not right to rob her of that gallantry and that might. Eleanor Bron has the perfect build for the part, thick-waisted and husky, and under different circumstances, she might have the perfect disposition for it, too.

Having Oliver Reed play Gerald is one of the movie's few open acts of rebellion against the novel, a deliberate breakaway. Reed is obviously not a Nordic sun-god type, and he never even begins to suggest the intransigence or the pearly arrogance of the classic public-school-bred British pukka-sahib industrialist. He's more the kind for a locker-room than for a club parlor. His massive, eggplant-shaped face is intriguing, though, and there's one moment—a split second when he lets out a wild shriek of triumph—in which he makes it plain that, twisted as the character's impulses might be, he still has more blood-life in him than all the other living things in the movie put together. Reed's performance has its challenging side, but he more than anyone typifies what's so wrong about all the acting in the film. He underplays everything, whispering his words and breaking them up with pauses, marshalling his feelings into an unnaturally low key. Probably, it's a tactic meant to stop the character's actions from becoming overwrought, and if that's its purpose, it certainly does what it sets out to do. Unfortunately, the understating doesn't just tone down the character's emotions; it knocks them out altogether. Reed is the worst offender, but to some extent, all the actors go in for this willed quiet. They seem to be afraid of playing strong feelings, and, in some of the scenes when they should be at their most tortured, they seem curiously gelid. Their performances are so unflinchingly manipulated and so carefully held in check, and it's not right for Lawrence: his women in love, and their lovers, have to be alive with passion—they can't be played with stiff upper lips. The rasping and brow-knitting and hesitating that the actors go through in this movie makes them seem horribly repressed and gloomy. They are not, as Birkin would probably be the first to point out, acting "spontaneously on their impulses." Russell's performers

are repeatedly guilty of the thing that Lawrence hated more than anything else: "intellectualizing," faking. They aren't dynamic enough or free enough to suggest what the novel is mostly about—people in search of their own emotions and of those of the ones they love.

This isn't a movie to get angry or bitter about. It's not cheap, and it's not vicious, and it's not stupid, and it's too weak and too slight to infringe on the novel's territory and do any severe damage to its reputation. It's a seriously misguided film, but there's nothing offensive about it. The people who made it couldn't be called lazy or crude. They don't come off as being highly skilled, that's all. Visually, however, it's a film that can get pretty annoying—painfully so, sometimes. One of Oliver Reed's blazers looks straight out of an old Mayfair operetta, but other than that, the costumes are tasteful and handsome, many of them copied directly from the descriptions of the clothes in the book. It's the rest of the film's visual elements that belong under the heading of a fashion illustrator's idea of profound beauty, and although they're not glaringly unpleasant, they're still aggravating, giving the movie the appearance of a highbrow Midlands *My Fair Lady*. Hugeness and glamor crop up all over. Lakes become huge stretches of white, and the forests of the coal-mining country look like tropical gardens. The Roddice estate is rococo to the point of resembling a palace out of the Arabian Nights; the snow scenes of the movie's final passages could have been peeled off an expensive Christmas card. A great deal of the "splendor" of the scenery is synthetic, calculated to draw sighs and gasps. Sometimes, it does that, but there are plenty of times when it doesn't. The pale quality of the lighting and the self-consciously muted tone of most of the color are similarly affected. In fact, the style of all the photography is affected—there's no other word for it. The camera moves only very rarely, and for long periods of time, one "classic," static shot is piled on top of another, with an eye toward starkly beautiful effects. Every so often, there's a mad extravagance of some kind—the first successful coupling of Ursula and Birkin, shot sideways and in saccharine pastels; Gerald, on horseback, racing a train. Yet most of the cinematography is determinedly chaste-looking. The final outcome, instead of being majestic and pure, is faltering and strained. Much of the fascination of good austere photography is in its refusal to call attention to itself, but the photography for *Women in Love* seems too forced to be self-effacing. Every shot has obviously been scheduled and planned, and the feeling that each of the images has been sweated out and programmed never stops haunting the movie. Russell comes on as a hard-working, earnest director, but his shooting style has a long way to go before he can start attempting classic simplicity. He's like Gerald. He has enough energy to do things right, but as it stands now, he lacks "grace and finesse."

—Elliott Sirkin

IN THE YEAR OF THE PIG

A film by Emile de Antonio. Pathe-Contemporary.

The trouble with films designed to move men's minds is that they usually don't. The tendency of propaganda films is toward reenforcement of existing beliefs. But films really can lead to changes in attitudes, particularly in those people who have no strong opinions regarding the subject at hand. If I were constructing a theory of documentary films I would postulate three levels of approach to the minds of the audience.

First there is the "right on" film. This is the kind of film in response to which the audience, as each point is made, chants "right on." Obviously the litany implies that the audience is in thorough agreement with the film and is merely having its existing beliefs reinforced—perhaps unnecessarily. Such a film is primarily intended to stir a convinced audience to action of some kind.

Second is the committed film for the uncommitted. Hopefully the audience responds initially in a neutral fashion and ends by chanting "right on."

Third is the film which seeks to change the views of the opposition. This film usually strives

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Third is the film which seeks to change the views of the opposition. This film usually strives

for at least a superficial air of fairness, balance, and dispassion. The audience responds initially with suspicion and ends, hopefully, in a neutral reaction or a positive reaction.

In the Year of the Pig shares some of the attributes of the first but lies mostly in my second category. The makers of the film do not pretend to neutrality, nor do they seem to be talking to an "in" group of dedicated militants.

(Parenthetically, I should state my own biases which will undoubtedly color my review to some extent. I have believed for many years that the United States involvement in Indochina is exaggeratedly immoral, that the Saigon government is excessively corrupt, and that the entire fabric of our society is warped past the point where it can be recognized as a true democracy by this idiotic war/nonwar. But as a person and a film-maker I loathe the "right on" kind of film. It fails to move me.)

One of the astonishing (and tragic) things about *In the Year of the Pig* is that to a person of my age it is a reminder while to a very large part of our citizenry it will be a revelation. The events covered in the film began some 16 years ago. Today's 25-year-old would have been 9 years old at the time. And a 19-year-old draft eligible would have been—that's right—3 years old. When I was 20 years old I was shocked by the outbreak of World War II. But today's youth have grown up in a country whose normal posture is in some degree warlike and continually war-*involved.*

In order to properly evaluate *Year of the Pig* one should be aware of when and why it was made. Clearly it was intended to influence the nomination of the Democratic candidate for president in the 1968 convention. But suddenly an event took place which dried up financial support. President Johnson made his withdrawal speech—making the film unnecessary in the view of some of the backers and potential backers. Clearly, then, the film was originally intended for a definite political purpose, clearly intended to influence both attitudes and behavior. And in order to be effective it must of necessity have been designed to appeal to a larger audience than the "right on" people.

Year of the Pig is a compilation film. Much of the problem in making such a film is finding existing footage to suit the producer's purpose. This means searching through mile after mile of footage from various sources. It means constantly making value judgments from a writer-editor's point of view. It also means risking considerable amounts of money on footage that may wind up on the cutting-room floor.

Most of the footage used came from ABC Television newsreel archives, French Army film archives, East German Television, the Russian re-enactment of the battle of Dien Bien Phu, and from National Liberation Front archives. The producers themselves shot a number of interviews with foreign policy experts, experts on Indochina, foreign correspondents from various newspapers, and other interested parties.

Year of the Pig is essentially a review of the United States involvement in Vietnam from the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 to the events in early 1968. It is a long, carefully documented record which piles fact upon fact until its case against the war is overwhelmingly convincing. (To me, anyway.) The facts are interspersed with opinions from various experts who make the case even stronger.

That the film is a political attack on the Johnson administration is evidenced by the fact that it opens with the following statements by Hubert Humphrey and Lyndon B. Johnson. Humphrey says: "I would remind you that scripture tells us, 'Blessed are the peace *makers.*' I wanna underscore the word makers. . . . And it takes a lot of doing, to make peace. It takes a good deal of hard work—building like a mighty cathedral, block by block, stone by stone." Next we see Johnson as he says: "And I sometimes wonder why we Americans enjoy punishing ourselves so much—with our own criticism. This is a pretty good land. I'm not saying you never had it so good—but that *is* a fact, isn't it?"

These two ironies set the political tone of the film and become a part of the point of view from which the film must be judged.

The crashing arrogance of Humphrey's biblical quotation becomes apparent when one re-

members that he is quoting from the Sermon on the Mount which contains somewhere, I believe, the line which begins, "Blessed are the meek."

The religious theme stated by Humphrey is picked up later by Colonel George S. Patton III who describes how touched he was by a memorial service for four men in his outfit killed in action. He describes the services in solemn tones—"We sang a couple of hymns"—and then at the close of his description his face breaks into a beautiful grin and he says happily of the hymn singers, "They're a bloody good bunch of killers."

In addition to the stock footage of statements by Johnson, Humphrey, Dulles, Westmoreland, LeMay, et al. De Antonio has filmed interviews with many key intellectual and political leaders of the past two decades. Perhaps his most significant informant is Paul Mus, Professor of Buddhism at Yale. Professor Mus is also the man who was chief negotiator for the French in 1945—the period of French return to Indochina after World War II.

Professor Mus appears to understand the Vietnamese modes of thought somewhat better than do our elected and appointed officials. Of Ho Chi Minh he says, "He has the touch and feel of the peasantry." Mus also describes Ho as "a Marxist economist who knows the importance of the basic production" and as a "Confucian scholar." Mus points out that in 1945 Ho Chi Minh had no army. He remarks, "Everytime Ho Chi Minh has trusted us we betrayed him." This sets the stage for the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu.

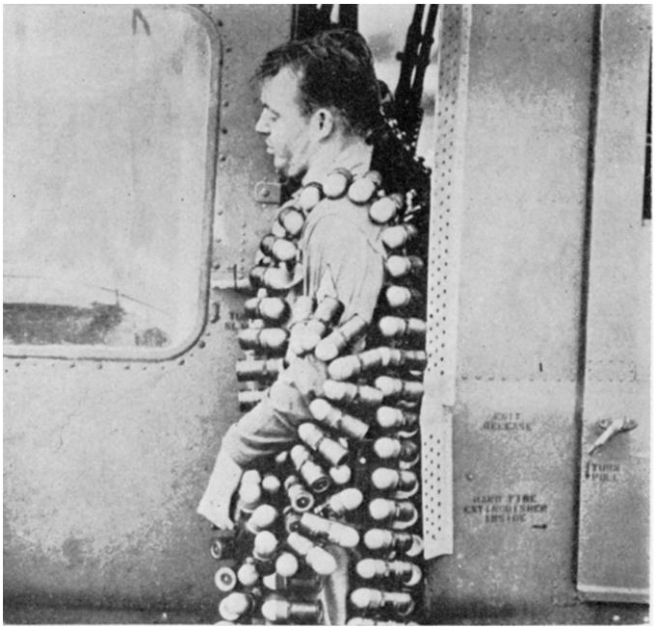
Over the filmed re-enactment of the battle of Dien Bien Phu we hear the voice of John Foster Dulles saying, "I do not expect there is going to be a communist victory in Indochina."

The rest of the film is a shattering review of history in which the events leading to the present tragic situation are taken up point by point —and in the process the American position is portrayed as a very weak one from every point of view. This painstaking review of history should be of particular value for the young—those who feel the immorality of our position but do not quite realize the extremely shaky ground upon which it rests.

The fact is brought out that the original division of French Indochina into North and South Vietnam was intended to be temporary and to be in effect only until a general election. The statement of the Geneva accord rationale for the division is preceded by the phrases, "Pending the general election which will bring about the unification of Vietnam . . ." Then the division is explained as providing two regrouping zones for each side's forces. The agreement also contained prohibitions against introduction of new military forces and the establishment of new military bases.

Then the film carefully documents the unpopularity, the corruption, and the fascist tendencies of the South Vietnamese government. It shows the American support of the Diem regime when the South Vietnamese in Saigon revolted after the elections. The dragon lady Madame Nu is seen as she says, "About the question of a rubber stamp parliament—But what's wrong to rubber stamp the laws we approve?" And she comments on the self-immolation of the Buddhist monk, Quan Duk—"But those monks who burn themselves burned themselves because they were incited to do it." Later in the film Colonel Ky says: "I don't think it's wise to allow people to use free press. You know, it creates more confusion, more divisions among the people."

Interwoven with this portrait of the South Vietnamese government is a portrait of Ho Chi Minh and his popularity in both parts of the divided country. Senator Thurston Morton (Rep., Kentucky) in a filmed interview says: "We've got to recognize that Ho Chi Minh, communist or what not, is considered by the people of Vietnam, and I'm speaking now of millions in South Vietnam, as the George Washington of his country." Senator Wayne Morse says: "Our intelligence brought in the report that if the elections called for in the Geneva accords of July 1954 were held, Ho Chi Minh would be elected president in South Vietnam by 80 per cent of the vote." And Paul Mus says: "Don't forget that he is a Marxist and don't



expect him to turn traitor to the ideals of his life."

The film takes us through the whole dreary mess, the escalation of the war by Johnson on the trumped-up Tonkin Gulf incident, the defoliation of trees and destruction of food, the dehumanization of American troops, and the continual American failure to understand those reasons for the strong enemy resistance which lie above and beyond the obvious political reasons.

Throughout the film there is no editorializing whatsoever by the makers. They let the record (combined with their own interview material) speak for itself. This kind of documentary technique is what lifts the film out of the "right on" category and places it in the category of a film which can affect the attitudes of the uncommited.

Although the film is obviously made from a strongly held point of view (or bias?) it seems to me totally convincing on the question of the immorality of the American position. All of the political rhetoric of the defenders and apologists for American policy is clearly shown to be founded on false premises. The rhetoric of the far-right military such as Curtis LeMay and Mark Clark is vicious and inhuman: "I wouldn't trade one dead American for fifty dead Chinamen." (—General Mark Clark) "We must be willing to continue our bombing until we have destroyed every work of man in North Vietnam if that is what it takes to win this war." (—General Curtis Le May)

I wish all of our political and military leaders would look at this film and carefully consider the point of view it presents. But, unfortunately, as I said at the beginning of this review, the trouble with films designed to move the minds of men is that they usually don't.

—Clyde B. Smith

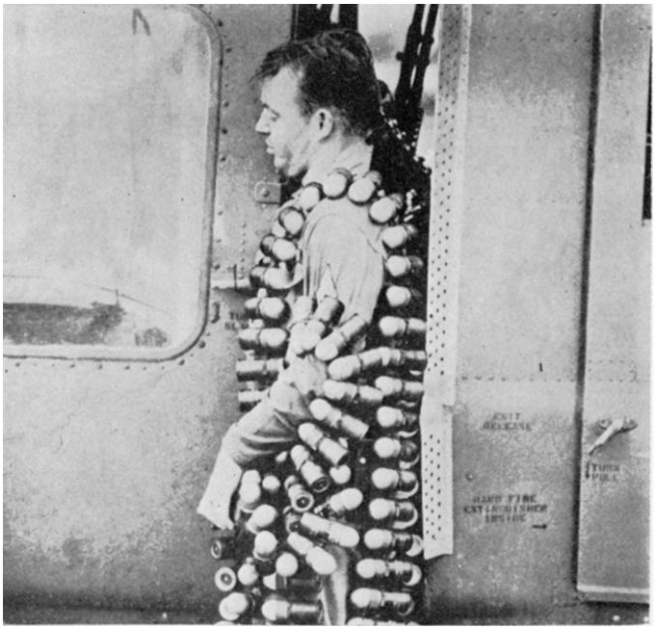
ADALEN '31

Director: Bo Widerberg. Script: Widerberg. Photography; Jörgen Persson. Paramount.

"Civilization is hooped together, brought
Under a rule, under the semblance of peace
By manifold illusion . . ."—W. B. Yeats

For a political film, *Adalen '31* is surprisingly sweet and gentle, just the sort to be clobbered by serious critics in an age of political militancy. The heart of the criticism of Widerberg's film is a variation of what I call the Mary McCarthy fallacy—in remembrance of her classic put-down of Visconti's beautiful but flawed *La Terra Trema:* You come out feeling not "How terrible!" but "How artistic." The implied assumption is that somehow to be aware of the artfulness of a film excludes being moved by the terribleness of its events. But in *La Terra Trema,* the events are so terrible that to be moving they must be artfully distanced—in part, as in *Adalen '31,* by carefully and beautifully framed shots of a sharply etched reality. Yet one might still find the material so painful that one barricades one's feelings—with suitable rationalizations—and ceases to respond at all.

Like Visconti, Widerberg is in what might be called the Shakespearian tradition of the artist as magician, whose power lies in transmuting the pain and terror of experience into the pleasure and beauty of art; an art, which, though it seeks naturalness, does so within stylized con-



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ventions. Contrary to this, to simplify a bit, is the more recent tradition of aesthetic puritanism which insists that true art must strip itself of illusions and palliatives—that the truth is discovered in harshness. Godard, for example, has moved towards this view—though being Godard, he may later contradict himself—which in summary form becomes: down with art, up with the revolution. Not surprisingly, Widerberg does not like Godard, and though he at one time criticized Bergman's films for their religious and personal obsessions, he has more in common with him than a fashionable antithesis would suggest. Though Widerberg is ostensibly, contrary to Bergman, a politically committed artist, like Bergman he does not deal with contemporary reality directly. Whereas Bergman sets his recent movies in a nowhere place, Widerberg sets his films back in time. Both Bergman and Widerberg are literary film-makers, very much more interested in the human material they deal with (and its realization in the acting) than in the sheer excitement of the medium; and though it is said that Widerberg is the more cinematic of the two, it is merely that, like Bergman, he has a superb pictorial sense which he is obsessed with exploring in terms of color and light in a way that Bergman is not. And though Widerberg gives us more of a sense of the Swedish milieu, he does so through the soft focus of time, using the specific and the concrete more to evoke nostalgia and fable than to give us real history. The difference between them can be seen in terms of literary models: Bergman is more influenced by the theater; Widerberg by the short story, the sketch, the fable. Though he uses actors well, Widerberg is weak at dramatic development. Not unlike the contemporary short-story writer, Widerberg is at his best in capturing the fragmentary, the momentary—and holding it: the freeze-frame at the end of *Elvira Madigan* is not a fashionable mannerism but almost the essence of his art.

What is interesting about a film like *Adalen '31* is Widerberg's blending of the simple artfulness of a fable with the seeming artlessness of *cinéma-vérité,* creating what might be called a *cinéma-vérité* fable. It is a form which has affinities with a film like Jean Renoir's *The River,* for within the framework of political events, Widerberg is dealing with universal, mythic themes: boys discovering sex, experiencing the death of a parent, and growing up. Like Renoir, Widerberg is a humanist, and the use of universal themes reflects his politics. Perhaps there is no better symbol of this than the attractive, sensuous nude, pubic mound revealed, that Kjell's friend Nisse leaves behind, when he is called to play in the band on the protest march on which he is killed. The young woman is left hypnotized—suspended in our imagination—a Giorgionesque emblem of the natural beauty of this world—and those of its possibilities still unrealized.

On one level, the artfulness of *Adalen '31* is merely the extension of natural beauty into film; on another, the pictorial quality functions something like blank verse, elevating the experience and the events in the film, and imparting a lyric tone, more bittersweet than tragic, and it is this sweeter tone which, I think, bothered some critics. Others, trying to be sympathetic, thought that the loveliness of the visuals was meant ironically. Basically, however, the loveliness is simply part of the sadness, part of the elegy for the deaths of the four workers and a girl who were shot at the Adalen protest demonstration in 1931. To say, as some critics have done, that the loveliness undermines the tragedy in the film is like saying that *Romeo and Juliet* should not be played by attractive youngsters because their youth and good looks would undermine the play's serious, tragic dimension. In *Adalen '31* the visual idealization of people and things, by heightening the value of what is lost, heightens the sense of loss. The artfulness of the film does not keep the audience from being moved, it is part of the reason it is moved.

Although *Adalen '31* does have some tragic elements, it is nevertheless not a tragedy. The protagonist of the film is not the father who is killed at the protest demonstration, but his son

Kjell, who comes near to manhood with his father's death. And what is moving in *Adalen '31* is not the tragic events in themselves, but the events as experienced by an adolescent boy growing up, experience embracing humor and romance as well as tragedy. The film closes, not with death or mourning, but an end-to-mourning scene and the wheels turning again in Adalen. Though it is true that tragedies often have a framework of hope and reconciliation and elements of humor, these things have a more dominant place in the film than they usually do in tragedy. And though the romance has parallels, like *Elvira Madigan,* with *Romeo and Juliet*— celebrating as it does an adolescent passion, doomed by social discord—it does not end with the lovers' doom, but with their losing of each other and the abortion of their child—their separation, not their deaths. The mood of the film is mixed, as moods often are in adolescence, when one most sharply experiences both a buoyant sense of the possibilities of this world and a frustrating, impatient sense of their waste. Sometimes in the tranquil presence of nature, and in the visual loveliness of this film, these mixed moods may, on a higher level, resolve themselves into a beautiful sadness.

Kjell, the adolescent hero of the film, though a worker's son, is really Prince Charming; but he does not get the Princess, as the fable is one of social conflict. His being Prince Charming, however, is a necessary part of the fable, not only as a fable, but for one of its moral points—its protest against social inequality. Which is a protest couched in traditional Western democratic terms; it is not a mindless plea for equality, nor an anarchic desire for leveling, but a plea for opportunity, that intelligence and ability not be wasted. Thus it is important both that in terms of class, Kjell is a worker's son and that, in terms of nature, he is Prince Charming.

The scene in which Anna's mother teaches Kjell about the impressionists is a good example of how *cinéma-vérité* style favors a more spontaneous kind of acting. The teaching scene is one of many such short scenes, seemingly leisurely in themselves, in which nothing very dramatic happens, but which, because they shift back and forth to various characters, give a kaleidoscopic sense of flow to the film, and make it seem that the camera picked up particular events almost by chance. We feel that we are merely dropping in on Anna's mother as she rather indifferently teaches Kjell about the impressionists by showing him various reproductions. Thus when Kjell's face lights up with the excitement of discovery, it comes as a surprise. The low-key documentary style has acted as a foil for Kjell's pleasure in learning, and Peter Schildt's responsiveness ("performance" seems the wrong word) is genuine in a way one is not used to from Hollywood films. But then as Anna's mother encourages Kjell's struggle to get the right pronunciation of the full, formal name, Pierre Auguste Renoir, the scene becomes more than charming in itself, and prepares us for Kjell's feelings of betrayal later on when his and Anna's baby is aborted.

This teaching scene also contains other details which serve as preparation for what happens later. For example, one of the reproductions which Anna's mother shows Kjell is Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party,* one of those groupings of men relaxing together with young women, which, though complex and careful in composition, seem remarkably uncomposed and casual. Anna's mother comments that Renoir is showing people eating, not because they are hungry, but for the pleasure of eating—an idea which has little to do with the picture, and which is rather callous as the workers in Adalen are on strike and not eating very well. Appropriately, it is not Anna's mother but Anna who gives Kjell some loaves of bread, which become part of a rare feast of Kjell's family and friends. In an obvious homage to Auguste Renoir, Widerberg shows the two families of workers, relaxed and having fun—and eating not for the pleasure of eating but because they are hungry.

But most importantly, the teaching scene prepares us for the emotional climax of the film, which is *not* the shooting scene in which four workers and a girl are killed, but Kjell's reac-

tion scene. Though violence may be exciting or stunning in itself, what is most dramatically affecting is not violence, but people's reactions, their anger and grief. What is in question is the central mood of the film: that is, that *Adalen '31* is not meant to be apocalyptically stunning like *Easy Rider,* or an exciting release of aggressive energy like *The Wild Bunch.* Unlike these films, *Adalen '31* is not about polarity or implacable division; rather its moral center is a mythic vision of unity, and thus the film is meant to be poignant: in such grief begins reconciliation. In the climactic scene, Kjell, distraught after his father's death, goes to the manager's house to look for Anna, and not finding her, he angrily breaks a window and cuts his hand. Anna's father comes out, and, in a gesture of reconciliation, binds up Kjell's wound—which echoes Kjell's father's binding up of the wound of a scab. He apologetically explains to Kjell that he had not known about Anna's mother's arrangements for the abortion (of Kjell's and Anna's baby). Still distraught, Kjell can only utter, in his bitterness and grief, the name he had learned with difficulty to pronounce from Anna's mother: Pierre Auguste Renoir . . . Pierre Auguste Renoir . . .

In a *Christian Science Monitor* interview, Widerberg has stated that in his film, contrary to the critics, Renoir is only a name. Which is too much of a disclaimer, as both Jean and Auguste Renoir, I think, inform his film, in terms of a Mediterranean humanism and warmth among other things. (Like Auguste Renoir, Widerberg seems to think that snow is a malady of nature.) But in some sense, Widerberg is right: he went on in the interview to stress that in *Adalen '31* he had moved away from the impressionist soft-focus of *Elvira Madigan.* (Some careless critics had thought the two films were look alikes.) Even, for example, in the shots of an interior of the manager's house, with sunlight fuzzing through a white curtain (on the right) the rest of the frame (on the left) has the spatial clarity and depth of a Dutch genre rather than an impressionist painting. But then Auguste Renoir, in his *Luncheon of the Boating Party,* had himself moved away from the blurred edge of impressionism towards sharper outlines. Widerberg has also avoided some of the more picturesque effects of *Elvira Madigan:* the repeated silhouetting of the lovers against the background, and the bifurcation of shots—the lovers in clear focus and the landscape in soft—to demonstrate how romantic passion can blur one's vision of the world. I prefer the more natural visuals of *Adalen '31,* with their greater clarity of detail, subtlety of color range, and over-all illumination. Widerberg has told how he avoided the use of direct sunlight, waiting till the sun was just out of sight, when it gives the sky a monochromatic light, to let the colors come through. Except in the indoor scenes, Widerberg did not use artificial light, although when used with restraint, this also can be effective: for example, as Kjell tenderly scolds his mother to end her mourning, there is on his face a kind of golden light, softening and idealizing. Yet Jorgen Persson's photography is relatively straightforward, simpler than say, Lucien Ballard's stunning photography in *The Wild Bunch,* with which *Adalen '31* shares a similar feeling for nature and natural light. Both are among the very few recent films I would see again just for the loveliness of their visuals. And both have been criticized for having made their violence too lovely. But in each film, it is made so in terms of a sustained style, and I think it would have been false and simplistic to have made everything in each film lovely—except the violence.

Widerberg's *cinéma-vérité* style is at its best in brief scenes with two people on camera. The awkwardness associated with this style—in the hand-held camera work and in the use of non-actors—is helpful in depicting the hesitations and embarrassments of first love with relaxed good humor, as in the scene in which for the first time Kjell and Anna are naked with each other: Anna shyly looks down with interest as Kjell gets a hard-on (out of camera range); and Kjell, embarrassed, rather pompously tries to explain how it is the blood rushing to the penis which causes this. Marie de Geer, who plays Anna, is a non-actor who is used well for her

presence. She is not really pretty, but with her big eyes and broad, open face, she is the embodiment of generous, feminine innocence. When the humor in the romantic scenes falters, she makes up for it by a sense of affection, sometimes through the use of a simple gesture, as in the scene in which she tells Kjell of her symptoms (of pregnancy): when he naively replies that it must be due to their differences in blood types, she smiles at his lack of understanding and moves forward to hug him. The charm of this material is rather fragile, and it needs the lightness of a low-key *cinéma-vérité* style to make it work at all.

On the whole, the *cinéma-vérité* style works less successfully with the strike scenes than with the romantic ones, which have both real feeling and awkwardness, whereas the strike scenes at times have only awkwardness. For example, a beefy worker who addresses a large, open-air crowd with rhetorical questions seems merely too self-consciously halting, and the crowd itself is just too uniform and dead. What works better are those scenes with someone to identify with—Kjell's father or Kjell and his father. My favorite of these group scenes is built up out of a simple, satifying action (as, similarly, some of the best non-group scenes are also built up out of a simple, satisfying action, or gesture, or response). Kjell and his father between them begin the flashing of mirror-fragments into the eyes of the soldiers guarding the scabs, an action taken up by others in the crowd until all the soldiers are forced to turn away. The victory is nonviolent, moral rather than material, and the effect is only temporary. The soldiers remain guarding the scabs. But the simple action becomes a nonviolent token of the solidarity of the workers, which, after the shooting in Adalen, will lead to the peaceful downfall of the Conservative Government. Though its sense of awkwardness is appropriate, another strike scene in which a militant young tough confronts Kjell's father is not wholly satisfying—because in the end we do not know any more about the issues involved than is suggested by the inconclusiveness of the argument. Whereas in an old-fashioned Hollywood film, the men would have seemed too articulate, Widerberg with his *cinéma-vérité*-like use of actors, presents them as stiff and clumsy, as arguing inarticulately without any thought-out positions. As the argument progresses, we become aware of how naive the father is, believing as he does that the workers need only have patience and the union leaders in Stockholm will somehow settle things. The father, expertly played by Roland Hedlund, is shown as a good man caught up in a crisis he does not understand. But if the *cinéma-vérité* style is good at making us share and understand a naive vision of the world, it doesn't get us much beyond it.

The biggest group scene, the shooting of the four workers and a girl, is poorly staged, and indicates, I think, that the blend of *cinéma-vérité* and fable does not always work well. Widerberg is here too intent on fable, on showing the workers as noble (they continue to march stoically and calmly, despite the spray of machine gun fire) and innocent (they are not shown doing anything to provoke the soldiers to fire). The official government report, which may well have been a whitewash, claimed that the killings were accidental, the soldiers having fired into the ground, with the ricocheting bullets killing the five people. Whether true or not, the report is more convincing than Widerberg's staging in which machine guns rattle against unarmed workers keeping to their marching route. A more straightforward and less fable-like handling might have worked better and been more convincing in terms of confrontations in Western democratic societies. It is possible, for example, that some of the workers provoked the soldiers (and vice versa) while others didn't—the provocation or lack of it having little to do with whom was killed. It is even conceivable that some of the soldiers did fire into the ground. Instead of giving us the simple contrivances of fable, Widerberg might have given us the more complex horror of haphazardness. To be sure, it is a question of individual sensibility at which point one accepts or re-

jects the simplifications of fable. It should be pointed out, however, that the problem with the staging may be due to Widerberg's inexperience with groups of this size. According to the *New York Times*, Widerberg used 3,000 actors, most of them non-professionals, making it the biggest group scene ever shot in Swedish movies, the record being 380 in a movie by Stiller. With more experience, Widerberg might have brought off a blend of *cinéma-vérité* and fable in this shooting scene, but it would have to have been staged differently than this one is.

Some "contrivances" or "assumptions" are necessary for dramatic structure (because the word for cinematic narrative structure has been borrowed from the theater does not mean it can be easily dispensed with), and since the dramatic structure in a *cinéma-vérité* style is stripped down and laid bare, one is likely to question the "credibility" of actions which one might not in an old-fashioned, more elaborately structured movie. Thus in *Medium Cool* the Verna Bloom character's search for her lost boy against the backdrop of the Chicago convention riots was easily spotted as a contrivance by the critics. So it is and so what? Like most people, I went to the film to see the Chicago convention footage, and I was frankly glad that it was presented with so casual a pretext, that Wexler hadn't, as in a mechanically well-made, old-fashioned Hollywood message picture, made the footage some sort of climax of awareness in the Verna Bloom character. As Pauline Kael has pointed out, the movies have gone all to pieces, though sometimes, as she would agree, it's for the better as well as the worse. The trouble with *Medium Cool* is not so much that it is weak in structure, but that it still has too much of the old Hollywood moralizing, the drive to punch you in the stomach with a moral point, confusing heavy-handedness with portending truth (hence the poor choice of the lead in Robert Forster, who looks like a tough, latter-day John Garfield). *Easy Rider* avoids the overall effect of heavy-handedness with the dramatic slack of its scenic bike rides, as does *Adalen '31* with its own pastoral scenery. *Adalen '31* stands in marked contrast to *Medium Cool* in its use of *cinéma-vérité* style, which is implicit perhaps in that one is pastoral, the other, urban; and that one is about the past, the other, the present. At any rate, by contrast *Adalen '31* can be scorned for being "pretty" and "sweet" and "sensitive" (another bad word, to Godard and others, though I wish there were more "sensitivity" in films), and yet, given the contrivances necessary in a feature film, it is the sweeter style which works better, which redeems the contrivances with feeling, whereas the tough, "realistic" *cinéma-vérité* style becomes at times a clichéd hollowness.

Widerberg's best "contrivances" are made out of everyday actions, as in the end-to-mourning scene in which the washing of windows takes on ritual, symbolic overtones of cleansing and renewal. It works because of the very low-key simplicity of the style, and because of the nonverbal, marvelously "sensitive" acting of Kerstin Tidelius as the mother—who moves within a brief, single scene from a deep, silent look of bereavement to a cheerfulness composed out of pain. The problem with contrivances is not their credibility or "probability," but arises first out of an awareness of the director's intention (often because of the familiarity of the contrivance), and crucially out of a lack of sympathy with that intention, in whole or part. It is a quesion of feeling manipulated by the director, of being forced at least part way in a direction one does not want to go. Given the character of Anna's mother, for example, it is not at all incredible or improbable that she would want Anna to have an abortion or that Anna would comply, yet I *felt* the abortion as a contrivance. To me, it was too readily clear that Widerberg wanted the abortion as a symbol of the gap between the managerial and working classes. Yet I could not wholly share Widerberg's indignation because Kjell and Anna seemed too young to me to get married. Nonetheless, I would insist that "contrivances" can be redeemed, sometimes despite their familiarity, if they support performances, which,

in the looser *cinéma-vérité* style, can seem much more real and affecting.

Another problem in the *cinéma-vérité* style is that facts, actions, details are presented often without interpretation or even adequate background (*Warrendale,* for example, eschews commentary, which makes it more direct, but, I think, also misleading). Stanley Kauffmann complained, for example, that on the protest march out of nowhere comes a red banner and the singing of the Internationale. (The demonstration was, in fact, led by Communists.) Widerberg uses these details for their authenticity—some like the banner are out of old photographs—but as they are not crucial for his fable, he leaves them unexplained. The style thus elevates particulars for their own sake, which is not out of keeping with the "artfulness" of the film. One accepts the details for their "presence," and in so doing we are meant to share the workers' greater involvement with the physical facts of existence. Still, many facts lie in a needlessly shadowy area: one wonders, for example, whether or not the father is a steward—which would help to explain why he is so often set apart from the other workers (beginning with the teasing scene in which he helps a near-alcoholic worker whom the other workers are baiting). At any rate, in Widerberg's fable the emphasis is simply on the father's kindness—not any possible material or social motivation. Lionel Trilling has pointed out that in primitive tales the hero is often tested for his goodness of heart, and, similarly, the events in the film test the goodness of heart of Kjell, his father, and, to a lesser degree, Anna's father. When a young tough tries to provoke Kjell to seek revenge for his father's death, he reasserts his faith in the workers getting ahead, not by violence, but by education. Kjell's father opposes the scabs, but, at some risk, binds up a scab's wound; the manager opposes the workers' demands, but also the shooting of the workers on a protest march. We accept these idealized characters from this vantage point in history—violence remembered in tranquility—not as historically typical portraits. This is, in fact, the special *originality* of the movie; what other film has given us both a sense of social conflict and a sense of national unity in whose terms social injustices may hopefully be resolved? We accept Widerberg's reading back into time of a social conciliation that has (largely) worked in Sweden; by giving us not history or political argument but social conflict as fable, he has made it moving.—ROBERT CHAPPETTA

Short Notices

The Ballad of Crowfoot is still a very rare phenomenon: a film created by a minority person, in this case a Micmac Indian, Willie Dunn (with assistance from the NFB). Dunn directed the film and wrote and performed the ballad which holds it together—a vaguely Dylan-ish lament, surveying the broken treaties, speculating wryly whether there will be "a better tomorrow." The film begins with animated still photographs of early Indian scenes; with the shot of a huge buffalo, it effectively goes into moving images; at the end, it returns again to a wrenchingly sad still shot of an Indian face. Indians, settlers, railroads, soldiers: the long, treacherous story is effectively and compactly conveyed. And the Indian eyes look quietly, damningly, proudly at the cameras, which have so far always been a white man's toy.—E.C.

Getting Straight reminds us that an unfortunate aspect of campus revolutions is the rash of vile Hollywood films about them. Richard Rush's *Getting Straight* pretends to tell it like it is, but Rush and scriptwriter Robert Kaufman, with visions of heftier box-office receipts, cautiously try to placate everyone, with the disregard for authenticity and the flair for commercialism that characterizes a Hollywood treatment of anything. It's about the radicalization of Harry (Elliot Gould), the lazy liberal. He is hip enough to appeal to the young audience and, being sour on protesting, he is somewhat acceptable to the silent majority. This might be thought a pro-student movie since, at the end,

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Harry abandons the system and becomes a rock-throwing radical. But the film-makers needle the Movement in a score of ways. Clichés and stereotypes are everywhere. The issues of the campus revolution are mentioned, rather than probed. Instead, Harry's romance with a leggy co-ed named Jan (Candice Bergen) is the center of the film. This vexed affair is unattractive, but apparently essential to ticket sales. Rush and Kaufman seem to be ignorant of student behavior—they don't even know that student activists are not chic and well-coiffed. The students are given awful lines about identity crises and how they have been wronged by parents, profs, and cops. The girls are baby-faced bunnies who show no signs of the savvy needed to mastermind demonstrations and confront hostile cops. In fact, the main function of the uprisings seems to be as backdrops for romance. The notion is broached that students riot not because of frustration about pig-headed politicians and college administrators, but because riots are sexually stimulating. Dissheveled and slightly bloody after a battle with police, Jan stumbled into Harry's bed. They even have a lover's quarrel while she is parading in a picket line. The final scene is unmatched for absurdity. They stand in the midst of a sizzling riot, unruffled by flying missiles and panicked people, busily patching up their differences. The film-makers fuzz up the political and social aspects of the Movement, and harp on its alleged role as a refuge for wounded lovers, the loveless, and lovers of the quick lay. Ultimately, they rely totally on the charm of Elliott Gould as Harry, an ex-activist who, after several years absence, returns to graduate school in quest of a teaching credential. But Harry shuns activism in favor of studying for his orals and making love. Harry is brash, bookish, callous, and sneaky. He is admirable because of his dedication to teaching; he is a bastard because he treats his well-meaning lover like a whore and a domestic. "You're not a woman," he bellows, "you're just a guy with a hole in the middle!" Though Harry rejects the position of the protestors, he consistently attacks the boobs on the administration. He begins his shift towards the demonstrators when he is denied his credential for cheating on an exam. His line, "It's not what you do, it's who you are," signals us that the change is underway. In a final attempt to join the system, he goes through with his orals. But he has a tantrum on a table top and wrecks the exam room when a slimy scholar tries to coax him into saying that F. Scott Fitzgerald was a homosexual. Conveniently, a riot is in progress, so Harry runs out and pitches in. The film-makers snidely suggest that student protestors are so shallow and loosely committed they can ditch their beliefs in a flash. A spaced-out draft dodger resorts to an amusing array of tricks to stay out, but all of them fail. Flipping, he joins the Marines and immediately becomes a crew-cut patriot. But when he gets a medical discharge, he reverts to his old spaced-out self as if nothing had happened. Ignoring minority groups would have been preferable to Rush's skeletal, condescending treatment of them. He presents a lone black student, arms him with rhetoric ("We've been stepped on for 300 years . . ."), and considers this dealing with the black student furor; and no one connected with the production of this film seems to have recognized that the sequence involving the Mexican-American would be offensive. In Harry's bonehead English class, a brutish Mexican athlete sits in the back, reading Batman comics. When called upon to answer a simple question about grammar, he flounders dumbly while the class snickers. This sequence is designed to show that Harry is such a talented teacher that he can even reach the featherbrains: Harry inspires him to read *Don Quixote,* and later, the Mexican writes of Batman, "He better than Batman. He braver." In the end, when Harry turns his orals into a circus and defects to the rioters, it does not seem like a triumph since most of the film cattily discredits the Movement. This fence-straddling fiasco is only bearable because of the presence of appealing, comical Elliot Gould. He careens through the film, clowning and conning. Few actors have the skill to nearly salvage a ridiculous movie. The clearest evidence of his talent is that he even makes Candice Bergen look good.—DENNIS HUNT

The Happy Ending is Richard Brooks' much-maligned film about marriage in America, undeniably an artistic failure, but more interesting than most people guess—one of the first films to explore the way in which our society stifles women by encouraging them to regard marriage as the perfect fulfilment of any and all of their individual needs. After sixteen years of marriage the heroine is going crazy, and she doesn't know why. She has everything she dreamed about as a teenager—a husband and daughter who love her, many friends, a plush comfortable home—but her life feels desolate, and what terrifies her is that she has no idea of what she did wrong or where she can turn to find out. She has no sense of personal identity, for she had

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been conditioned to believe that her domestic identity—Housewife and Mother—would see her through a lifetime; but now it seems too late to confront herself, too late to begin asking questions she should have asked two decades earlier. The film is unusual in trying to confine itself to her disillusioned point of view; some ghastly, grotesquely overwrought scenes of domestic horror—a coarse drunken party, beauty parlors and gyms filled with ugly, fat women desperate for beautification—that have been criticized as cruel parody by Brooks may have some validity if they are taken as the *character's* harrowingly intensified vision of the emptiness of her life. An interesting variation is that Mary's husband is a "good" husband, not a drunk or a philanderer; he does not mistreat her or neglect her, and he keeps reminding her how much he loves her. By deliberately avoiding a conventional explanation for Mary's misery, Brooks clearly means to say that what appalls her is simply the pettiness, complacency, monotony of domestic contentment; she can no longer stand her husband's steadiness, his bland good nature, his reliance on romantic clichés to conceal, even from himself, his increasingly tepid response to her. Unfortunately, this arresting conception isn't successfully realized: We're supposed to be seeing Fred from Mary's point of view, which is why he looks like a zombie or a walking cigarette advertisement, but it's hard to believe in anyone quite so placid and unchanging; and this problem is compounded because John Forsythe—who was, I'm sure, deliberately cast for his dull Madison Avenue look—is such a poor actor that we are uneasy wondering how much of the character's creepiness was intentional and how much of it is accidental. Brooks includes a good deal of material mocking the traditional Hollywood version of love, marriage, and "the happy ending." (There are excerpts from movies like *Father of the Bride* and *Casablanca.)* This might have made an interesting sidelight, but it's given too much emphasis here—Hollywood is undeniably guilty of much false glamorization, but I doubt that romantic movies can be given the major share of the blame for women's deadening fantasies about marriage. I also wish Brooks had avoided some of the clichés of domestic soap opera—the heroine's recurring alcoholism, and her suicide attempt—which distort a frightening drama of ennui by adding too much melodramatic excitement. Even less excusable is the inclusion of one of those earthy, worldly-wise maids that Thelma Ritter used to play (now we have to settle for Nanette Fabray), who gets all of the deadly aphoristic lines that comprise Brooks' own credo. The dialogue is, in fact, often embarrassing, and the color is bad—though perhaps its garishness is intended as a deliberate comment on the quality of life in Denver. In spite of all these faults, though, the film's earnestness is sometimes affecting. I think Brooks' attempt to tackle a crucial but depressing subject is admirable, and there are moments when, through the eloquence of Jean Simmon's performance, the attempt begins to come to life, and we are moved to reconsider the infernal nature of the domestic trap. I hope that the film's commercial failure will not discourage other film-makers, including some women, from pushing deeper into this still-unexplored territory.—STEPHEN FARBER

Lord Thing is that rarity of rarities, an effective propaganda film. It is a fiction film which successfully passes itself off as a documentary. In these times, when the subversive craft of propaganda has been generally discarded for the self-destructive art of confrontation, there should be cause for some rejoicing in the fact that one film at least stands to change some minds and make some converts for the revolution.

Lord Thing (available via 1504 Highland, Wilmette, Illinois 60091) gains its veracity from the black people who inhabit it. And this is the documentary element of the film: a succession of the realest images of black life I have seen. By this I do not mean that Filmsmith Inc. or director DeWitt Beall have "accurately depicted the daily round of living in the ghetto," or that the pictures of slums and streets are any more "true" than anyone else's. Only an Ivens could force us to experience specific tactile things out of the clouded abstraction that images of black city life call up within us. Beall's achievement lies on another level: in having the eye to see and the wit to use the power of the people themselves. This feature-length color film is built primarily of extended narrations offered by members of the Chicago group now calling itself the Conservative Vice Lords, Inc. Each member who speaks in the film demonstrates himself to be a human of perception, intelligence and commitment—an *individual* for whom any broad and general label would be insufficient. The photography (by Olaf Bergman and director of photography Kazeo Ayakawa) underlines the people-orientedness of the film by having human beings define the limits of the frame. Whether in close-up or in long

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shot, our attention is visually centered on the people, on specific, concrete individual people acting in specific, concrete and individual ways. This is crucial to the success of the film. For we are dealing in an area where broad generalities are the order of the day. We are dealing with black Chicago youth gangs. To understand a gang as it has been experienced by a series of sympathetic individuals is to destroy most of one's preconceptions about gangs from the start. The measure of Beall's ability is that he uses the very material which dissipates old generalities as the foundation of a new generality. He creates propaganda. He makes fiction out of fact. Beall's own fiction is itself one with strong roots in fact—and one presently accepted as fact by a number of respectable people. He sees gangs as a positive force in a negative environment. He considers the development the film shows (from many warring little gangs to one gang—Vice Lords—to socioeconomic organization—Conservative Vice Lords, Inc.—and, implicitly, to political power group—CVL) as a movement toward better things for blacks. That this viewpoint is one shared with his CVL protagonists does not hurt the efficacy of the film's presentation. The important point is that Beall's notion of "the way it is," as *Lord Thing* shows it, is utterly convincing. Each natural gesture, each shot of someone walking or moving his head, each open turn of phrase, each line of unaffected relaxed speech adds verisimilitude to the case. Because the people are so real we are convinced that the story must be real too. Let me tell you how far this fiction-out-of-fact business goes. A good proportion of *Lord Thing* is devoted to what the titles call "historical reconstructions." These are sequences purporting to show past events as reenacted by street kids under Beall's direction. Pure fiction. Yet the film loses no credibility because of these—absolutely none. The reasons are many: Beall's direction here is particularly restrained and adept; he is still using real and natural people to play the parts; he has opted for a functional "objective" style (as throughout) and stuck to it so well that even the complexities of faked-fight sequences pass by unnoticed; and, these parts are in black-and-white—traditionally the coarse-grained medium of "on-the-spot coverage." Finally, the "historical reconstructions" are convincing because we accept *Lord Thing* as a *fiction* film; we actively connive in the fictionalization of reality; we want to think that existence displays some pattern. When a film-maker of Beall's insight and subtlety plays with our human impulse to fictionalize reality, and when in addition he has as the medium of his message such impressing and proud people as these, a truly effective propaganda film is almost a foregone conclusion. "Truly effective" because it brings no tears to the eye, because it never tells you you had better get to work to save the country and yourself. "Truly effective" then, because action and reaction are left up to the viewer. "Truly effective" finally, because Beall does not care what you do with the film. All he is after is your mind.—WILLIAM D. ROUTT

Loving, even though it conscientiously steers clear of its chances to dissect the world that it focuses on, says more truthful things about what it's like to be middle-class and middle-aged than any movie in recent memory. Irvin Kershner, the director, and Don Devlin, the author of the screenplay, know that men and women in their thirties and forties who are smart enough to realize that they're never going to get what they want out of being alive, are overcome, not with panic or hysteria, but with discomfort. The same kind of nagging, faintly disturbing weariness that they've known all along is what agonizes people in their middle years, the only difference being that it shows up something a little more intense than what it's been in the past. Why this should be and what it all means in the long run, the movie doesn't say. But the mood of fatigue and mild wretchedness is there always, exposed with perfect, unbroken accuracy. The whole film is suffused with a grey, tired feeling, a self-deprecating sense of being beaten down. The emotions of Kershner's commuters and his housewives, of all his people, aren't explained or dramatized—the stringency of the naturalistic style makes that impossible. The important thing, though, is that they're not falsified either: they're presented. George Segal, looking like a few dozen Saul Bellows heroes, makes almost every sentence, every inflection, into an expression of soft, quizzical exhaustion. His face sinks deep into his skull and sags gently, and the feelings that cross it seem blurred; they're the stunned, betrayed looks of someone who seems convinced that whatever he decides to do next is not going to make much difference. The people around him are pretty much the same. They also look stricken with the self-distrust and the bewilderment that comes from getting on and having responsibilities, from being inadequate and knowing it. Even more

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than Kershner's *The Luck of Ginger Coffey, Loving* seems like a fiction documentary. The exact way in which things happen—the rhythms and the tensions in the scenes, their sizes—come disquietingly close to duplicating the way things happen every day, all the time. Arguments come and go, in an unresolved, fleeting way. They're short and irrational, jaggedly out of proportion and cropping up over nothing, the results of some general restless insecurity. They develop like arguments, not like debates, and they aren't the only events in the movie that are presented with such scrupulous exactness. A scene with Segal catechizing his girlfriend's new lover, looking as if he can't really believe that he's asking a stranger and a rival so many inane, embarrassing questions, has down perfectly the unsettling fitfulness that's always part of someone's landing unprepared in a disturbing set-up, then doing the wrong things out of shock. A walk through midtown New York has just the right amount of stop-and-go jauntiness animating it. And in all the city sequences, there really is something of the aura of the city—harsh and glowing at the same time. But it's the party that provides the background for the final scenes that gets the most complete documenting, its textures being amazingly similar to those of any gathering of rich, somewhat hip, family-type people. The women look fresh and beautiful one minute, dried out the next. The dancers know that they don't like the rock steps they're doing, but they do them anyway. People talk about things they don't know much about (like art history), but good-naturedly, not out of arrogance or stupidity. Nothing can disrupt the prevailing inertia. Even when something happens—a strange outbreak of voyeurism and a savage fight in the snow—it doesn't make much difference. The same kind of minutely faithful reconstructing goes into a breakfast sequence and a house inspection tour. The way the hero's two children behave, the way they talk to one another and on the telephone, is brilliantly observed, all the gestures shaded by the floppiness and weird grace of small girls (really astounding how Kershner could get such easy-going, unaffected performances out of children). More importantly—most important of all, actually—nearly all the different things that happen in the movie, unrelated as they are, are all selected and joined together so that there's as much rhythm between them as there is within them. There's an over-all sense of life and motion running through the film, and it lets the four days covered in the action give off the impression of four days' worth of actual living, of having the same form and of being freighted with the same moods that they'd take on if they were somehow really ever to happen. In movies of the *Loving* kind, there's no greater triumph possible.—ELLIOTT SIRKIN

A Man Called Horse and **Flap** (earlier titled *Nobody Loves A Drunken Indian)* express some of the growing concern about the degradation of the American Indian. *A Man Called Horse* is a portrait of Indian culture before that degradation began—in the Dakota territory around 1825. Richard Harris plays an English lord on a hunting trip in the American wilderness, who is captured by the Sioux and forced to work for them as a beast of burden until he finally proves himself worthy to be adopted into the tribe. Some militant Indian groups have criticized the film for portraying the Indian as savage, but that objection implies that they share white America's belief in the superiority of "advanced civilization"; whereas what seems to me remarkable about the film is that it suggests the grandeur, the *magnificence* of a savage, primitive culture. The attention to carefully researched details of setting, costume, ceremony produces some extraordinarily beautiful images, a tableau of Indian life more striking than anything seen on the screen before. Most of the film has no English dialogue at all; it consists of painstaking reconstruction of rituals of initiation, marriage, war, and death—almost an anthropological document from another time. Since the film was made by whites, there is a note of terror mixed in with the wonderment: From seeing this film, we get some understanding of how New England puritans must have felt on confronting this strange, foreign people; to superstitious, provincial, unimaginative European settlers, these fierce, bizarrely painted and costumed natives must indeed have looked like monsters from hell. The film invokes the primal tensions in the relationship of white man and red man, the recurring conflict of the civilized and the pagan; the dignity and nobility of the Indian come across more powerfully because there is no patronizing attempt to "humanize" him to fit a preconceived liberal image. It is disappointing, then, that irritating fictional contrivances sometimes intrude on the authenticity. We are urged to empathize with Harris as he undergoes a variety of conventional dramatic crises and eventually emerges triumphant. Indian groups have rightly objected to the intimation that the white Anglo-Saxon is the

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natural leader of the tribe (he devises a military strategy that saves them from invasion, and thus wins their devotion, in true phony-movie fashion); this is the major blemish in an otherwise honorable effort. Harris's stilted readings and his blond wig are further distractions. Elliott Silverstein has directed competently and unobtrusively, except for a dream sequence that he claims was inserted without his approval. Silverstein and his technical staff give the film exotic flavor, but a deeper appeal too—what draws us to the Sioux, in spite of their savagery, is their movingly direct relationship to the essentials of human experience—the test of manhood, courtship and marriage, death. Particularly death, for the film is basically a tragic vision of a people soon to be destroyed by the cruelty of the elements and the advance of civilization. And it is this tragic vision, the apprehension of extreme grief and suffering unchecked by civilized defenses, that touches Harris most deeply and humanizes him.

Carol Reed's *Flap* makes a fascinating contrast; looking at Reed's images of the squalor of a contemporary Indian reservation in juxtaposition to the beauty of the Indian ceremonies recreated for *A Man Called Horse* could offer a sobering introduction to a study of the tragedy of Indian history. The film etches the milieu of the reservation in fine, stinging details—a barren landscape spotted with sleazy adobe hovels, and populated by a sad-faced people wearing a tawdry melange of tribal and modern-anonymous dress. But dramatically, the film falls flat. The story is about a half-hearted attempt at revolution by a group of resentful Indians, conceived as a tragicomedy. The comedy might have been an apt way of suggesting the pathetic hopelessness and absurdity of their revolutionary movement, except that it is rarely funny, only arch and repetitive. But the tragic finale is even worse—a ridiculously contrived scene of martyrdom that shamelessly milks the liberal audience. The characters are cardboard figures in Clair Huffaker's screenplay, and they are not well cast or well played. Anthony Quinn is not too bad in the pivotal role of Flapping Eagle, but he is becoming a one-man UN gallery of irrepressible minority heroes. In one scene he even does a few steps of the little dance that has become his stock in trade since ***Zorba the Greek;*** at that point we know we're watching not a real Indian, but another of Quinn's ethnic star-turns on behalf of the Life Force. Tony Bill, obviously cast so the movie would have "youth appeal," does not even have Quinn's facility at impersonation, and a heavy coating of Mantan hardly compensates for his lack of experience. Shelley Winters is called in for a couple of scenes as—guess what?—the brassy local hooker, a role she no longer even seems to enjoy very much. It's a shame that a film with such a fresh, vital subject has to rely on all these Hollywood trappings. But even with their weaknesses, the new approach of these two movies about Indian culture is worth some notice.—STEPHEN FARBER

The Revolutionary, directed by Paul Williams from a script (and novel) by Hans Koningsberger, was planned two years ago to be a rather far-out work; yet now that it has reached the screen it has been outpaced by events and its virtues seem those of quiet detachment: during its run in San Francisco, armed black revolutionaries kidnapped a judge, with four deaths ensuing, topping the assassination of a judge which climaxes the film. Amid a hail of pseudo-revolutionary quickies, *The Revolutionary* derives an unlikely power from its careful abstractness (which makes it not quite "with it"), its intriguing idiosyncracies of characterization, and its open, awkward confrontation with the implications of civil war. Although I think the plotting is rather unsatisfactorily schematic, we are nearer to the careful, ironic observation of Joseph Conrad in "The Secret Agent" than to Hollywood's youth craze; and in the hero's unlikely relation with a rich girl we are nearer to James's Hyacinth Robinson than to Elliott Gould. The film has, perhaps unintentionally, a dogged moral sense which even Seymour Cassel's yippie cannot upset. The revolution here, set in vaguely British surroundings, comes out of a tradition and is a deliberate human act, not a childish reflex; its ambiguities are focussed on, not focussed out.—E.C.

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In **The Strawberry Statement** MGM reverses the sympathies of Louis B. Mayer but still gives members of the audience what it thinks they want to see—in this case themselves. It has permitted director Stuart Hagmann to intertwine with a cops-and-kids story an evocation of young love whose tenderness at once undercuts and underlines the movie's propagandistic intent. In pointing out that public issues can alter private lives *The Strawberry Statement* may mark the coming of age of the coming-of-age film. It assumes that for some the onset of maturity arrives in college and that their first cocktail might turn out to be a Molotov. Adults have not quite disappeared, but they have become so rigidified that they appear mostly as statues that mar the urban landscape. In their place are the police, and in their buildings are the students. Israel Horovitz's screenplay relates in simple fashion the radicalization of Simon (Bruce Davison), a member of the college crew, during a crisis highly reminiscent of Columbia's in 1968. Simultaneously it discreetly traces his romance with Linda (Kim Darby). Horovitz bares their ambivalence (hers initially towards him, his towards the outcome of activism) instead of their anatomy. The self-consciousness of Hagmann's perpendicular shots accentuates the naturalness of the acting of the supporting characters, who are types rather than stereotypes. They lend an authenticity that reinforces identification with the likable leads. The first reel establishes the exuberance of youth by placing next to one another Simon running and an aged woman walking with a cane. The camera swings free to cover his movements. The last reel records a horrific reseizure by National Guard and police of the school gymnasium, and the final shots, freeze-frames of Simon in a futile attempt at rescuing Linda, disclose how trapped he now is. *The Strawberry Statement* does not explain why Linda was involved or why Simon became so. It does not have to, for it assumes the audience always to have been on their side. With racism and war on the other, preferences have been predetermined. Such narcissism may not be art, but it may have to do until the real thing comes along.—ROBERT G. MICHELS

These Are My People and **You Are on Indian Land** (National Film Board) are from the "Challenge for Change" program, in which the NFB has sent its cameras and crews to groups across Canada, seeking to capture, reflect, and stimulate social change. This edgy enterprise was for a time presided over by an American documentarian, George Stoney; we hope to present a report on it soon. *These Are My People* is a fairly ordinary film, centering on an articulate spokesman of the Mohawk tribe, who explains, at a meeting, the meaning of the confederacy and its ancient law. *You Are on Indian Land* is a *cinéma-vérité* account of an Indian direct-action project: the blocking of an international highway which was run across their reservation. The Indians had tried to approach the government in Ottawa, and been rebuffed. Growing cannier and more militant, they planned to try turning the white man's law against him; users of the highway (and the customs house situated on their island) were trespassers. Armed with placards, they blockaded the road. The police of the nearby town arrive, under the cameras, and try to bluff the Indians to clear the road. The provincial police arrive, and threaten arrests. The mounties arrive too. But the Indians refuse to budge; they have reached that critical point of political awareness and commitment where they will go to jail rather than accede to injustice. They shove back towed-away cars; they stand in front of tow trucks. They demand a meeting with the prime minister. The police appeal to their spokesman to tell the Indians to leave; an impressively thoughtful and quiet-spoken man, he replies that they are "free people." Then ensues an almost surreal sequence in the snow, with the police bundling middle-aged ladies off into police cars, a young Indian militant saying to his friends, as he is hauled away, "See you in Disneyland!" and little Indian kids running around gleefully yelling "Get off our land! . . . Police brutality!" And when the police, who even in Canada can turn nasty, begin to get shorttempered, the spokesman jumps on the towtruck and gives a cooling-off speech in Mohawk (subtitled for us—he gives a later version in English for the cops). The Indians, now reinforced by a large group of hard-hatted construction men, go off to the meeting house. And there, confronted by the smart young militants and sleepy old people alike, an appallingly condescending Anglo government representative says he can make no promises, he can only "report your feelings." What the film is reporting, of course, is not only feelings: it is documenting that curious process whereby people become successively conscious of their trampled rights, determined to recapture them, more firmly militant when thwarted or ignored, and finally revolutionary when ultimately denied. The big steel bridge looks imposing and permanent, and the Indians look few and weak. But the highway is on their land, and sooner or later the government must admit it.—E.C.

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