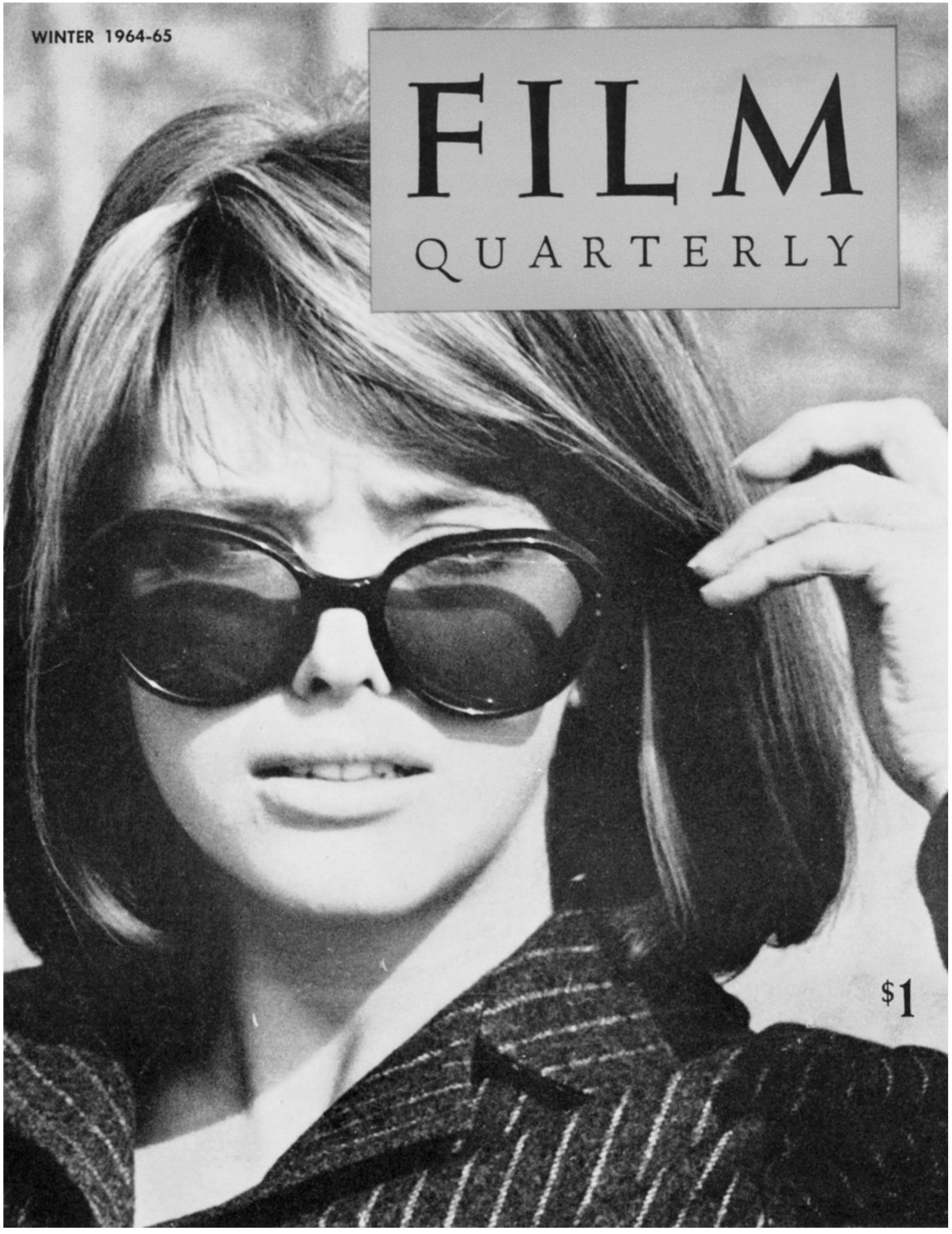
WINTER 1964-65

FILM QUARTERLY



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THE COVER: Petra Krause-Nettlebeck in Kristl's *Der Damm*

ARTICLES

FESTIVALS — 1964

FILM REVIEWS

BOOKS

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KRZYSZTOF-TEODOR TOEPPLITZ

The Films of Wojciech Has

Among the Polish film directors whose names have reached the West, Wojciech Has is relatively little known either to public or critics. To be more exact, he is just beginning to be better known now that the stir caused by Wajda and Munk has begun to subside; the premières outside Poland of *Kanal, Ashes and the Diamond,* and *Eroica* are receding into the past, but last year Has's *How to be Loved* captured first prize at the San Francisco Festival.

A growing interest in Has can also be found in the director's own country. Here his films are not considered dazzling like those of Wajda, nor do they strike the audience, as do Munk's, with the aptness of what the director has to say. What is more, right from the outset it has been impossible to fit Has's films into the formula of the "Polish School" constructed by the critics for the period 1956–1958. This idea of a "school" was generally accepted for a time, and became current usage for foreign film critics—especially for critics in the West. But Has does not concern himself with the pathetic, nor very much with the tragedy of history, nor what might be described as the involuted contortions of our national destiny. He is not at all engaged by the problems of heroism, whether of the romantic-positive type favored by Wajda or the sceptic-rationalistic type of Munk. In fact, Has has never made a war film, which could be held to be the "diploma piece" for a Polish film director—rather as in the mediaeval studios a painter had to produce a Madonna and Child before he could be considered a master.

The same sort of difficulty is found with the work of another Polish film director, Jerzy Kawalerowicz, an artist who is also a master of professionalism. He too keeps well clear of the accepted themes of the Polish School, and critics who try to make a standard interpretation fit his work have more than once come to grief. Nevertheless he has found his own way to success, helped by his exceptionally high standard of craftsmanship.

The case of Has is different, however. Those who want to understand his work well must be capable of reacting not only to film in general, but to a considerably more complex group of impressions, sentiments, and moods, common to film and literature, and in the final analysis to life itself.

Has is a "literary" film director. This is not only a matter of giving priority to the narration of the plot instead of to the form of the film, which may be less important than his particular sensitivity to "literaryness" of mood. Several elements combine to bring out this effect of "literaryness," the principal one being Has's use of dialogue. To a far greater extent than is normal, dialogue serves Has to carry the main burden of telling the story. Another element is the tendency for Has's characters to acquire a certain exoticism, so that they become closer to those of a psychological novel than to the sort of heroes and heroines normally met with on the screen. Finally, literary quotations may even be written at length into the script. Thus in *Farewells* the main characters stand at a bar and hold a conversation by quoting verses from Slowacki at one another. *How to be Loved* ends with a line from Nerval and the engineers in *Gold Dreams* quote verse in the original French —which, one may remark, sounds fairly unusual.

These interpolations are not accidental. Rather they point to the sort of material from

which Has shapes his films, and his wish to catch impressions more of moods than of events or problems. This is essentially a job for poetry rather than drama or film. However in Has's hands it has nothing in common with the false poeticism cultivated in so many films with the help of soft photography, purposely ambiguous montage, discontinuities in the story line, etc., etc. Has's poetry makes his films to a certain extent static in their manner of exposition, giving us shots which may last for five minutes or even longer, action which is frequently held up, and sets which increase in importance accordingly. In this way the director undertakes one of the basic functions of lyric poetry, that is, to "catch the moment," saturate himself in it, and fix it before it can fade.

This short summary of Has's style could give a false impression without some more definite idea of the sort of literature with which he feels he has most in common, and which thanks to him has found its way on to the Polish screen. This is the body of work known as "The Reckoning of the Intelligentsia" (to use the label given it by Marxist critics) which is one of the most fertile and interesting phenomena in Polish writing since the war.

Some of the leading works in this field are the novels of Stanislaw Dygat—amongst others *Good Bye to the Past* filmed by Has and usually known as *Farewells;* and *Lake Constance,* currently the subject of one of his screenplays but not yet filmed; Kazimierz Brandys' (*How to be Loved*); and Tadeusz Breza. As for the roots of this literature, briefly, it sets out to describe what happens to the educated middle classes when they have to come to terms with the war. And not war as a general experience for the whole of humanity, involving genocide and annihilation, but rather as a sociological phenomenon, the overturning of the apparently stable urban society in Poland.

And so a typical hero of this literature will be a young man brought up in an enlightened middle-class home who even before the war came into conflict with his environment, rebelling from the point of view of the bohemian against its traditional conventions. War destroys the pretences built around themselves by his parents' generation. Their prosperity lies in ruins, their class prejudices appear grotesque. Finally they themselves are helpless in the face of the new circumstances with which history has presented them. They are driven to depend on chance, outdistanced both in coping with life and in making a living by their own servants, people until now looked down on as "not belonging to society."

While for this older generation everything that happens is senseless and disastrous, for the bohemian it is all quite straightforward and only bears out his own predictions. He does

Barbara Kratofftowna and Zbigniew Cybulski in *How To Be Loved*

not really lose his sentimental attachment to the world that is passing. He knows how to appreciate its charm, he understands its *raison d'être,* but at the same time he can see its ridiculous, anachronistic side. From this arises his scepticism, tart humor and irony, and from this comes also his peculiar attitude of "make-believe life," which is prevalent among Has's heroes.

There are two main aspects to this "make-believe life." The first is a feeling of nostalgic attachment and empathy for the people and manners of the society that has had its day. Now that these people are no longer sure of themselves, no longer grasping or dangerous, they awaken a sort of sympathy in the hero.

The second aspect is a receptiveness to the fresh experiences offered by contacts with the new society. Has's heroes do not take the representatives of this new society very seriously, but they accept them as partners in investigating what further life has to offer.

This very brief survey is enough to give some idea of the no-man's-land in which most of Has's films are set. The fullest portrait of this social border-land is contained in the film *Farewells,* where the structural elements can be made out quite clearly and are almost exactly as described here. However, these same elements can be found in all his films, which together constitute—more than anything else—an incontrovertible study of decadence. The hero of Has's first film, *The Noose,* is after all decadent, a morbid alcoholic. The atmosphere of indolence and decadence hangs over the characters of *One-Room Tenants* (sometimes known as *The Common Room*). People who have been beaten by life keep appearing in *Partings.* Some signs of decadence can be found also in the hero of *How to be Loved. Gold Dreams* is the film that has the most constructive message, a story about people who are working on a vast industrial project, people who identify with their work, which provides them with both hope and ambition. But even here the attitude of the engineer contains a suggestion of sceptical bitterness, as a sort of *porte-parole* of the director. There is also a special shade of "outsider" quality in the behavior of the young man, the vagabond, who is involved with nothing and nobody. He is an up-to-date version of Has's hero, having something in common with the mythology of the Beat Generation. A similar young man appears as the main protagonist in *Partings,* taking advantage of people in a small town cynically, without compunction, and without being touched by their problems.

While dealing with the decadence portrayed by Has in his films, we must make at least two further important points. In the first place we must not confuse it with the "dying fall," with a mood of melancholy regret for things that are past. Has is far from manufacturing tragedy, nor does he concern himself with privileged musings and the pretentiousness that this leads to. As in the literary originals, particularly Dygat, so in Has's films a state of social insecurity is more a matter for irony than for lyricism, and also occasions a peculiar type of sarcastic humor. This humor and irony, approaching people and problems from their lighter, ridiculous, and even grotesque side, provides a built-in compensation for the atmosphere of "make-believe life" in which his heroes are sunk. The characters of *The Common Room,* prewar students all packed into the same lodging, with neither food for the present nor prospects for the future, are continually making fun of their situation. But the one man in the group who takes his predicament seriously, tries to make it measure up to his ambition and throws himself into his life with full conviction, commits suicide at the first set-back. "Make-believe life" entails living at a slight distance from reality, and this distance is created most effectively by irony, towards both the world and oneself.

This approach is not only psychologically appropriate so far as Has's character-drawing is concerned, it is also essential to stop his films from degenerating into melodrama. For in actual fact it is not so difficult to perceive that the situations drawn by Has are very close to melodrama. Only a thin line divides his films from

Goodbye to the Past

the cheap poetics of autumn leaves and the dead embers of burnt-out passion, etc., etc. Also the inclination of Has's heroes—who come from "the right sort of home"—towards romances with dance-hall hostesses (*Farewells*), poor girls from the suburbs (*One-Room Tenants*), and actresses from touring companies (*Gold Dreams*), or to friendship with casual acquaintances found in bars (*The Noose*) could have a flavor not found in the very best sorts of literature, if it were not for this ironical distance. Thanks to this the situations in Has's films are able to develop both artistically and intellectually.

The problem of value in Has's films may give rise to some reservations. Has said once during an interview: "My heroes are not weak creatures, they want to act but they are prevented. They are not stupid. To make some positive contribution to life is difficult, and when we try we find there are plenty of obstacles. To be disciplined and equitable is the best way of consolidating one's position and 'getting oneself organized.' And this is exactly what the characters that I bring to the screen want to achieve."

And so this world that appears decadent on the outside is not so in the moral sense. On the contrary, the search for constructive values is going on continually, constructive both morally and socially. Still one can hardly say that Has is wedded to one definite moral idea; the answers he gives in his films are various, though not basically contradictory. Quite often one of these answers will be presented through an artist who hopes to reassure himself that his life has not been wasted, by regaining his creative ability as it was as its peak. The drunk, reminiscing in the bar in *The Noose,* recalls with emotion the time when he was "the best saxophonist in the country," and blames his downfall on the loss of this position. Similar people living on their memories or on the hope that their creative power will return can be found in *Gold Dreams* and *One-Room Tenants.* The hero of *How to be Loved* makes his whole life subordinate to the fact that he has been a first-rate interpreter of *Hamlet*, and when there is no longer any hope of a return to this state, he commits suicide.

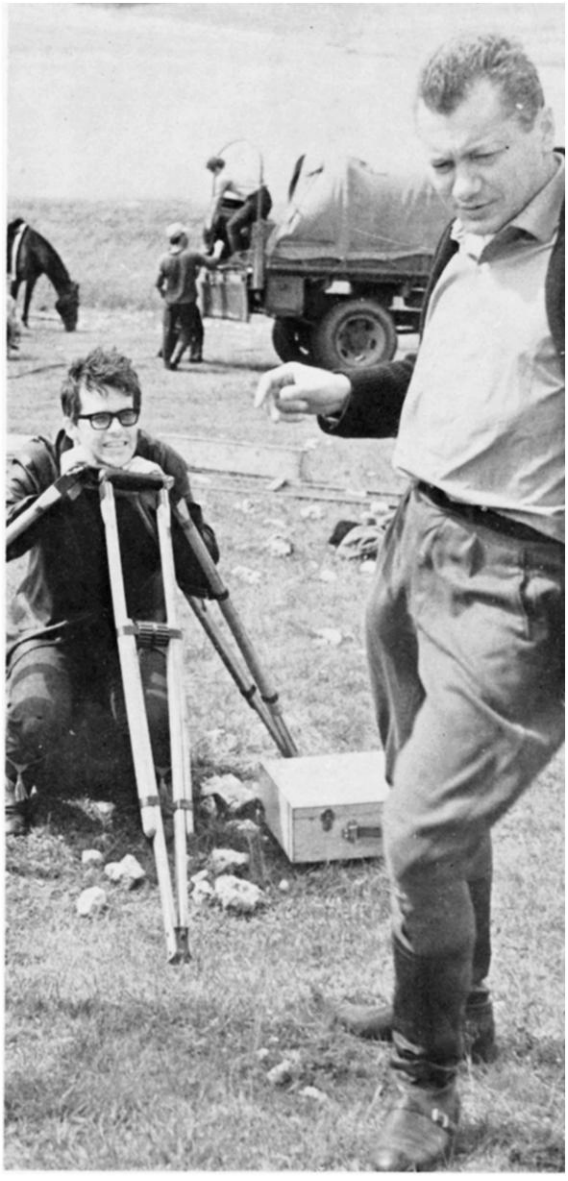
The successes that these people talk about and the reassurance that they get from the approval of others are not of course the chief concern in Has's films. The director's attitude can be seen in *How to be Loved,* where the heroine attains success and popular affection just when the love which has given personal

meaning to her life has been lost completely. Success does not in fact go with a feeling of happiness, on the contrary it has a taste of some bitterness and resignation.

So what about love? That answer also appears to be unreal, although the question, of its very nature, must be very general. The motives of love act in opposing directions, no matter how impenetrable they may be in Has's films. Sometimes, as for example in *One-Room Tenants,* love manages to be a comforting gesture; or sometimes, as in *Farewells,* it confirms in some way the crystallization of the hero's attitude. But also very often it has a diffusing effect—it becomes burdensome and importunate as in *The Noose* and *Gold Dreams.* The attitude to love and women in Has's films is yet another occasion for irony. These things seem to be marginal rather than central to the hero's life.

So then it will be closest to the truth to say that the scale of values in Has's films is mainly the business of "getting oneself organized" spoken of by the director himself, and which amounts to achieving some concord between motives and action. Often this state is reached in terms which may be accepted objectively as constructive. The hero of *Farewells* "gets himself organized" when he becomes fully receptive to the new experiences, which the new era will bring him. The engineer in *Gold Dreams,* disappointed in his private life, will feel the same when sacrificing himself to his work. But in *One-Room Tenants* this moment of internal equilibrium is reached when the hero accepts the idea of his own death—death which nobody can believe is necessary for himself. In *The Noose* the point is similarly tragic. In the end it cannot be denied that many of Has's solutions gravitate towards existentialism, although in ways that differ from one another considerably and are never banal.

Against the background of Polish postwar cinema Has has established a distinct personal silhouette. He is not the easiest of directors, but he gives us that part of the truth about present-day Poland which is commonly lacking in more representative work.



Wojciech Has
shooting
Saragossa

ULRICH GREGOR

The German Film in 1964: Stuck at Zero

The situation of the German film in 1964 can be compared with that of an old tree which—although dried-up and dead—has not yet decided to which side it will fall, and only because of this uncertainty has remained standing. Several factors have brought West German film production (and we are here concerned only with the West) to the brink of ruin. First is the ever-growing competition of television, whose audience has grown since 1954, when TV was first introduced to the German public, to 10 million in a population of about 50 million. Second is the decline of the film audience: in 1957 the audience numbered 801 million; in 1963, 416 million. Production has fallen: in 1958 there were 115 feature films; in 1962, 63; in 1963, 73. Numerous well-known production companies and finance firms have collapsed; UFA has completely done away with its feature-film production after steady failures, and the remaining business, the film theaters, has been bought by a big book publisher. And there is the artistic as well as commercial failure of most of the established film directors. In 1962 it seemed that film production in West Germany was doomed. Only the unexpected success of a series of Edgar Wallace and Karl May films (May is Germany's best-loved Wild West author) which, however, are of no artistic consequence, has allowed the industry to hold onto its shaky position and even build itself up a little.

Several suggestions for governmental and financial help have been made in an attempt to pull the German film out of the blind alley in which it has been lost for years. However, these suggestions scarcely touch the real grounds of the German film crisis. For more than two years there has existed in Germany a sort of "movement" of young directors who are opposed to the established industry. This group of young directors appeared at the 1962 short film festival at Oberhausen with a spectacular manifesto, and since then has been called the "Oberhausen Group." However, these directors represent opposing and rival tendencies, and although one may feel sympathetic towards them, one can scarcely claim, with a few individual exceptions, that they have shown the intelligence and the artistic capabilities that are necessary for a real renovation of the German film. On the contrary, certain of their films and their theoretical statements cause one to fear that a German *nouvelle vague* could result in sectarianism, irrationalism, and a filmic *l'art pour l'art*. Before we discuss this group, let us

Der Rest ist Schweigen

first concern ourselves with the established German film production. The best-known personalities of the German postwar film, Helmut Käutner and Wolfgang Staudte, recently have not been doing much. This applies especially to Käutner. In 1962 he made two films, both of which were disappointing: *Der Traum von Lieschen Müller* (The Dream of Lieschen Müller), a dull attempt at parody of the common illusionistic entertainment film, that did not achieve its object, and *Die Roten* (The Reds), a formal, ambitious filming of the novel of the same name by Alfred Andersch. But when *Die Roten* was presented at the Berlin Film Festival, the response was general amusement. Käutner tries in this film—the story of a middle-class woman who wants to escape from the life she has led up to now—to give the appearance of philosophical depth through the conscious imitation of the stylistic techniques of Antonioni (and even Resnais). But the contradiction of highly artificial photography (Gianni di Venanzo) on the one hand, and a banal, tasteless production, as well as embarrassingly pretentious dialogue on the other, is striking. Fundamentally, the novel is not suitable for filming and the lead actress, Ruth Leuwerik, a staunch German mother-type, was certainly unsuited to her part. This film shows again what has been clear since Käutner's earlier films (*Das Glas Wasser*, based on Scribe, and the version of Hamlet *Der Rest ist Schweigen*), that Käutner's despairing attempts at Art inevitably result in a half-monstrous, half-involuntarily comical pseudo-art. After the unanimous beating he took from the critics, Käutner turned after *Die Roten* to TV and stage directing, and only recently has he gotten up the courage to try another feature film project (Ludwig Thomas' *Lausbubengeschichten*).

Herrenpartie

If Helmut Käutner represents the type of director who strives for modernity in formal expression at any price, neglecting questions of content, a colleague, Wolfgang Staudte (from whom came the best German postwar achievements, *Rotation* and *Der Untertan*) is more concerned with political commitment. But in contrast to Käutner, Staudte's weak point is that he neglects the formal side of his films. The films Staudte produced in West Germany after he left the DEFA, above all, *Rosen für den Staatsanwalt* (Roses for the DA—1959) *Kirmes* (1960), and to a lesser extent *Der letzte Zeuge* (The Last Witness—1961) are still among the relatively best German films. They are convincing primarily by their uninhibited criticism of contemporary life in West Germany, by their forthright attempt to "overcome" Germany's past, and by their commit-

ment and honesty. Their story techniques and their photography, however, are traditional, and many characters appear simplified or schematized. In 1962 Staudte made a very interesting feature film for TV: *Rebellion,* from a novella by Joseph Roth, the story of a disabled veteran of World War I, an extremely subtle and stylistically sound piece of work. The following year, however, he disappointed his followers with a superficial, musical-comedy-level filming of Bert Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper* which missed all the polemics and critical undertones of the work. It seemed that Staudte would have to be dropped from the list of serious German directors. Many critics still maintain this after a very polemical and pertinent Staudte film appeared at the 1964 Berlin Film Festival: *Herrenpartie.* The subject of this film (which could only be made as a joint German-Yugoslav production, just as *Rebellion* could only be produced for TV release) is grandiose, and concentrates as if in a burning-glass the complicated problems of Germany's present. A German glee club on a vacation in Yugoslavia wanders astray on a lonely mountain road; the members come to a village in which only women live, the male inhabitants having been shot as hostages by the Germans in the last war. Between the Yugoslavian women and the German singers (who suddenly discover their old soldier natures) warlike conditions develop; the thin cover over the past is torn away. However, while Staudte shows his sharp polemical force and his gift for pointed and biting satire in the characterization of the glee-club members, he is much less successful in depicting the Yugoslav women. They stand around like figures out of a Greek tragedy, and their antagonistic, embittered attitude toward the Germans switches all of a sudden to the opposite after a sympathetic young girl from the town reprimands them. Staudte's film must be taken as a piece of agitation, as a self-critical discussion of the unassimilated leftovers of Germany's past, and to some extent merely as material for a "political" musical. In this area he displays his real qualities; however, in contrast, there are a variety of formal weaknesses in the film. *Herrenpartie* is not a film for aesthetes, or for admirers of subtle, tense, psychological drama; still, this film has something to say, and it says it with provoking, critical sharpness, and this is a quality which no other German film produced as of 1964 can show.

Many critics are setting their hopes on a third name, that of an outsider to the large productions: Bernhard Wicki. Wicki, a former Swiss actor, made his debut with an interesting socially critical and controversial film about big city youth: *Warum sind Sie gegen uns?* (Why are you against us?) His first long feature film, *Die Brücke* (The Bridge—1959) revealed honest antimilitaristic intentions as well as indisputable cinematographic sensitivity. Unfortunately this film did not portray the actual background of the war with the sharpness and clarity which one might have hoped for—in this respect it is somewhat superficial. Less convincing was Wicki's next film, *Das Wunder des Malachias* (1961), which was based on a novel by the Catholic author, Bruce Marshal. Wicki tries here to stigmatize certain excesses in contemporary, prosperous German society, namely the reckless commercial exploitation of religious needs. The film swings back and forth, undecided, between allegory and a criticism of contemporary reality. The production is subjected to a hectic rhythm and revels in spectacular mass scenes which allow the audience no distance from the action and no time for reflection. *Das Wunder des Malachias* was produced on an extremely high budget and since it met no public success it brought ruin to its financial backers. Later Wicki had a contract to go to Hollywood, where he took part in the direction of the super-production *The Longest Day;* and recently he made a film of Dürrenmatt's play, *Der Besuch der alten Dame* (The Visit) with Ingrid Bergman in the lead role. This last contains a few successful scenes, but in general shows the stamp of the typical international, commercially calculated joint production, and the personal signature of the director, Wicki, can hardly be recognized.

In the precarious position of the German film, economically as well as artistically, the clever manufacturers of the cinematic trade—the businessmen of film direction—have achieved the most success. Alfred Weidemann has known how to quickly adapt to the prevailing conditions since his beginnings in film propaganda in the Hitler Youth. He recently turned Schnitzler's *Reigen* into a tasteless farce, which appeared in the movie theaters under the philistine title *Das grosse Liebesspiel* (The Great Love Game). Kurt Hoffmann is a specialist in what are supposed to be intellectual and witty comedies, but which are actually flat and conformist. His *Wir Wunderkinder* (Aren't We Wonderful?—1958), an apology for the "unpolitical" German average citizen, was for some reason always overrated outside of Germany. His *Schloss Gripsholm* (Gripsholm Castle—1963) robbed Tucholsky's novel of all its unpleasant and biting passages and left a nice, colorful picture album. Recently he did a serial TV film *Das Haus in der Krapfengasse,* based on Ben-Gavriel. Rolf Thiele, after his half-way successful musical *Mädchen Rosemarie* (1958) has moved over to pseudo-erotic soul dramas, which hide their commercial intentions under a glossy polished literary surface: *Lulu* (based on Wedekind) (1962), *Venusberg* and *Moral 63* (1963). His last film, an adaptation of the Thomas Mann novella *Tonio Kröger,* was allowed to represent Germany at the Venice film festival, but this film too was an artistic fiasco. Thiele translated the literary subject into calligraphic, precise pictures, whose decorative sugary style soon becomes boring (camera: Wolf Wirth). He invents unnecessary "decorations" to add to the subject matter and revels in heavily significant, painfully inept symbolism (manuscript leaves that turn into seagulls, statues which turn in the light of a flashlight and which are supposed to embody the "sensuousness" of the Italians). The German film will certainly get no farther along this road of apparently ambitious, but consistently unsuccessful filmings of literary works (which even Käutner has tried with his *Die Roten*).

The sum of these observations, at least as far as the films of the established directors are concerned, is rather depressing. The old masters of the German film have nothing more to say, or at best repeat their old themes (as in the case of Staudte). The rest, producers as well as directors, don't know how to get out of the vicious circle of decreasing income and decreasing quality. The representatives of the German film industry do not hesitate to accuse the State of being responsible for this sinister situation. And it *is* important that in the last few years German films have profited only slightly from government subsidies, while the State has set up high entertainment taxes, which TV, as a public institution, does not have to pay. In the past there were only two subsidy measures taken by the government: the "German Film Prize," offered yearly, which honors a few individual successes with a relatively small financial donation; and the system of the so-called "Prädikatizierung" (Proclamation) in which a commission proclaims certain long and short films to be "valuable" or "especially valuable," with the consequence that the particular films are freed either in part or completely from paying the entertainment tax. This system exists because of the short film industry; for shorts, at least those that are "proclaimed," are included in their programs by theater owners because they bring a reduction in the entertainment tax.

Two years ago the government—alarmed by Cassandra cries by the industry—set up a special subsidy fund for the German film, which now contains some 6 million German marks per year. The largest part of this fund is divided by a commission among "valuable" productions, and in the form of "Premiums" of 200,000 marks. Films which are "suitable for raising the image of the German Republic in the eyes of foreigners" receive a premium of 250,000 marks, which corresponds to a fourth to a fifth of the production costs of a black-and-white film. Also scripts can receive a high premium, which is then, of course, to be used in the filming of that script. However, the situation with

the German film is such that often scripts which have received a premium can nevertheless not be filmed because a backer for the rest of the production costs cannot be found. The commission which doles out the premiums is composed for the most part of government representatives who are little qualified to make artistic judgments of films; hence an unfortunate film like Käutner's *Die Roten* promptly received a feature-film premium, while Staudte's *Herrenpartie* (probably because of his "subversive" character) received no mention.

For about a year there has been discussion of a law to help films which has been introduced in Parliament by the Christian-Democrat, Dr. Martin. According to this law, the returns of theater owners would be used to subsidize films commensurate to their commercial success. This would mean that the production of conformist, financially successful mediocre films would be encouraged, and the showing of more disturbing unconventional films would be completely halted. The fact that this "law to help films" would not reform the German film, but rather conserve its old and bad structure, has however become clear to the law-makers, for at the last minute the law was withdrawn from consideration and is presently being reworked.

It is not true, however, as the representatives of the film industry too often claim, that all the dolors of the German film can be explained by its economic need. The real reasons for the artistic and intellectual crisis in which the West German film has been since 1945 (and one can go back even farther), while the East German productions experienced a "classical flowering" up to 1951, lie much more in the lack of courage of the producers, the incapability of writers and directors, the inability to catch reality in their characters and settings, the lack of a critical position, and the inability to free themselves from clichés and platitudes. The development of West German society to its current material affluence is probably to a great extent responsible for the present situation of the West German film. But this explanation is not entirely sufficient, for it does not say why in present-day Germany there is no decent film-making, although there is a serious literature. Today, however, the same fateful bloodletting of 1933 is again visible in the development of the German film. At that time the most significant film directors and authors emigrated —those who hadn't already left the country— and the natural growth of the film was broken. Hence for the younger talents in film who started after 1945, there was no tradition on which they could build. The idea that the German film under Hitler achieved any degree of serious artistic integrity, is a legend which is supported only by those who are lacking in political sensitivity, those who evidently don't see through the false propagandistic pathos of the Veit Harlan films, and who have no feeling for the *Kirchhofsruhe der Diktator* (graveyard peace of the dictator) which prevails in the so-called "unpolitical" films of the Hitler regime. Especially difficult to understand is the persistent high estimation of the fascistic mysticism of Nazi propagandists such as Leni Riefenstahl, who is the rage of certain foreign film aesthetes, and who praise her foolishness as did Michel Delahaye in his Berlin festival report (1964) for *Cahiers du Cinéma*. The West German postwar film has not yet departed with sufficient sharpness and clarity from this past. As far as it touches on political subjects, it almost always surrounds the passive hero with a halo of respectability (*Wir Wunderkinder*), and the officers of Hitler's army are always pure souls, desiring to resist (*Des Teufels General, Canaris*). This lack of courage to honestly discuss the past is certainly one of the chief reasons for the artistic failure of the films since 1945. Of course there are reasons for this special political apathy which lie outside the films and point to the constitution of West German society. What little effect, basically, the lessons of the past have had on public opinion in Germany is apparent in the hysterical press campaigns which break out every time a foreign country produces a supposedly "anti-German" film—for instance, *The Four Days of Naples*.

It is interesting that the burning problem of Germany's past pervades TV, literature and the stage as well (consider the play by Rolf Hochhuth, *Der Stellvertreter*–The Deputy), while the subject seems to be taboo in films, or at least is always handled in a conformist and apologetic manner.

There is yet another situation which may be considered responsible for the inadequacy of films to orient themselves in the present and for their failure to take a critical stand. Political discussion in Germany is overshadowed by a taboo, the taboo of the relationship to East Germany. Everyone realizes that German politics of the future are only conceivable with some sort of settlement in relations with this other part of Germany. But this cannot be publicly discussed. Therefore, since the basic question of German [political] identity is consistently suppressed from public discussion, in the long run it is German society itself which suffers from a lack of self-recognition. Since there is no image of the future, there can be no image of the present. And surely this characteristic blindness and lack of orientation in West German society is related to the present inadequacies in the West German film.

The crisis of the German film is, however, a crisis of the generations as well. Until now the film has been controlled by writers and directors who were born between 1910 and 1920. Might one not assume that sooner or later this generation will be swallowed up by a younger one which will be able to lead the film out of its ideological and intellectual blind alley? Such hopes, in 1962, seemed to be justified. In February of that year, at the short-film festival in Oberhausen–which is known for its progressive and noncommercial climate–a group of young cinéastes gathered, who already had their first documentaries and shorts behind them. They surprised the public with a manifesto in which they–and not without reasons–decreed the "death of the conventional German film." Here is the text of the manifesto, which appears to be a call to revolution by a German *nouvelle vague:*

"The collapse of the conventional German film has pulled the economic floor out from under an intellectual position which we reject. Because of this the new film will have a chance to live.

"German short films by young writers, directors and producers have, in the past few years, received a great number of awards in international festivals and were recognized by international critics. These works and their success show that the future of the German film lies with those who have demonstrated that they speak a new filmic language. In Germany, as in other countries, the school of the short film has become the experimental field of the feature film.

"We will explain our claim that we will create the new German feature film. This new film needs new freedoms: freedom from the usual conventions, freedom from the influence of the commercial partner, freedom from the tutelage of special interest groups. We have concrete intellectual, formal, and economic conceptions of the new German film. Together, we are ready to take the economic risks. The old film is dead. We believe in the new one."[1]

Two years have passed since the publication of this manifesto, and one can try to weigh what the young generation of directors has produced. The results are unsatisfactory, unfortunately, when compared with the grand intentions of the manifesto. It was apparent at first glance that the diversity of temperament and character within the "Oberhausen Group" made it impossible to speak of the group as a movement with common goals. That which the young directors agree upon (most of them were born around 1930) is the conception of the *auteur* film, a film which is the creative expression of an individual, not of a team or of an abstract idea. For most (not all!) of the young directors, the film tends to signify a formal practice, a search for subjective expression as the reflex of an objective reality. This pertains particularly to those members of the Oberhausen group who live in Munich, so that there has even been talk of a "Munich School"

Das Brot der frühen Jahre

in German film. To simplify a little, we can say that the great models for the young German directors are Truffaut, Godard, and Resnais, while they are less interested in the newer trends of Italian realism or *cinéma-vérité*. If only they could, in intention at least, create something comparable to the work of their models! But unfortunately such a claim is impossible.

The best-known director of the group is probably the Viennese-born Herbert Vesely. He made his debut (after the filming of a poem by Trakl) in 1954 with the longish experimental film *Nicht mehr fliehen* (*No More Running*), a rather confused creation, overburdened with philosophical ideas and filmed in a Spanish wasteland. There followed a series of short films, among which *Portrait einer Pause* (Portrait of a Pause—1956) was outstanding. It is a film of the pause between two ballet rehearsals. It is characterized by an aesthetically refined photography, by the play of light and shadow, as well as by the lack of dialogue. In 1961/62 Vesely made his first long feature film, *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* (Bread of the Early Years). This production was revolutionary for the German film, since for the first time a foreigner—an esoteric-minded one—had the opportunity to make a film under professional conditions, but to make it in complete freedom and without making the smallest compromise. (This was made possible for the young director by the equally young but relatively financially strong "Atlas" firm, which has specialized in backing the cost and production of artistically serious films.) The film stems from the novel of the same name by Heinrich Böll. But in spite of all the favorable circumstances under which the film was made, *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* was disappointing. The novel deals with an actual subject: it relates the story of a young man living in present-day Cologne. He is sick of the false moral values and norms of the society of the Economic Miracle, and he suddenly tries to escape the life he has led. But Vesely tries to reduce this story to a sequence of subjective fragments, which scarcely have a relationship any longer to the reason behind the events. The action, and this goes for the development of the characters as well, seems to have hardly interested the director; he treats it as

Das Brot der frühen Jahre

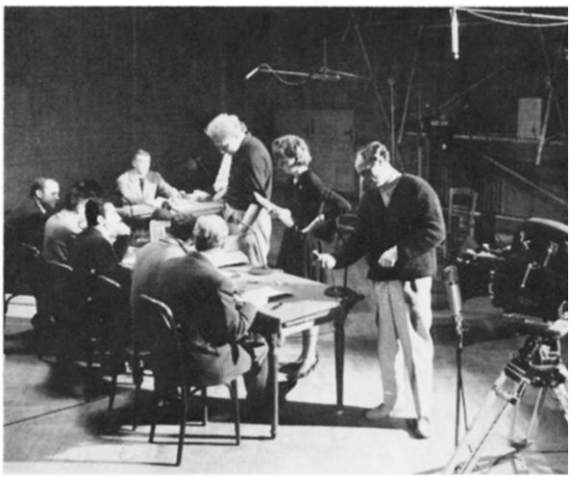
a pretext for a precise, modernistic camera-lyricism, which somewhat detracts from the photographic aspects of the novel's love story. What dominates in this film is the taste for well-thought-out calligraphic scenes (camera: Wolf Wirth), the striving for a modern manner of narration—which, however, brings no insight into the inner life of the people, and the imitation—to be a little more friendly let us say "quotation"—from foreign models, especially from Alain Resnais.

Das Brot der frühen Jahre received a whole list of official prizes, thereby returning the investment of its producers. But this film aroused as little sympathy with the public as it did with the critics, the German as well as the international critics (for *Das Brot der frühen Jahre* was shown in Cannes and Venice). Since then Vesely has not again braved the public. Strangely enough, the labor unions recently made a contract with him for an advertising film, which is said to be not too convincing, however.

Two other young directors appeared in 1962 with their first feature films; the Berlin director and producer, Hans-Jürgen Pohland and the Munich documentary film-maker, Ferdinand Khittl. Pohland described in *Tobby* the life of an actual Berlin jazz singer. Tobby spends his evenings and nights in night clubs, without knowing what he really wants. He receives an offer to go on a musical tour; the tour would be well paid, but involves artistic compromise. Tobby swings back and forth and finally rejects the offer. The film is almost completely improvised; the singer, Tobby, plays himself on the screen. Pohland is unsuccessful in giving his film a unified structure or a significance which reaches beyond the private. But if the film does not demonstrate particular intelligence or analytic perception, it does possess a naive honesty, and its composition reminds one frequently of the methods of *cinéma-vérité*.

On the other hand Ferdinand Khittl's *Die Parallelstrasse* (The Parallel Road) is a work of heavier, if a bit clearer, philosophical intentions. Khittl had made a name for himself earlier as a director of industrial films, especially for a film on the industrial uses of the magnetic tape (*Das magische Band*). But *Die Parallelstrasse* shows for the first time the direction of the director's artistic intentions—unless they are the intentions of the scriptwriter, Bodo Blüthner. Many different influences from modern literature and the modern film are apparent in *Die Parallelstrasse*. A group of seri-

Die Parallelstrasse



Die Parallelstrasse

ous-looking men discuss the value and significance of some puzzling "documents," which—or so it appears—comprise the intimate diary of someone who has died. The "documents" are introduced into the frame story in the form of short documentary excursions, and the commentary takes on a rather philosophical-literary tone. For the most part the action concerns travel impressions from Africa and America. However, everything is shrouded in secrecy and ambiguousness. Suddenly the discussions break off, without having led to any result. What remains in the audience's memory are some picturesque, exotic scenes and a sequence of lyrically colored aphorisms about life, death, and the transitoriness of things. While *Die Parallelstrasse* remained completely unnoticed in Germany, the film received strong publicity at the festival for experimental films in Knokke-le-Zoute 1963/64, where it actually won the first prize of the festival. Some of the critics and jury members seemed not to be disturbed by the questionable romanticism and the ritualistic mystery, and admired instead the strange charm of individual documentary passages.

Das Brot der frühen Jahre and *Die Parallelstrasse* show especially clearly the dangers which threaten a large number of young German directors: a forced aestheticism, a striving for abstract "modernity," and the predisposition towards a speculative and vague pseudo-philosophy.

At the farthest edge of this movement we find two directors who have achieved a special position among their colleagues both for their films and for their theoretical articles: Bernhard Dörries and Edgar Reitz. Both became known for their experimental short films. Dörries made a film about an Italian cemetery, *Campo Santo* (1962) and a film entitled *Algier-Report* (1963). This last describes the life of a young Algerian in Munich—at least one can conclude this from the title and the protagonist's face, for there is no word of dialogue or commentary spoken in the film. One sees the Algerian as he takes a lonely walk around

a city; but one doesn't know where he comes from, where he is going, or what he thinks. Intentionally, the film eliminates all concrete and specific details which could determine the existence of this Algerian in order to give only a vague, general and ambiguous impression; the story of this Algerian could be the story of any lonely man in any large city.

The same tendency towards abstraction is seen in the work of Reitz, a former engineer who has worked in TV and in industry. His two latest films—which he considers his most important—treat technical themes. The first, *Kommunikation* (1962) describes the methods of modern electronic news transmission; the other deals with the theme of speed: *Geschwindigkeit* (1963). Rather than presenting a rational and comprehensible description of the technical developments, Reitz tries in *Kommunikation* to develop a philosophy of communication. He makes use of a variety of symbols (lifted hands, walls, telegraph wires) and of shots which show electric relays, oscillographs and lamps that turn on and off. The whole is tied together by a montage which suggests a mysterious significance. In *Geschwindigkeit* Reitz mounts his camera on a moving car and lets it swing on its own axis. In this way he obtains a series of vague, impressionistic pictures, which he joins together in an extremely complicated "score." Reitz builds an abstract world in his films with considerable intellectual exertions.

Reitz's *Geschwindigkeit*

It is a world which has a certain similarity to twelve-tone music, and from which humans are excluded. It is characteristic that these young directors often use comparisons with music in order to explain their intentions. At the same time, however, they reject an intuitive method of work—this applies at least to Edgar Reitz; he worked a whole year on the preparation of his *Geschwindigkeit* which contains no fewer than 347 shots. At the moment, Reitz is busy with the development of a new method to use the film for exhibition purposes.

Reitz and Dörries suggest in their work the idea of a new film aesthetic; for this reason Reitz named his last film *Kino 1*, as if it were the first item of a whole series. Dörries states that "a film which belongs to the realm of the new films must have no end and no beginning, it can only originate out of a continuum of contents, which are arranged without logical sequence."[2] And in the same article, which is the result of a discussion with Robbe-Grillet, Dörries writes, "In a projected film by Vesely there occurs the awakening of a girl out of her own fragments, which are without memory, without past, without the significance given to them by education and environment—a birth, symptomatic of the conception of man as it can also be found in films like *L'Avventura* or *Vivre sa vie*. The events which occur to this person who is determined neither by a family nor by society, lie on a surface, or on parallel running planes, without direct dramaturgical references, unattached, without compelling motives; the unreflected, ahistorical, asocial perception prevails—and the individual becomes again unknown, basically incomprehensible, a puzzle."

Clearly, Vesely, Reitz, Dörries and their followers are trying to achieve an agnostic film, a film that will mirror an irrational world, that will stand in contrast to the documentary or socially committed film. Hence Dörries, in *Algier-Report*, separates his hero from the surrounding world; Reitz shows mysterious shots of radar antennae, skeletons and signal poles: the world shall again become a mystery and

Man shall again become an unknown being.

It is difficult to expect the renovation of the German film from such esoteric directors. It is much more to be feared that the established film industry will concede an experimental field to the *avant garde;* the experiments would have no effect on anyone and give the commercial movie-man a good conscience. Reitz and Dörries however have the chance to win new followers: for two years they both have had jobs as professors of film direction at the "Hochschule für Gestaltung" in Ulm, an art academy along the lines of the Bauhaus, which also has a film department.

Recently a film appeared from the group at the Hochschule, the long experimental film, *Der Damm.* It is a work by the ex-Yugoslavian Vlado Kristl, whose short films *Don Quixote* and *Madeline-Madeline* had stirred some interest, due to their ludicrous humor. *Der Damm,* produced by Detten Schleirmacher, received considerable publicity before it was even finished because the lead actress Petra Krause, a very popular TV singer in Germany, jumped from a window to cure her heartbreak, and since then has been crippled. It is possible that this will remain the only reason that the public will take an interest in this film.

Der Damm begins with a long, Becket-like monologue, in a mixture of melancholy and banality. The implication is that these are the feelings of someone, although one can conclude this only much later. Then one sees the attractive Petra Krause being pushed back and forth on her wheel chair, first by a thin, weak but mysterious young man (Vlado Kristl), and then by a fat uniformed train conductor. The setting of the events is for the most part a bare, snow-covered landscape between river and trees, along the edge of which a long dam runs. There seems to be a rivalry building between the two men, and the younger seems to be the loser. Finally one sees him (several times) in a quarry, picking out a large stone which he carries around and finally carries to some unknown goal by means of an express train. But even my attempt here to reconstruct the "events" of the film relies to a large extent on interpretation, and might possibly be angrily rejected by Kristl. For *Der Damm* is carefully constructed in such a way that the audience has no starting point for identification or orientation. There are no scenes which are not broken apart and mixed with other fragments to the point that they are nonrecognizable, there is no logic to the dialogue, just meaningless talking past each other and word jumbles. There is scarcely a second which does not bring new, confusing cuts and montages, while the loudspeaker beats sharp and piercing electronic noises into the ears of the audience. The result is the complete absence of formal structure. Even if one can take some pleasure at the beginning in certain montage sequences, the everyday proceedings (like a telephone discussion in a cell) become unrecognizable. One becomes alienated, tired, and indifferent to the abstract sameness of the film—the insistent repetition of the same motives and same formal means. The main complaint one must make against Kristl is his lack of a basic idea, a conception. In order to present feelings and perceptions in the raw as this film obviously is trying to do, it is not sufficient to renounce any kind of structure and simply set microscopic montage fragments one after another. For them to actually become a statement, these fragments must be related to a kernel thought, as is the case in Alain Resnais' film *Muriel,* which Kristl may have had in mind as an artistic model (one can find clear reminiscences in *Der Damm* of *Hallelujah the Hills* and Polanski's *Mammels*). But one feels the formal alienation is presented for its own sake as *l'art pour l'art.* What Kristl really wants to say with this film remains in the dark. A single motive is clear: that is the Sisyphus motive, of the man who senselessly keeps pushing the stone up the hill; but this motive does not work as a clarifying "key," but as a piece of philosophical symbolism.

The only happy quality of *Der Damm* is a certain disposition of the author toward burlesque and sportive comedy. He integrates dancing, springs, and leaps into his acting, and

thereby perhaps keeps his film from sinking into a rather embarrassing pseudo-philosophy. Also, *Der Damm* has less of the predilection for agreeable, calligraphic scene formations than one finds in the other *avant-garde* German films, especially in those of Vesely. In this move away from superficial camera-lyricism there is something positive. Finally, however, there seem to be the same typical mistakes in *Der Damm* as in the other esoteric films: vagueness of form, intellectual emptiness, originality of expression merely for its own sake, and the imitation of foreign models.

Of course, it would be a false picture to reduce new German film-making to Vesely, Reitz, Dörries, and Vlado Kristl—that is, to a line of rigorous formalism and aestheticism. Although this line represents the main current, there is also a whole list of directors who do not fall into this pattern: e.g., Raimond Ruehl, Haro Senft, Franz-Josef Spieker, and Walter Krüttner. Their first short films don't yet yield a clear picture of personality; all of these men have made experimental films as well as realistic documentaries. Ruehl's most interesting films are *Salinas* (1960), an expressive, strong report on the difficult work of gathering salt in Spain, and *Gesicht von der Stange,* one of the many "questionable" films dealing with youth, which is about a young girl who has her hair cut in the manner of Jean Seberg. Here Ruehl is trying to show, in a little episode, the influence of films on young people of today. The film is lively and formally imaginative (and contains quotations from *Chien andalou* and *Rashomon*). Only the playing of the youths is not well done. Haro Senft demonstrates in *Kahl* (1961), a film about the construction of an atomic reactor, remarkable mastery in the use of filmic techniques. By means of montages and of repeated inserts of newsreel material he builds a panorama of political and social events as a background to the main story. Other shorts by Senft are *Parolen und Signale* (1962) and *Auto Auto* (1963). Krüttner and Spieker have made numerous documentaries, mostly for TV; of Krüttner's films, the ironic report of a hubbub of tourists at Hitler's former Upper Salzberg residence, *Es muss ein Stück von Hitler sein* (It Must be a Piece by Hitler—1963) is the most noteworthy.

Peter Schamoni and Alexander Kluge appear to prefer a realistic style. The two made together a formally imperfect but thematically noteworthy film on the architecture of the Third Reich, *Brutalität in Stein* (Brutality in Stone—1960). A filmic analysis of those rigid monumental constructions that the Nazis left behind, it attempts to portray the inhuman spirit of the regime; the commentary includes, among others, the explanations of Rudolf Höss, the former commandant of the Auschwitz concentration camp. *Brutalität in Stein* tries to say too many things at once, but it does present one of the rare cases in which a young director comes to terms with the Nazi problem, and hence it is worth one's attention. Since then, Schamoni has made a number of reportage films of little consequence, and together with the art-film expert Carl Lamb he made a film on the painter Max Ernst. Kluge, who is a writer as well, made a film on the situation of teachers in Germany (*Lehrer, 1963*). The film depicts some typical social fates of German schoolteachers through a half a century. Although this film holds one's attention by its careful political analysis, the effect is still incomplete. Two continuations, which, with the first part, were to form a trilogy, were never made.

Finally, the animated films of Wolfgang Urchs and Boris von Borresholm should be mentioned. They demonstrate not only a sense of fantasy and graphic talent, but they also possess thematic and topical importance as well. *Die Gartenzwerge* (1962) presents German postwar history as a satirical drama of industrious but not too intelligent dwarfs. *Das Unkraut* (1962) polemicized against the political apathy in present-day Germany: a strange weed, which is ignored by people, begins to grow in a city and finally grows over the city completely. *Die Pistole* (1963) relates—a little in the manner of Jan Lenica—the story of a

pistol, which embodies the destructive principle in Man or in history; small, microbe-like beings finally succeed, through the use of their intelligence, in conquering the pistol. In discussing animated films, we should also mention that Jan Lenica's *Die Nashörner* (inspired by Ionesco's play *The Rhinoceros*) was made in Germany, although it would be difficult to call this a German film.

Most of the young German directors (Rob Houwer should be included among them; he comes from Holland and has been busy lately primarily as a producer) are working on feature-film projects or scriptwriting along with their short-film work.

One group of the Oberhausen-Munich directors, for example, collaborated with the Hamburg producer Walter Koppel (who has since gone bankrupt) in making seven parts of an episodic film based on "factual" material from the sensation sheet *Bildzeitung*, which treats the dangers to which young girls of today are subject through the laxity in morals. The result was a film of preponderantly commercial tenor with the title, *Hütet Eure Töchter!* (*Protect Your Daughters!*) which finally reached the theaters in 1964. It is concerned with such themes as innocence led astray (three episodes by Eberhard Hauff, Wolf Hart, and Karl Schedereit), the work load which a young girl in a factory must suffer (episode by Walter Krüttner), child prostitution in a wrecked auto (Franz-Josef Spieker), and the relationship between the factory boss's daughter and a Sicilian worker (Rob Houwer). The seventh episode was finally dropped by the producer.

For a while great hopes were set on the Berlin director, Will Tremper. He started with *Flucht nach Berlin* (Escape to Berlin), a relatively sensational adventure film about the escape of a young man from East Germany to West Berlin, which, however, has some good atmospheric descriptions of a milieu. Above all, *Endlose Nacht* (1962) brought Tremper a certain renown as a hopeful young director. The film proceeds through a single night in the lobby of the West Berlin Tempelhof airport. Because of fog, a number of flights have been postponed; the passengers, who could not leave, wait for the morning. With this situation as the structure of his story, he then causes different human fates to cross one another. Thereby, in little scenes and incidental conversations, he catches much that is characteristic of Germany.

Basically, he depends upon spectacular effects and tension—and here we see that Tremper cannot escape the scandal journalism of his past. Such sensationalistic elements are also in the scripts which Tremper wrote after *Endlose Nacht*, e.g. the script for *Verspätung in Marienborn* (Delay in Marienborn), a TV film by Rolf Hädrich on the political East-West theme, describing, in a rather trite manner, an unsuccessful attempt at escape to West Germany (an actual occurrence).

Another independent production of the last few months must, unfortunately, also be characterized as a miserable failure: a film produced by the actor Peter Carsten and staged by the Czech exile Thomas Fantl, *Die Zeit der Schuldlosen* (The Time of the Innocent—1964). The story for this film is from material by the writer Siegfried Lenz, which first appeared as a novella, then as a radio play, and finally as a stage presentation, inevitably to be made into a movie. The film falls into that extremely vague and therefore specifically German category of "problem films," which by means of concrete treatment of selected conflicts tries to present "eternal" and "general" problems. In this film, we are concerned with the problem of guilt and responsibility. But why cannot things be called by their right names, and let the film take place in the time of the Nazis? Instead, we have a political dictator who resides "somewhere," and who forces a group of citizens to either interrogate or kill an arrested criminal. Several years later the same people meet together and hold a trial over the murder of the criminal, which one of them committed. But the film formulates its problem so abstractly, its characters are so stereotyped (they

Die Zeit der Schuldlosen

appear to be put together like cases in a superficial social investigation) and finally the direction is so weak and undifferentiated—not even worthy of a mediocre TV production—that one can only call this film an embarrassing misfire. The fact that *Die Zeit der Schuldlosen* won considerable official recognition—the film ran as the German entry at the last Berlin film festival and received several "German film prizes"—throws a bright light on the alarming situation of the German film and of the incompetence of those who are responsible for it.

Where, then, lie our hopes for the possible renovation of the German film—if we refuse to resign ourselves to hopelessness? Recently our expectations have been concentrated on two younger film directors: Hans Rolf Strobel and Heinz Tichawsky. Strobel and Tichawsky have made their joint productions primarily for TV; and some of them have been so successful that one can put them forward to perhaps halfway save the honor of the German film. The filmography of the two directors already runs to a number of titles. Most of their films are reportage, but this reportage is outstanding in its sharp sense of reality and the analytical and critical attitude with which the films meet that reality. Actually, Strobel and Tichawsky don't consider their work as art, but as filmic journalism, which, of course, doesn't keep their films from having artistic qualities. In *Notizen aus dem Altmühltal* (Notes from Altmühltal—1961) a typical film for them, they draw a portrait of a backward and underdeveloped region in northern Bavaria, which is nevertheless recommended to visitors as a tourist's paradise. In the manner of *cinéma-vérité,* they bring Count Pappenheim before the camera to explain his flag collection, they visit the city council during a sleepy session, they observe tourists who are lost in the admiration of patriotic monuments, investigate the living conditions of some Italian workers, and finally attend a sentimental play in the village theater. This film is not only made with irony and intelligence, but it successfully attempts to destroy a myth—the myth of the Altmühltal region as a tourist's dream—and sets in its place a critical picture of reality. It aroused a scandal in Germany (as have other Strobel–Tichawsky films) because certain of the people presented in the film felt themselves to be insulted; and only after much trouble and a trial did the directors succeed in getting their film "proclaimed" by the film evaluators.

In 1962, Strobel and Tichawsky made a film for TV on the problems of urbanism, which heavily criticized the building authorities of the city of Munich, and caused far-reaching discussions. But as of today, their best work is perhaps the long documentary *Notabene Mezzogiorno,* which discusses land reform in the south of Italy. This film (it won first prize in Florence in the festival of ethnographic films) is a montage and new arrangement of several shorts which the directors had made already earlier in Italy. It contrasts several individual life stories of people from the rural regions of southern Italy, and concentrates especially on the case of a peasant who is moved from a mountain village to a fruitful region on the plain, but out of ignorance does not correctly use his land, and hence must live in misery. Strobel and Tichawsky have the peasants speak directly before the camera, and let them act out situations from their everyday lives. The main theme of the film is the difficulty of planting the spirit of progress and autonomy in a land that has been exploited and suppressed for

centuries. The individual episodes acquire a special authenticity by being situated in time and place by subtitles, which break into the action and keep the audience at a distance. And what we had hoped now seems about to be realized; namely that Strobel and Tichawsky would tackle a theme from contemporary Germany. The two directors are at present working on a feature film with documentary sequences on the conventions of marriage in the prosperous society, which they intend to entitle, *Ehescheidung* (Divorce).

Another young director, upon whom our hopes are also set, is Peter Lilienthal. He has so far worked only for television, which, in its relative liberality towards the young directors, has become a sort of Maecenas. Lilienthal has adapted material from Slawomir Mrozek and Francisco Arabal as well as Klaus Röhler. For television he made a long feature film in realistic decor: *Stück für Stück*, the story of a boy who buys himself a bicycle, piece by piece, with money he has saved. This film is convincing by its realistic background (everyday Berlin) as well as by its psychological analysis (the relationship of the boy to his mother), and by its careful, expressive camera work. Lilienthal's most personal creation so far is no doubt the short film *Jede Stunde verletzt und die letzte tötet* (Every hour hurts, and the last one kills), based on the play *Guernica* by Francisco Arabal. The highly stylized, theatrical material—a man and a woman search for each other in the ruins of a destroyed house—has a dreamlike quality which is achieved by surrealistic montages and the blending in of foreign film materials (as scenes out of Buñuel's *Las Hurdes*). This film was produced for the Baden-Baden television, but because of its strange shock effects was not broadcast, and so far has only appeared at the Knokke festival.

If one sees a real talent in Peter Lilienthal, it is harder to say this of Michael Pfleghar, who also started in television, and who recently made his debut in the film world with a feature, *Die Tote von Beverly Hills* (The Dead Woman of Beverly Hills). This film (which was made in the U.S. under very adventurous circumstances—Hans-Jürgen Pohland was the producer) is a colorful comedy, which tries to be witty and original, but is actually quite banal and embarrassing in its attempt to be significant. Overworked gags stand next to washed-out jokes, a disagreeable, tasteless mixture.

What is fatal about the situation of the German film is the fact that its condition has scarcely changed since 1960. The economic crisis and the lack of inspiration have become permanent, and at the moment only the new feature project of Strobel and Tichawsky offers any immediately interesting prospects. There is perhaps some hope, in a longer view, in the improved situation in publications on film criticism: *FilmKritik* and *Film* in Munich, *Filmstudio* in Frankfurt. But most of the German producers have still learned nothing from their bitter experiences. Perhaps the crisis will have to sharpen, the intellectual emptiness become even more unbearable, before something new can begin. Perhaps we must wait for the complete collapse of the old structures which have led the German film into its blind alley, so that the younger generation can take the reins and show their talents, and carry through the revolution announced in the Oberhausen manifesto two years ago, for which we have as yet been waiting in vain.

[*Translation: Marigay Graña*]

NOTES

1. Printed in *Cinema*, Zollicon, 8, annual series No. 31, Fall, 1962. The manifesto was signed by Bodo Blüthner, Boris v. Borresholm, Christian Doermer, Bernhard Dörries, Heinz Furchner, Rob Houwer, Fredinand Khittl, Alexander Kluge, Pitt Koch, Walter Krüttner, Dieter Lemmel, Hans Loeper, Ronald Martini, Hans-Jürgen Pohland, Raimond Rhuel, Edgar Reitz, Peter Schamoni, Detten Schleiermacher, Fritz Schwennicke, Haro Senft, Franz-Josef Spieker, Hans Rolf Strobel, Heinz Tichawsky, Wolfgang Urchs, Herbert Vesely, Wolf Wirth.

2. Bernhard Dörries, "Folgen einer Verschiebung der Aufmerksamkeitsrichtung." *Output* Ulm, annual series 2, No. 15, pp. 32 ff.

HOWARD JUNKER

The National Film Board of Canada: After a Quarter Century

It started with John Grierson. Trumpeters of the Sound Track Band delivered a fanfare. And the grand old man of documentary film entered to open the 25th-anniversary celebration of the National Film Board of Canada. Friends, civil servants, and creative people rose and applauded. The reception was warm and a little reverent.

"Don't believe the love feast," Grierson said after the speeches gave way to cocktails. "They treat me like I was. . . . I thought at least someone would ask me for an autograph. I feel like Hindenburg; I'd sign anything."

The cantankerous, 66-year-old Scot is revered for much more than his part in getting government film operation going in Canada. As he put it years ago:

"We who were talking simultaneously about

above: The Parade from *Les Raquetteurs*

film in the public service proceeded to do something about it. We found money somehow; we built the documentary and educational film movements; we founded the Empire Film Library and other film libraries; we grew a school of film-makers; we made hundreds of films; we outspoke, out-wrote, out-manoeuvred our oppositions, and drove our way to the screens of the country."

Grierson even gets credit for first use of the word "documentary." The film he gave the new label, in 1926, was Robert Flaherty's Samoan idyll, *Moana.*

Together the two masters divide the possibilities of documentary concern. Flaherty was a lyric poet, Grierson a polemicist. United by their regard for "natural material," they differed on the kind of reality worth considering. Grierson didn't give a damn about the noble savages Flaherty showed in struggle with walruses, the sea, or their own painless existence.

Grierson wanted nothing to do with escapism or aestheticism. The problems he faced were problems to be solved, through community action, in the workaday world. His first film, the cornerstone of British documentary, *The Drifters* (1929), sought to bring alive, in the story of North Sea fishermen, "the ardour and bravery of common labour."

Grierson developed the idea of film-maker as public servant and gadfly, working within the confines of government organizations. First with the Empire Marketing Board, then with the General Post Office film unit, Grierson brought together a group of young British intellectuals who were also interested in using film to express a social consciousness. With Basil Wright, Paul Rotha, Stuart Legg, and others, Grierson stressed the prestige film—propaganda that people would want to see because it was well done. Prestige films were "designed to convey ideas and create loyalties with regard to a country, department or organization . . . to bring alive in narrative or dramatic terms some particular aspect of community life and achievement."

These were the ideas and the record Grierson brought to Canada. He arrived in 1938, asked by the government to report on "every phase of the production and distribution of Canadian films." He found a Motion Picture Bureau, set up in 1914, which had a one-man creative staff, a few competent civil servants, and a good plant. He recommended that all government film work be handled by one agency, that an all-embracing distribution network be developed.

Based on Grierson's program, the National Film Board of Canada was created by Act of Parliament, October 2, 1939. Though always eager to return to England, Grierson stayed with the Board until the war had ended. He built the staff around a handful of friends he brought with him. At its peak in 1945 the Board numbered 787, just a few more than its present strength. As he had done before in England, Grierson had trained a generation of film-makers.

After the war, the Film Board entered a ten-year decline. The departure of the British film-makers hurt; the adjustment to peacetime production was difficult. The advent of television also kept the Board off stride. A renaissance finally got under way in the middle 'fifties, coinciding with the Board's move from its Ottawa sawmill to a $6 million plant on the outskirts of Montreal. Not only did this mean the Board would be permanent, which Parliament had given frequent reason to doubt, it also meant the Board was that much further removed from government surveillance, that much closer to a midpoint between French and English Canada.

Today, from a distance, the Film Board appears to be a monolithic atelier which makes nothing but arty documentaries. (Since its first Oscar, for *Churchill's Island* (1940) the Board has accumulated over 600 awards, lately at the rate of 60 per year.) Actually, the strength of the Board lies not in being fancy, but in consistently producing films of high competence and utility.

The current catalogue contains 1000 titles on a multitude of subjects. There are cartoons like *My Financial Career,* based on a Stephen

Leacock story; instructional films like *Air Transportable Elevator Assembly and Operation;* enrichment films like *Lewis Mumford on the City;* Canadian films like *St. Lawrence Seaway* and *Calgary Stampede*; historical re-enactments; films on the poets and artists of Canada, on the industries, the folk groups; films on mental health, the climates of North America; films like *Universe* which explored the solar system; like *A St. Henri le 5 Septembre,* which spent a day in Montreal's worker district. In all, the Film Board is a rather multifarious factory.

Its purpose, as stated in the Film Act, and always quoted when criticizing the Board for not doing what it should, is certainly wide enough to allow some interpretation: "to initiate and promote the production and distribution of films in the national interest and in particular . . . films designed to interpret Canada to Canadians and to other nations."

Last year the Board carried out its mission with 508 motion picture items, including 2 features, 81 original films, 173 revisions and versions, 66 film strips and 26 photo-stories. It reached a global audience of 600 million with 30 films a day on TV, almost 750,000 16mm projections, and over 30,000 theater bookings.

The Film Board's distribution network is the best in the world. Its reputation is so awesome partly because so many people have seen its work. (Last year 17 movie trucks were given to African nations.) And the Board's film-makers are never left—as even Academy Award winners in the U.S. like Louis Stoumen and Robert Hughes have been stranded—with a great film and no one willing to release it.

Total Film Board expense last year was $9.5 million, of which $2.6 million was earned back through work for other government agencies and sales and rentals.

Impressed with the Film Board's record, depressed with problems of sponsorship in their own market, many American film-makers wish the U.S. could create a duplicate. Our closest equivalent, the Motion Picture Service of the U.S. Information Agency, handles only the foreign propaganda portion of government film business. It cannot show its work at home (so as not to compete with Private Enterprise) and does not maintain more than a token working stable of creative people.

Proponents of an American Board are not so much interested in centralizing government production as they are in finding someone to encourage experimentation and research in film making. The Ford Foundation gave grants to twelve film-makers this year. Perhaps a federal group, like the National Science Foundation, could do more. And generally it is thought an American Board might produce those films which are too marginal, too original, or too controversial to attract commercial interest.

In practice, of course, the Film Board is not always utopian. It enjoys the problems of any bureaucracy. It is sometimes stodgy, sometimes in-grown, sometimes wasteful. Internal politics, inertia, drudgery temper the Board image—as seen from the inside.

During the war, because Grierson insisted on showing both sides of the story, the Board was accused of being soft on Germany. After the war the Board had to survive a red scare. Though no longer accused of being Commie-ridden, the Board has the contrary disadvantage of being tied to the government. Responsible to the Secretary of State for Canada, the Board officially comprises three government ministers, the Government Film Commissioner (currently Guy Roberge, the first French Canadian to hold the post) and five private citizens. And Parliament must approve the budget each year—a task that becomes increasingly perfunctory, however, as the Board's prestige grows.

The most serious difficulty official status imposes on the Board concerns the kind of films it can make. As critic and ex-Board film-maker Robert Russell asked last winter:

"Will it ever be possible for film-makers within the structure of the Film Board to talk about love and sex and political aspirations and social change and all those things which man holds dear? Or will they be confined to talk about the history of paper making and asbestos

mining and Canadian wildlife and urban redevelopment with, as someone said, Slow zooms on quiet seagulls?"

In short, although there are infrequent complaints of outright censorship, for the most part the Board simply avoids potentially disturbing subjects. Film-makers who choose to work at the Board elect as well to work within its limitations.

"If you want to do something that will stick in the government's craw," says director Donald Brittain, "You can always take a leave of absence and do it outside. But there are enough subjects you can do here, in enough different styles, to keep you at work despite the frustrations."

Brittain proved that the truly creative filmmaker can transcend seemingly pedestrian assignments with one of last year's best films, *Fields of Sacrifice*. Sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs, the film was to show Canadian war cemeteries in Europe. Brittain made a beautiful memorial, in style much like *Night and Fog*.

If there are times when the Board acts against its artists, it has also indulged Norman McLaren, discovered by Grierson at the 3rd Scottish Amateur Film Festival in 1936.

Since then McLaren has worked in an ivory tower, probably the least-harassed government employee in the world. Besides painting and scratching and drawing directly on film, McLaren has also worked with drawn sound tracks and other forms of synthetic sound. He has interpreted folksongs in animation, invented 3-D cartoons, even used the lines of a cathode-ray tube as means for animated expression. His experimentation with manipulating graphic, cut-out, and painted material in front of a camera continued with his work in "pixillation," the live animation of actors in the films *Neighbors* (1952) and *A Chairy Tale* (1957).

Fields of Sacrifice

Arthur Lipsett has also been given great freedom. He has made three photo-collage-montages which have very little to do with Canada. His first, *Very Nice, Very Nice*, however, which he made on his own time with scraps of image and sound he picked up from the cutting tables of other editors, was not released in Canada until after it had been nominated for an Oscar and played with *Viridiana* in New York. (Lipsett's recent work, *Free Fall* and *21-87*, seems repetitious—the whole idea of wildly flashing stills and phrases wears quickly.)

Other film-makers have also had to buck the run-of-the-mill. One of the Board's most popular films, *Corral* (1954), the first by Colin Low, now one of the giants of the Board and its chief interpreter of the West (*City of Gold, Circle of the Sun, The Days of Whisky Gap, The Hutterites*) showed the taming of a wild horse in pictures alone—it used no narration. The authorities balked at such a then-unheard-of practice, but Tom Daly, a Grierson veteran and champion of creative directors at the Board, was able to get the picture by with only a few written words at the beginning.

The first French adventure with *cinéma-vérité*, *Les Raquetteurs* (1958), ran into similar trouble. Michel Brault, who went on to work with Rouch on *Chronique d'un Eté* and later made *Pour la Suite du monde*, was sent out on his first picture as cameraman-director, a seven-minute newsreel on a meeting of snow shoe enthusiasts; he brought back a mess of footage which no one except Daly and producer Guy Glover thought could make a film. Gilles Groulx, who had gone with Brault on the film, cut it on

his own time. *Les Raquetteurs* has all the detail and thereness of later *cinéma-vérité* work with none of the pretension.

Groulx' next montage, *Normetal,* was changed after he had finished it, from a pessimistic view of the life of miners, to an optimistic one. Refusing to sign it, Groulx had to wait a year for his next film. Similarly, one-time lumberjack Arthur Lamothe's *Les Bucherons de la Manouane* (The Woodcutters) was toned down where it had attempted to explain how the Archbishop condoned the exploitation of the woodcutters. These instances of outright censorship, it should be repeated, are not the general rule.

Certain young French Canadians continue to feel frustrated at the Board. Anxious to be *auteurs,* to speak of their own problems and of the crisis in Quebec, they want to go beyond the documentary approach. They are, for the most part, separatists. (In general, separatists resent being dominated by English Canada, fear their own culture is slowly being compromised, and therefore demand a French-speaking Quebec independent from the rest of Canada.) Separatists have been particularly critical of the Board.

"The Film Board is an instrument of colonization," wrote Pierre Maheu in an editorial in last April's *Parti Pris,* a violently separatist magazine. "It is a gigantic propaganda machine whose role is to put the public to sleep and to exhaust the creative drive of the film-makers."

In the same issue five young French-Canadian directors gave their own, decidedly less rhetorical views. They said they were unable to express themselves (1) within the limitations of a government organization, (2) within the exceedingly narrow limits of documentary, and (3) outside the Board, since the Board has prevented the development of a private film industry. They complained of censorship, and worst of all, of self-censorship. They complained about the kind of "folklore" films the Board insists on making. They were reprimanded for their outburst, told not to let it happen again, but nothing more.

Barbara Ulrich in *Le Chat dans le Sac*

In fact, the angriest of them managed to do a feature at the Board this spring. Gilles Groulx' *Le Chat dans le Sac* shows a young writer who wants to be *éngagé,* but finds himself checked at every turn by the establishment. *Le Chat* cost only $38,000, was named best Canadian feature at the Fifth Montreal Film Festival (which was begun by two members of the Board) and is amazingly risqué for something by the Board. It contains love scenes and plenty of topical, political comment. At one point, the heroine quips: "Don't think the cinema is an immature art just because you've seen a Film Board film."

Despite the apparent freedom *Le Chat* implies, Groulx considers it a timid experiment: "My feature changes nothing. The administration didn't think much of my ideas, but they thought they'd let it pass. Now the question of a next film comes up. And I don't look forward to it. I know almost exactly what will happen. . . . I'm going to give things a year, and if they don't improve, I'll give up the cinema and go make money. If I can't create, I'd just as soon make money."

In the past five years the Board has received considerable attention as a cradle of *cinéma-vérité.* Here as elsewhere, the work was done by a few film-makers working within the giant

structure. And in this case, against it. Disgust with the way films were being made at the Board, a desire to get out of the studio into the midst of life motivated a small group which worked under Tom Daly and centered around Roman Kroiter, Wolf Koenig, and Terry Filgate.

Kroiter and Koenig both joined the Board in the late 'forties, Koenig a farm boy whose lucky break came when a Board team shot on his farm, Kroiter a college student who worked at the Board during vacations. The two became quick friends and spent a great deal of time during their apprenticeship criticizing what they saw. Kroiter's first film *Paul Tomkowicz, Street-Railway Switchman* (1954—the same year as Leacock's *Toby*) showed his regard for the ordinary, basic stuff of reality. The switchman cleans the tracks in the winter night, has a midnight snack, and cleans the tracks. No heroism, no sentiment—just what happens, ennobled not because the switchman plays a vital role in modern transportation, but because he does his job, lives his life.

The demands of television for new material gave Kroiter and Koenig a chance to practice their ideas in a half-hour series, which they called The Candid Eye. Beginning with the idea that just shooting whatever they could find that might be interesting in *The Days Before Christmas,* culminating in the classic *Lonely Boy,* the team produced fifteen reportage films—less crucial-event conscious than the films of Drew Associates, less doctrinaire and more structured than those of the Maysles, less intellectually poetic than Marker or Reichenbach, less fictional than Rouch.

In general, objectivity, for the team, included making a judgment. As Koenig put it: a film should show how things really are, not simply what they appear to be. Thus, the team did not feel bound by the rigid noninterventionism that bound the Americans. In *Blood and Fire,* a look at the Salvation Army, the team encouraged a prayer meeting leader to try to persuade someone to come out of the congregation and make his confession. That this did happen made the film. Were the film-makers wrong to have asked for it?

Similarly, the team made extensive use of interviews, seldom tried to stick to an event all through its development, was not above having fun with a subject, as in *I Was a Ninety-Pound Weakling,* which wandered through the inanity of contemporary physical-culture parlors. Filgate's *The Back-Breaking Leaf,* on the other hand, had a news-report quality in its consideration of workers in the tobacco harvest. The film had social consequences as it brought the public's attention to the problem.

In all, though the Candid Eye group believed in being "clear water" through which their subject might reveal itself, their interest in reality as spontaneity was subordinate to their interest in reality as something to be structured, polished, and evaluated. Their conception of the film-maker did not extend to self-annihilation, although, to be sure, their films were not directed in the everyday sense of complete control of subject matter. (Because they tended to work as a team, frequently changing functions, they found it almost impossible to say who was responsible for what in a given film.)

On the French-Canadian side, *cinéma-vérité* was carried further and abused more. At its best in *Pour la suite du monde* the French Canadians used *cinéma-vérité* as an instrument of exploration, as a way of preserving a culture in danger of extinction. *Cinéma-vérité* at its worst can be seen in *Voir Miami, Quebec, USA,* and *A Saint Henri le 5 Septembre.* Here the candid eye degenerates into travelogue shot haphazardly with an emphasis on the snide or the sexy (the candid leg) or the sentimental. The resulting formlessness is then wrapped up in misty intellectualized poesy.

Day After Day, an analysis of what it's like to work in a paper plant, makes good use of the poetic, bits-and-pieces kind of commentary. The film lacks sympathy, however, a general fault with the French-Canadian film-makers, who in dealing with common people and problems seem to have difficulty giving up their

roles as elite artists. Typically, films begin on the road toward where the quaint slobs live and end with the drive back to civilization, and aren't we glad we're not them.

The rage this year in Canada has been the possibility of a Canadian feature-film industry. Only two dozen Canadian features had ever been made, none for a decade, when *Seul ou avec d'autres* (1962) was made for $11,000 by students of the University of Montreal with the embarrassed assistance of Brault and Groulx. Three features were made last year: *Pour la suite du monde,* Claude Jutra's *A tout prendre* (an experiment in psycho-drama which deals with Jutra's own affair with a Negro model), and the Film Board's history-drama about settlers in Saskatchewan, *The Drylanders.*

This year there were five. Two were made at the Board: Groulx' *Le Chat,* and *Nobody Waved Goodbye,* Don Owen's Rouchian examination of a youth in revolt. *Trouble-Fête,* made by ex-Film Board director Pierre Patry, was another story of a schoolboy in revolt. Two features were produced by Budge Crawley, giant of the industrial film world in Canada.

Though the Board has produced four of the nine recent features, it has been an ambiguous pioneer—none of its first features was originally intended as such. In fact, 29-year-old Owen was supposed to do a half-hour documentary on how probation officers treat problem kids. Owen, however, spent his budget on stock, went to Toronto, and came back with a feature in the can. Groulx' feature was similarly a wildcat venture, while *Drylanders* and *Pour la suite* simply grew too long.

This year the Board has prepared: an instructional feature on prison problems for the Department of Penal Service; a documentary feature on antique furniture in co-production with France, directed by Georges Rouquier; and a sketch film on adolescence, a co-production with France, Italy, and Japan, with parts directed by Brault, Rouch, Gian Vittorio Baldi, and Hiroshi Teshigara.

Independent film-makers in Canada have nowhere begun to approach this level of sophistication. Most of them are still in the whining stage: we can't find a backer, because we can't get distribution; we can't make a distribution deal, because we can't arrange financing.

Only Crawley, whose industrial house grosses $1 million a year and is, like the Board, 25 years old, has been able to make a genuine start. His first feature, *Amanita Pestilens,* directed by René Bonnière, shot in both English and French (a third of Canada speaks French) is a suburban satire about mushrooms on the lawn and a waste of $350,000. The second, *The Luck of Ginger Coffey,* was co-produced with Walter Reade-Sterling's Continental.

Fortunately there are nationalistic feelings which may unite behind the film-makers to help a feature industry get going: if other nations can enjoy their own image on the screen, why not Canada?

At the Film Board's anniversary, State Secretary Maurice Lamontagne replied that the Government is about to ask Parliament to set up a loan fund to assist feature production. Unfortunately, the same day, opposition leader Diefenbaker told Parliament that, as far as he's concerned, Canada has more important problems to consider than partnership in the movie business. So the matter will stew a while longer.

What's really needed, nonetheless, is not aid but a big hit, since each flop destroys another potential backer. A case in point is the disgrace this fall of Jean-Pierre Bernier's *La Terre à Boire* (script and performance by Montreal DJ and character Patrick Straram), which will keep the financing theater chain, United Amusements, away from Canadian features for a long time.

But a string of second features is being made. Patry has finished *La Corde au Cou* and has begun *Cain.* Brault and Groulx are at work on new features for the Board. Lamothe has a budget of $150,000 (put up by Pathé) to film *Poussière sur la Ville,* a novel about union struggles in a mining town. And Gilles Carle, having

just finished his first feature at the Board, *Un Cactus dans la Neige,* has begun an independent comedy, *Faut-il Coucher avec Lili?*

Whereas an English Canadian director with talent would probably wander off to Hollywood, like Norm Jewison, the French Canadians may be expected to stay home. It is their desire to make features, no matter what, that will get the domestic industry going.

Meanwhile, back at the Board, Kroiter and Low are preparing *Labyrinth* for Expo '67, the Montreal World's Fair. (The Film Board's presentation at last year's Toronto Exposition, *Sixty Years of Canadian History,* showed excerpts from newsreels beginning in 1904, projected simultaneously on 13 screens.)

Labyrinth, the latest effort to transform cinema into *gesamte Kunst,* will move five hundred spectators at a time through a forty-minute, four-chambered, $6 million philosophical and architectural extravaganza.

"It sounds pompous," says Kroiter, "but we are trying to show people what they see, to show them the wonders of the world and of themselves.

"We use the Theseus myth as a proto-story. It's a pattern found everywhere. Really, it's the discovery of the nature of the self, in the course of which a false definition is destroyed and a truer realization achieved. It feels like dying, actually it's exactly the opposite."

Francis Thompson, who made the Johnson's Wax Pavilion's *To Be Alive!* for the New York fair, and myth-pattern scholar Northrup Frye are acting as consultants.

The grandeur of the plans, even as they stand now in miniature mock-up, the vast combinations of screens, the sincerity of Kroiter and Low themselves, their concern with communicating basic philosophical principles, could make *Labyrinth* the greatest movie show ever.

Festivals–1964

JUDITH SHATNOFF

Cannes

Strangely enough, when the Festival is over, the films which remain most in the critic's memory are more those of a "parallel Festival" than those of the official one.

Patronized by the French Association of Film Critics, the "Critics Week" limited to first or second films, has given us the opportunity to see films from countries which do not usually give us to know much of their production (*Hunchman's Night,* Iran, for instance). It also gives us some revelations on newcomers whose work might otherwise have been ignored. No doubt *La Vie à l'Envers* (France, Alain Jessua) and *Prima della Revoluzione* (Italy, Bernardo Bertolucci) are indicating new ways for these two countries. No doubt also that it was for us more interesting to see *Goldstein* (B. Manaster and P. Kaufman) and *Point of Order* (E. de Antonio and D. Talbot) than to see *The Fall of the Roman Empire* which opened the Festival.

But this role of discoverer of new talent has also been shared by the official Festival:

We have seen a remarkable Brazilian film (*The Black God and the Blond Devil,* by Glauber Rocha) a romancero of the Brazilian bush, the sertao, sometimes difficult to follow, sometimes bordering on the surrealist, but always deeply involved with the saga of the Brazilian people.

We have cried–in fact the whole Festival audience never cried so much–with, for us, the first really moving and effective treatment of the Negro problem *One Potato Two Potato,* (Larry Peerce, USA). We cried with Barbara Barry who tries in the film to vanquish the colour bar, and got the prize for the best feminine acting in the process.

We lived through a "different" experience with Hiroshi Teshigahara (Japan) whose *Woman in the Dunes* through a realistic tale of a village threatened by the sands, leads us into a metaphysical reflection of the freedom of mankind. We have shuddered with *The Passenger* (Poland) which did not make us discover its author but confirmed to us that with this last unfinished film Munk had reached the level of the greatest. We have laughed–for the first years since decades–and thoroughly enjoyed a charming, witty, musical comedy coming from . . . the U.S.S.R. *I Walk Around Moscow* which tends to prove that stern, austere problems are not the only ones that can arise in that country.

We have been convinced that François Truffaut is one of the greatest talents in France today, even when–as with *La Peau Douce*–he decides to treat a subject–adultery–which may not always have the same importance, the same attraction–the same fascination as did *Les Quatre Cents Coups, Tirez sur le Pianiste* and *Jules et Jim.*

Françoise Dorléac in *La Peau Douce*

We have seen what can happen when a man like Germi decides to go too far, with *Seduced And Abandoned* (Italy) where he plunges into bad taste and a ridiculous caricature of Sicilian life.

We have been a little disappointed to see the "Grand Prix" go to *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg,* so charming, so well decorated, so nicely sung, with a music which is not too unusual and about people who are not unusual at all.

I believe one can say of the 1964 Cannes Festival what is said of a film which has charm and interest but does not belong among the greatest: minor but interesting: no *Leopard* this year, no *8½* but an honest amount of valuable films—in and out of the Festival—which prove that if Cannes did not exist someone should invent it.

JUDITH SHATNOFF

New York

In September, when the New York Film Festival was welcomed to Lincoln Center for a second time, it seemed a lively start for the cultural season, which had slumped badly all summer, despite propaganda to the contrary and despite the commercial glitter of the World's Fair. For the festival arrived with fanfare and promise—an event not to be missed: the cream of other festivals collected and packaged for thirteen New York days and nights, plus special extras—called "New York Festival Choice 1964"—plus directors and stars to introduce their films—all this and *Art.* Or so proclaimed the festival advertisements and program notes. But the festival was a dud.

It was an international, formal, weighty festival, even an efficient festival, smoothly managed by a cordial staff.

And it was a festive festival which opened grandly, Victorian style, with the Russian idea of *Hamlet,* although afterwards, at a black-tie reception, a large crowd invited from the press and the industry could wander the Grand Promenade of Philharmonic Hall, champagne glasses in hand, to look at an opposite extreme in film—at the 8mm projector boxes on which Andy Warhol's Pop-adventures *Kiss, Eat, Sleep,* and *Haircut* were perpetually the same. Thus the opening predicted what was to come—that in the selection of films all tastes would be embraced, from square to hip, from sweeping gesture to solipsistic diddling, from films with social message to fairytales, love films, films about personal anguish, a film about eating spaghetti; films by new directors, by established favorites, independent films and those deformed representatives of Hollywood, *Fail Safe* and *Lilith*—you name it, the festival had it. But as the festival went on (two shows an evening, previews for the press, twenty-six features and twenty-five shorts in thirteen days) it became a little hard to justify sitting so long in the dark. Breadth of taste, weight, homage to Art, democratic or heroic eclectism aside, there just weren't many good films to see.

Of the eighteen features I sat through I can recommend Jean-Luc Godard's *A Woman Is a Woman* because it is charming entertainment, richly colored, full of silly in-jokes, absurdities, play and music, and makes no pretension to be more. And I recommend with greater enthusiasm Hiroshi Teshigahara's *Woman in the Dunes,* easily the prize of the festival, and the

Françoise Dorléac in *La Peau Douce*

We have seen what can happen when a man like Germi decides to go too far, with *Seduced And Abandoned* (Italy) where he plunges into bad taste and a ridiculous caricature of Sicilian life.

We have been a little disappointed to see the "Grand Prix" go to *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg,* so charming, so well decorated, so nicely sung, with a music which is not too unusual and about people who are not unusual at all.

I believe one can say of the 1964 Cannes Festival what is said of a film which has charm and interest but does not belong among the greatest: minor but interesting: no *Leopard* this year, no *8½* but an honest amount of valuable films—in and out of the Festival—which prove that if Cannes did not exist someone should invent it.

JUDITH SHATNOFF

New York

In September, when the New York Film Festival was welcomed to Lincoln Center for a second time, it seemed a lively start for the cultural season, which had slumped badly all summer, despite propaganda to the contrary and despite the commercial glitter of the World's Fair. For the festival arrived with fanfare and promise—an event not to be missed: the cream of other festivals collected and packaged for thirteen New York days and nights, plus special extras—called "New York Festival Choice 1964"—plus directors and stars to introduce their films—all this and *Art.* Or so proclaimed the festival advertisements and program notes. But the festival was a dud.

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only film I saw at the festival, except Buñuel's *L'Age d'Or,* in which the brilliance of the photography and the complexities of the story were artistically integrated. Shortly after the festival, both films opened successfully in New York; both films, too, were box-office sell-outs at the festival—the Godard film most likely because it is Godard, and *Woman in the Dunes* on a sweep of sensational publicity.

It should be noted that the Philharmonic Hall is an extraordinary place to *see* film. There are visual difficulties—the gold-leaf decoration on the loges reflects sidelight into the orchestra audience's eyes and the acoustics are weird. While one can hear every whisper of one's neighbor, many soundtracks are muffled. (*Fail Safe,* for instance, was almost unintelligible, although the boos and hoots of the audience came through loud and clear.) But it is to the ugly palace of the establishment that audiences flock. New Yorkers bought out tickets to favored films before the festival opened—to *Hamlet* (the opener), to *Woman in the Dunes, A Woman Is a Woman,* Donner's *To Love,* to *Bande à Part*—Jean-Luc Godard's newest fairy-tale about the same old gang of kids, and to Luis Buñuel's classic *L'Age d'Or* (1930), and his latest, *Diary of a Chambermaid.* Oddly enough, in these choices audiences were largely right; what they missed, that is, what was left half- or scantily-attended, wasn't worth the $3 to $4 top price of the festival—anyway not with the Beatles' movie playing at local theaters.

L'Age d'Or, however, is a brilliant film, full of venom and wit that hits deeply, if youthfully, at every evil. Seeing it, one understands why it has been kept under covers and might still be confined to coterie audiences if Buñuel were not Buñuel—"called a genius and dismissed," as D. H. Lawrence put it.

L'Age d'Or begins documentary-style, with the life and mating habits of scorpions, then cuts to a ragged half-starved band of rebels in a shack; cuts to a triumvirate of bishops jutting from the Spanish coast as solidly as the rocks on which they are enthroned; cuts to the rebels staggering through the barren Spanish countryside (one by one they fall and perhaps die—from starvation, deprivation); cuts to a view of a lovely cove in which a party of little boats land like explorers reaching the new world—but out of these boats step state and society dignitaries who have come to honor the empty robes of the church and to found a city on the hallowed rocks, and a man and a woman who begin to roll sexily in the mud, in the midst of these solemnities. The man and woman are dragged apart, the solemnities continue, the cornerstone of the city is laid and mortared with manure, and *L'Age d'Or* proceeds to savagely elaborate on the human nature and conditions it has illustrated—to satirize civilization's most cherished illusions, society, love, religion, culture.

L'Age d'Or is a savage, shocking, witty film, unified by the anti-Spanish, anti-Christian-civilization viewpoint of its creator (Salvador Dali collaborated on the screenplay), to which the surrealist technique fits almost without a flaw—from the dairy cow on the bed of the woman to the view of this woman, reunited with the man (a diplomat, an official keeper of the code who is the most outrageous breaker of all codes), expressing her sexual rapture by sucking the big toe of a statue of Venus; from her desertion of the man for an old and lecherous conductor of Wagnerian music, to the blasphemous climax: Christ exposed as the conductor of an orgy; Christ, un-bearded, looking very like a Bourbon King of Spain.

Seeing Buñuel's remake of *Diary of a Chambermaid* the same evening as *L'Age d'Or,* one also saw a view blackened, lacking the wit, the ragged but persevering band of rebels, or even a developed central character to hold the blackness of the photography to the black view of sex and politics. The chambermaid, Celestine, should be both commentator and protagonist, but in Buñuel's version of the Mirbeau novel, Celestine is only inscrutable. No one can tell why she does what she does or why anyone must look so long, so close, and so often, in film after film, at Jeanne Moreau's sulky down-turned mouth.

Jeanne Moreau in *Diary of a Chambermaid*

When Jean Renoir made his version of the story, he wildly mocked the decadence of the aristocracy and the upward clambering of the servant class while, incidentally, knocking the historical romance to pieces. Renoir's bouncy Celestine (Paulette Goddard) is actively after Prince Charming and seems to wink at Strindberg as she tells the sinister head-servant Joseph (Francis Lederer) that he has the "soul of a servant." Modernized and political, Buñuel extends that theme: the soul of a servant is the soul of Fascism, and Joseph (Georges Geret), the servant-Fascist-rapist-killer, rises to a petty bourgeois chanting Vichy slogans. It is Joseph's film—but then, as performed and directed, Georges Geret's motivations are as inscrutable as Miss Moreau's. Really it is no one's film, but a filmed mood, and while the scene is France the mood continues *Viridiana* Spain. Buñuel concentrates on gloomy interiors, gloomy winter exteriors, until all is black on black, full of fetish, mordant sex, and rape decorated with snails crawling—at the film's pace. *Diary of a Chambermaid* was an interesting disappointment.

There were other, though less interesting, disappointments to come. I had had hopes for the work of two new and very young independent directors, Alain Jessua (*Inside Out*) and Bernardo Bertolucci (*Before the Revolution*). Both films came from Cannes with honor—although festival honors no longer seem to indicate quality, only honor. *Inside Out* was further touted in the festival program notes as "Alienation or Zen?"—two of the mighty topics. But as it developed, *Inside Out* was only a mildly interesting I-view of a dull (possibly homosexual) fellow mistreating his charming little wife as he goes mad. There are some scenes, particularly a picnic episode, which indicate that Jessua is very talented; there are also some clever touches to *Inside Out,* scenes in which the hero, as ego in command, refuses to see bothersome humans and they, obligingly, disappear. Other sequences in which the hero contemplates a tree, bread, a wine bottle, his wife's skin, are cleanly rendered, using huge close-ups of these objects quite like the intense inspection of everyday in Pop art and in schizophrenia—where the film unfortunately ends. Whatever philosophical or social content the film may have contained dwindled to clinical psychology. As for *Before the Revolution*—for as long as I could sit, I saw a self-indulgent bad first novel badly photographed.

As the image on screen jiggled, blurred, went from pale to dark, zoomed and jump-cut without any particular reason since the story was linear, conventional, borrowed from Stendhal, I blinked and braced myself with the catechism of non-art: lack of technique equals experimental style; lack of continuity equals social comment; what seems arbitrary is really Absurdity and therefore philosophic; form can be separated from content (the way the body can be separated from the head); and on into that critical Newspeak where what is bad is good, that is, is Alienated, which means a lot these days, particularly if your theme is perpetual adolescence (as, say, in *Bande à Part*). But when the doe-eyed heroine of *Before the Revolution* soulfully sighed, "You can't go home

again," I went.

As film after film at the festival illustrated massively, the dependency of film on literature continues strong, and no overlay of slick or experimental cinema technique could save a feature weak in conception or leaden with literary clichés or static as drama. An example was the Mekas film of the play *The Brig*, which won a prize at Venice.

The Brig bombards its audience with noise and jumpy images, some in, some out of focus, but there is a rationale—to transmit kinetically the brutality of a US Marine brig, for *The Brig* is an exhausting filmed thesis. At that, it is extremely successful. After five or ten minutes this thesis is hard and clear and convincing. The technique applies. But *The Brig* is plotless, static drama, going nowhere except through statement to restatement to overstatement of its thesis for fifty minutes more. Why sit through it?

It was only in the short films that one could see film as film, doing what no other media can do. There were the usual animated shorts, some quite deftly drawn like *Insects* by Teru Murakami, and *Alf, Bill and Fred*, by Bob Godfrey, both from Great Britain. Another British short, *Snow*, was entirely and frankly kinetic—full of locomotives speeding through snowbanks in time to rock-and-roll—a most moving film. Norman McLaren's *Canon* was a clever tour de force in optical printing, combining animation and actors in a four-part fugue. And a French short, *Corps Profond*, was an eerie exposure of body workings and innards taken by swallowed and microscopic cameras—except the voice-over couldn't resist "now we go down the tunnel of the esophagus" and "next we come to the body's sewerage system." Yet in the selection of shorts, this spelunking sanitation engineer found none of the striking and disturbing work of the leading American film-artists.

Robert Breer's *Breathing* was shown (it is not nearly as good as his *Horse Over Tea Kettle*), but to see a really characteristic example of American art-film, you would have had to go to the Knokke-Le-Zoute Experimental Film Exposition or to the Contemporary American Avant-Garde series held at the Gallery of Modern Art in New York in October. No short shown at the New York Festival could match the first five electrifying minutes of Stan Vanderbeek's *Breathdeath;* but no Vanderbeek, and no Brakhage, Baillie, Anger, Belson, D'Avino, etc. appeared at the New York Festival, despite its ostensible all-embracing approach to cinema art. Only Pop-art was American contemporary—and safe: the New York galleries are still merrily popping, so why not Lincoln Center?

Like the features, the shorts were selected from hundreds of possibilities, and if one's idea of a festival is to show a little of every style, something for everyone or anyone, pure junk must have its moment—junk like the short *L'Adage*, a peek at classical ballet through marsh smoke; junk like *Fail Safe*, which is dangerous junk because it argues that limited nuclear war is unthinkable, inhuman—and then proceeds to a resounding anti-intellectual, promilitary contradiction in which limited nuclear war does occur and is poeticized in a pseudo-Hemingway dream of a matador. *Fail Safe* can be dismissed as a badly acted bad film with a preposterous conclusion—but why, why dignify it as a special "New York Festival Choice 1964"?

When Amos Vogel, Festival Director, was asked that question at the dull symposium which followed the dull festival, he smiled and said that *Fail Safe* did meet the Festival standards. The next logical question, "What *were* the Festival standards?" was referred to Richard Roud, Festival Program Director, selector of films and author of the Festival program notes. Roud implied that his standards were evident in the selection of films. All further questions about which films were good, bad or indifferent, were democratically waived to a panel of critics who so strongly disagreed that they had agreed prior to the symposium not to spend time discussing films.

Truth is, there was/is not much to say or see. Good films are rare, festivals are not.

PETER GOLDFARB

Venice

The catchword for the 1964 Venice Film Festival was Austerity. The beaches of the Lido lay strangely empty awaiting a full-scale invasion that never came. Gone were the shimmering starlets and the endless round of social functions. Evenings in the palatial lobby of the Excelsior were like a formal-dress wake and the hordes of paparazzi searched frantically for someone, anyone, to photograph. A conscious effort was made by the festival's directors to eliminate the more ornamental and distracting elements that accrue to a film festival and consequently concentrate more on the films. This effort was to be commended and one was even led to hope that the quality of the films presented might somehow increase in proportion to the diminished peripheral festivities. Unfortunately, however, they did not, and in the end one was faced with a double disappointment.

The disappointment of the films in general (I will talk about the exceptions last) lay in the fact that so many of them showed great promise at the start only to fall into trouble along the way. Here are some examples: *Att Alska* (To Love) the Swedish entry by the young Finnish director Jorn Donner is the story of a young woman who, recently widowed, rediscovers what life and love are really all about. The man who quite literally brings her back to her senses is a friend of her husband, played by the inimitable Zbigniew Cybulski. The beginning and first developments of the affair are beautifully handled by Donner as he deftly and humorously examines the characters in every detail of their relationship: with each other, with the woman's friends and family, and alone. But the film sadly deteriorates into a needlessly repetitive variation on the horizontal position and though the actors proceed from bed to sofa to floor and back again with undiminished enthusiasm the audience by this time found the trip a rather tiring one. Another love relationship is explored in depth in British director Desmond Davis' *The Girl With Green Eyes.* This story of the encounter of a young Irish girl from the provinces with a worldly but aloof writer many years her senior and of their subsequent affair is told with disarming simplicity by Davis and he exacts excellent performances from his three principals, a beguiling Rita Tushingham as the girl, a sober Peter Finch as the writer, and an unctuous Lynn Redgrave as the girl's best friend. The style of the first part of the film has a wonderful freedom and fluidity and Davis, an ex-cameraman, is at his best when he can unfold the action in expansive decors like the city of Dublin or the magnificent Irish countryside. At such times the dialogue as well seems freer, richer, less inhibited. But when he is forced indoors to recount the steady demise and disenchantment of the couple, the action and dialogue become curiously strained and somewhat stilted. However, he manages to redeem himself at the end in the scenes of the girl on the boat to, and in, London. In this, his first feature, Davis has made a promising start.

Two of the festival films were adaptations of well-known literary works. For different reasons, both failed. The German *Tonio Kröger* from the short story by Thomas Mann is a rather lean though graceful reconstruction of a man's attempt to delineate his present meaning by means of his past recollections. But these recollections, although beautifully filmed by director Rolf Thiele (*Rosemary*) are never more than poignant interludes which mark time without either individually or cumulatively contributing to any understanding of the character of Tonio who, as portrayed by Jean-Claude Brialy, remains annoyingly dispassionate and aloof. In short Thiele never really succeeds in finding in his images the emotional and intellectual equivalent of Mann's masterful prose. A proverbial "storm of controversy" preceded the Venice showing of *Les Amitiés Particulières,* adapted from a 20-year-old novel by Roger Peyrefitte, which tells the story of the mutual attraction and intense friendship between two pre-adolescents in a Jesuit boys school. André

Malraux had publicly denounced the film (without seeing it) and at a press conference in Venice the producer and director (Jean Delannoy) countered with all sorts of grandiose statements of pure and good intentions. As is so often the case in such cinematic disputes, all the sound and fury ended up signifying nothing. A film in which a couple of kids pledge undying friendship, smile at each other, and pass notes whilst a bunch of adults make fools of themselves is not simply without offense or controversy; it is also very boring.

Another pair of films, though vastly different in subject matter, fell short of distinction this time for the same reason. Both Michael Roemer's *Nothing But A Man,* the only American entry after the last-minute withdrawal of *Lilith,* and Pasolini's *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* are nevertheless respectable, even impressive films. Roemer's work deals with the private struggle of a Negro to find dignity and self-respect not so much in the world around him as in his own heart. The director does well in maintaining his story within a highly personal context, and the film, although dramatically flawed, is honest and does not strain at social significance. Pasolini's film is a sober and sweeping account of the life of Christ rendered with extraordinary fidelity to its Biblical text. What these two directors have in common is that both have chosen a documentary approach to their films, incorporating the use of nonprofessional actors, exclusively in the Pasolini and with only two exceptions in the Roemer film. Both men, although Pasolini is undoubtedly more skillful and experienced, have difficulty in sustaining the credibility of their nonactors' performances once the latters' initial visual impact as "types" is exhausted. Thus, for example, Pasolini's Christ (played by a young Spanish student and badly dubbed by a voice that is much too old and well trained) is, at first sight, enormously impressive, but after repeated exposure his effectiveness diminishes rather than expands and no amount of penetrating close-ups can uncover something which simply is not there. Of all things, Pasolini's Christ lacks compassion. Another unfortunate consequence of both directors' insistence on a straightforward, realistic camera style is that, again without the help of professional performances, their cameras often work against the inherent drama of a particular scene. Whilst the flaw is very serious in the American work Pasolini happily overcomes it at the end of his film and the scene of the crucifixion comes off as some of the most stunning cinema I have ever seen.

When Joseph Losey deals with war in his latest film, *For King & Country,* one must sit up and take notice. Although the story of the senseless execution of a mentally disturbed young soldier in the First World War still has a certain staginess carried over from its theatrical original, as well as bearing a disturbing resemblance to Kubrick's *Paths of Glory,* it boasts two superb performances from Tom Courtenay as the soldier (winner of the best actor award) and Dirk Bogarde as his defense attorney. The style is generally more rigid than what we have come to expect from Losey and some of the long dialogue sequences are rather static. In short it is far from a great film, but Losey is still a master of his medium.

The Russian *Hamlet* by the veteran director Grigori Kozintsev (*The Youth of Maxim, Don Quixote*) is a film of epic proportions which embodies a curious mixture of much overdramatic photography and many beautifully understated performances. The film fails to attain a totality of vision and the characterization of Hamlet lacks a continuity of interpretation, but the film is episodically quite fascinating. By adopting Pasternak's modern prose translation Kosintsev eliminates most of the poetry and chooses to concentrate on the fundamentally dramatic elements of the tragedy. Thus, whilst the more subtle and intellectual intricacies of the plot remain in somewhat fuzzy perspective, moments such as the ghost scene, Ophelia's mad scene, the closet scene, the duel with Laertes, the murder of Claudius, and the death of Hamlet are rendered in magnificent high relief. Winner of a special jury prize, *Hamlet*

Roemer's *Nothing But A Man*

seemed to be the most enthusiastically received film of the festival.

After the agonies of *Le Mépris* and the frivolities of *Bande à Part,* Godard in *La Femme Mariée* comes up with what may well be his best film since *Breathless.* He paints an arresting cubistic portrait of the eternal triangle with a telling transformation from subject into object of his modern woman at the apex. Ignoring any traditional narrative sequence, Godard restructures his pictorial elements into a highly distinctive and intuitive arrangement of space-time relationships. *La Femme Mariée* is something which every good film should be, a continual revelation.

The theme of *La Vie à L'envers,* the first film of the Frenchman Alain Jessua, which won the festival's opera prima award, is far from unfamiliar to the modern cinema. It is the story of the alienation of an individual from the society of man. But what makes this humorous yet sharply intelligent little film so refreshingly original is its fundamentally positive point of view. The withdrawal which the central character undergoes is of a purely voluntary nature and is happily not precipitated by any convenient disillusion or forced anguish. His self-imposed isolation is not so much a reaction against his surroundings as a movement *toward* them, a reduction in terms which Jessua has recognized as an eminent subject for film, and he has used skillfully and to full advantage the medium's capacity to select the essential over the superficial. However the film is much too long for what it has to say and Jessua introduces a disturbing ambiguity at the end as to whether or not the character is simply out of his mind. This seems a betrayal of the director's intentions but one hopes that it is an excess of inexperience and looks forward to the next work of this talented young man.

As in all of Antonioni's later films, *Red Desert,* the deserved winner of the festival's grand prize, relies favorably less on plot and more on character, emotion, sensation, and atmosphere. The latter, in this case, is the bleak industrial zone of the city of Ravenna in northern Italy. In this world given over to refineries, chemical plants, smoke, fire, and never-ending fog, moves the figure of a woman, Giuliana, who is suffering from a severe neurosis following an automobile accident and a long period of hospitalization. Unaided in her struggle for sanity by her kindly but rather insipid husband, she turns, involuntarily, to a friend of his who, at first, seems to understand her anguish. But he too belongs to the sunless, mechanized world which is the real cause of her neurosis and, in the end, she is left to find, perhaps with the help of her child, her own solution. All the elements which have heretofore established Antonioni's reputation as a first-rate artist are here in full play and the extraordinary evocative power of his compositions is at its apex. But *Red Desert* has something new for Antonioni: it is his first film in color and it may well go down as one of the greatest expressions of chromatic sensitivity in the history of film. To be sure there have been many notable films wherein color has been used as a psychological rather than merely decorative function, *Duel in the Sun* and *Gate of Hell* to name just two, but rarely has the relationship of colorative to emotional values been so consistently precise and personal. Antonioni with his customary integrity has gone to great lengths (even to repainting by hand many natural exteriors such

as houses, trees, and a wheat field) to echo with the right chromatic vibration every phase of his protagonists' constantly shifting states of mind. There is thus, within a limited palette of actual colors, an enormous variation of tonalities; be they tender or harsh, darkened or illumined, glacial or infernal, all are used by Antonioni to create the particular reality of Giuliana and the expressive force of his creation, aided by Monica Vitti's vibrant performance, is nothing short of prodigious.

The retrospective program of Scandinavian films, which excluded the supposedly too-well-known works of men like Stiller, Dreyer, and Bergman, was an excellent case in point for the argument that any old films which haven't been discovered by now aren't worth discovering.

In conclusion, some of the films shown out of competition are worth a brief mention for their excellence. Two superb Czech films, *The Accused* and *Black Peter*, have won richly deserved prizes at other festivals and are further examples of the emergence of that country to the vanguard of quality film production. *The Passenger*, Munk's last and, alas, unfinished film is nevertheless a masterpiece. An unheralded little Canadian documentary called *Caroline*, about a woman who thinks her husband has forgotten their anniversary, is a triumph of tasteful film-making; and American Stefan Scharff's *Across the River* is a ruggedly independent film of uncompromising individuality.

Ruy Guerra's *Os Fuzis*

HARRIET POLT

Berlin

If a film festival can be judged by the number of good or at least interesting films shown (and how else?), then this year's Berlin Festival was a good one—a better one than last year's, at any rate. Even the irritating "showcase of the West" atmosphere seemed to have been toned down, or perhaps after the first exposure one simply gets accustomed to the Cold War. Sure enough, the Eastern bloc countries still were not invited, though the organizers of the "Critics' Week" (à la Cannes) tried in vain to include some Eastern films. Some friction nearly arose at the showing of the so-called "stateless" film *Polnische Passion* (Polish Passion), which attempted to prove that Stalin had been as responsible for starting the Second World War as had Hitler. But the film was shown only in the morning, its director (Janusz Piekalkiewicz, a Polish emigré) was attacked from all sides at the press conference, and things went on in relative peace after that. The weather was persistently nasty, the hotels and theaters often too far apart for comfort; but the occasional rewards in the theaters made up for a lot of this.

For me these rewards consisted of the following films: Ruy Guerra's *Os Fuzis* (The Guns, Brazil); Sidney Lumet's *The Pawnbroker;* Wolfgang Staudte's *Herrenpartie* (roughly Stag Party, Germany); Claude Lelouch's *L'Amour avec des Si . . .* (Love with Some Ifs . . ., France); and Antonio Pietrangeli's *La Visita* (The Visit, Italy). A good scattering of countries heard from. The Brazilian film is violent, impressionistic, confusing, and thoroughly fascinating. *The Pawnbroker* is a film with many flaws, yet underneath them one senses the skeleton of a work of great seriousness and integrity. The weaknesses come mainly in the flashbacks, which are a bit mechanical, and in the concentration-camp scenes, which, I am told, are not authentic. The lyrical opening scene, too, is

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If a film festival can be judged by the number of good or at least interesting films shown (and how else?), then this year's Berlin Festival was a good one—a better one than last year's, at any rate. Even the irritating "showcase of the West" atmosphere seemed to have been toned down, or perhaps after the first exposure one simply gets accustomed to the Cold War. Sure enough, the Eastern bloc countries still were not invited, though the organizers of the "Critics' Week" (à la Cannes) tried in vain to include some Eastern films. Some friction nearly arose at the showing of the so-called "stateless" film *Polnische Passion* (Polish Passion), which attempted to prove that Stalin had been as responsible for starting the Second World War as had Hitler. But the film was shown only in the morning, its director (Janusz Piekalkiewicz, a Polish emigré) was attacked from all sides at the press conference, and things went on in relative peace after that. The weather was persistently nasty, the hotels and theaters often too far apart for comfort; but the occasional rewards in the theaters made up for a lot of this.

For me these rewards consisted of the following films: Ruy Guerra's *Os Fuzis* (The Guns, Brazil); Sidney Lumet's *The Pawnbroker;* Wolfgang Staudte's *Herrenpartie* (roughly Stag Party, Germany); Claude Lelouch's *L'Amour avec des Si . . .* (Love with Some Ifs . . ., France); and Antonio Pietrangeli's *La Visita* (The Visit, Italy). A good scattering of countries heard from. The Brazilian film is violent, impressionistic, confusing, and thoroughly fascinating. *The Pawnbroker* is a film with many flaws, yet underneath them one senses the skeleton of a work of great seriousness and integrity. The weaknesses come mainly in the flashbacks, which are a bit mechanical, and in the concentration-camp scenes, which, I am told, are not authentic. The lyrical opening scene, too, is

somewhat trite, especially when it is repeated towards the end of the film. After all this is admitted, however, *The Pawnbroker* is still a strong film. Its strength lies in the characterization (Rod Steiger received the prize for best actor for this role), which I believe to be entirely credible, and for the Harlem atmosphere in which the majority of the scenes are played. In short, a good film which could have been better.

The story of *Herrenpartie* is simple: a group of German men tourists get lost in the mountains of Yugoslavia and end up in a village, whose men were all killed by German soldiers during the war. The village women, all wearing mourning, refuse the Germans food or lodging, upon which the Germans requisition it. The older Germans, having finally revealed their true sentiments and pasts, are partially redeemed by the young hero and by an honest newspaperman. Though the film occasionally slips over the borderline into caricature on the one hand and melodrama on the other, Wolfgang Staudte, well-known in Germany for his socially critical films, doesn't miss an opportunity to satirize the boorishness and forced *Gemütlichkeit* of his German tourists.

L'Amour avec des Si . . . is one of those French crime-comedies which takes a lighthearted joy in perversity. The whole thing is based on one gag (which I will honor the reader by not revealing), but the film gets away with some of the most ludicrous scenes—for instance a car race lasting about 10 minutes, which in most films would be tedious, but which works here. The use of newspaper clippings, stills, and archive materials helps give the film a jazzy, unmistakably French tone.

Another, rather bitter comedy, is *La Visita.* A not-so-young woman (Sandra Milo, Mastroianni's mistress in 8½) has advertised for a husband. The most likely sounding candidate is a bookseller from Rome (François Périer), who turns out to be cold, selfish, and petty, and the two part with promises only to write each other post cards. Some unnecessary characters and moments of exaggeration do not detract from the charm of the film, and especially from the portrayal by Miss Milo, graced with an extravagantly padded behind.

Two films which deal with the problems of women in countries where women had previously had no rights are Susumu Hani's *Kanajo to Kare* (She and He, Japan), and Satyajit Ray's *Mahanagar* (The Big City). The Ray film stands up surprisingly badly against Hani's. Hani sees his heroine (Sachiko Hidari), who tries to find something of interest in her life and her surroundings, with great understanding. The heroine's Japanese habit of smiling on all occasions made her, for me, rather mysterious at first, but gradually I was able to feel my way into her motivations. Hani, a young director, is considered part of a Japanese "new wave."

He and She

The Ray film also deals with a woman who finds the old ways untenable and, against the wishes of her family, gets herself a job. However, Ray fails to portray his characters in any depth. His symbolism (for instance, the lipstick which represents the heroine's Westernization) is sophomoric, the pace is poor, almost all the episodes having or seeming to have the same length, and in general the film gives the impression of having bored Ray even before he started it.

There were other disappointments. Two remakes, Karel Reisz's *Night Must Fall* and Ken Hughes' *Of Human Bondage*, are both weak, the latter, despite a remarkably able performance by Kim Novak, rather silly and melodramatic. Bert Haanstra's long documentary *Alleman* (Everyman, Holland), a description of Dutch life, contains too many cute gimmicks. Godard's latest film, *La Bande à Part* (The Outsiders), shown at the Critics' Week, gives the impression of having been thrown together from bits left over from Godard's last films, and despite some moments of great charm, especially at the beginning, the film leaves one feeling rather sick and futile.

Then there were the usual number of walkouts: a mundane love-story from Finland, a gloriously Technicolored historical epic from Spain, and so on. Among these was the grand prize winner—Ismail Metin's *Susuz Yaz* (Dry Summer, Turkey), of which almost nobody but (evidently) the jury saw more than ten minutes. The German press raised a howl at the presentation of this prize, but it was already

HARRIET POLT

Karlovy Vary

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So much for comparisons. Karlovy Vary is a small resort town. The hotels, the festival hall (occupying the concert hall of the Grand Hotel once called Pupp, then Moskva, now Moskva-Pupp), and the theaters where non-competing films were shown, all occupy a small area, so that within a few days one knows all the other people attending. Yet while some complained of the shortage of bars, there could be no complaints about lack of opportunity for meeting one's colleagues, a lack that one finds at a big festival like Cannes or Berlin.

I unfortunately came late, having stayed in Berlin almost to the end, and thus missed the grand opening with Grigori Kozintsev's *Hamlet*, which, I was told, was interesting if somewhat old-fashioned. I also missed Buñuel's *Le Journal d'une Femme de Chambre*, over which most critics expressed disappointment. Of the other competing films, worth mentioning is Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos' *Obzalovany* (The Defendant, Czechoslovakia), which won the grand prize, but which was difficult to understand through the transistorized translating devices because of the rapidity and intricacy of the dialogue. A skillfully filmed courtroom drama, the picture deals with important questions of responsibility and guilt, in the rather specialized context of the socialist state. Further interest: Jorge Grau's *El Espontaneo* (Spontaneous, Spain), a cleanly told story about a rootless boy whose ambitions exceed his educational possibilities and who is finally gored to death in a rash leap into the bullring. Pretentious and unnecessary switches from black-and-white to color at the end of the film weaken its final effect. Carlo Lizzani's *Vita Agra* (The Bitter Life, Italy) has enough funny moments that one hardly notes the lack of coherence until thinking about it afterwards. The bitterness of the title refers to the hero's (Ugo Tognazzi) final capitulation to the mechanized industrial society he at first wishes to blow up.

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Every festival has its jokes, and the best Karlovy Vary joke was the one about the Russian entry, *The Living and the Dead* (Alexander Stolper, from a novel by Michail Sholokov). The film lasts three and a half hours. The joke was that you enter the theater living and you come out dead. It was perfectly apt.

The two American entries were *America America* (out of competition) and *The Best Man*, which won the special jury prize. It is not necessary here to review these films, only to say that the audiences and most of the critics liked them, though at the Open Forum discussions the Russians in particular took offence to the "propagandistic" nature of both films.

The Open Forum was only one of the fringe activities of the festival. During the four mornings of discussion, issues were raised concerning the artist's duty to society, the appropriateness of showing detailed sex scenes (with special reference to Bergman's *The Silence*, the hors-concours showing of which almost caused a riot at the gates), and so forth. Needless to say that as at all such discussions, no problems were solved. Another series of discussions centered around the showing of films by relatively "young" film-producing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Since, however, I was busy catching up with recent Czech films, which were showing at approximately the same times, I was not able to attend these discussions. Instead I saw the prize-winning short film *Josef Kilian* (Pavel Juracek and Jan Schmidt), some of the new cartoons, the satire-western *Limonadovy Joe* (Lemonade Joe, obviously, by Oldrich Lipsky) and more. The retrospective of the films of the Pole Andrzej Munk, who was killed in a traffic accident in 1961, opened up some brilliant works new, for the most part, to Americans—especially his last uncompleted *Pasazerka* (The Passenger).

JACKSON BURGESS

San Francisco

The talk of the Eighth San Francisco Film Festival was the opening-night fiasco, when Czechoslovakia's *Lemonade Joe* was shown second-reel-first, first-reel-last, because the cans somehow got shuffled or mislabeled and a short on the work of director Karel Zeman substituted for reel 1 of *Joe*. Otherwise, there just *wasn't* much to talk about. *Lemonade Joe* was pretty funny, even witty in a couple of shots (as in the cut to the wide-open mouth of the yodelling-cowboy hero), and *The Winner* (François Reichenbach's *Un Coeur Gros Comme Ca* in a "transonic" English-language version) was a skillful and tactful film, but both were shown out of competition. Of the competition entries, not one excited anybody that I talked to. In fact, in the two weeks of the festival I didn't get into a single argument; I don't even remember hearing an argument.

There were two passable films in competition: Karel Zeman's *A Jester's Tale* and the U.S.-Canadian film *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*. *A Jester's Tale* won the Golden Gate award for best feature film, which seemed, whether or not it was so intended, a decent reparation to Czechoslovakia for the *Lemonade Joe* catastrophe. None of the critics I talked to objected

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to the award, since none had seen anything he liked much better.

Zeman received the award for direction. Israel's *Sallah,* a harmless, hokey comedy, won prizes for its star, Hyam Topol, as Best Actor, and for its writer, Ephraim Kishon (also its director), for Best Screenplay.

Denmark's Maud Berthelsen was voted Best Actress. Best Supporting Actor and Actress were won by Mexico's Dagoberto Rodriguez and Russia's N. Fedosova. The Darius Milhaud Award for Best Musical Score went to an American, Gunther Schuller, who did the music for the Polish film, *Yesterday in Fact.*

Thus the awards were spread around a bit, in keeping with the tendency for film festivals to see that something nice is said about everybody so that all the countries will come back next time. This is not to say that the judges (Karl Malden, Wilfrid Hyde White, and Russia's Mark Donskoy) fixed it that way; only that no awards looked to me like absolute *musts.*

The festival was not very well attended, despite enthusiastic support in the San Francisco papers—notably the *Chronicle,* which, although it lambasted the opening-night errors, gave big reviews daily plus numerous sidebar stories. The movie-going public wasn't captured, despite the festival's well-advised move to the Coronet Theater, despite the newspapers, despite the publicity given the busty Czech star of *Lemonade Joe,* despite the newspaper explanations that now we have an "A" festival. Maybe film festivals aren't for movie-goers. Maybe they should be the exclusive province of critics and film-makers and actors.

Since October 26, the air has been full of rumors that Irving Levin is giving up on the San Francisco Film Festival, or that the San Francisco Art Commission, which modestly subsidizes it, is giving up. A lot of the disappointment seems to derive from the great expectations aroused by the award of that "A" rating, which many seemed to feel would automatically result in bigger names, better pictures, prettier girls in the lobby and wiser men.

Film Reviews

WOMAN IN THE DUNES

(Suna No Onna) Director: Hiroshi Teshigahara. Screenplay by Kobo Abe, based on his novel. Photography: Hiroshi Segawa. Music: Tohru Takemitsu. Teshigahara Productions, 1964.

When Hiroshi Teshigahara introduced *Woman in the Dunes* at the 2nd New York Film Festival, he explained that he had not tried to make a "real" film. Both the story and science were against him. The story is of a man trapped. Physically, he is trapped at the bottom of a sandpit. He has been tricked into going down into the sixty-foot-deep pit and is held prisoner there by members of a village coöperative who need another "helper" to dig sand—to dig sand both to keep the dunes from sweeping away the village huts and to dig sand for a livelihood; they sell it secretly to construction companies at a cheap price, for the sand is worthless in building—it contains too much salt.

But the man trapped is a teacher, an insect collector laden with nets, flasks, camera, specimen boxes, who has come to the seaside village on a holiday to find a rare beetle. The man's attitude towards his work is mixed. On the one hand, he is a man of the twentieth century, an entomologist involved in the classification, sorting, inspection, and dissection of insects; on the other hand, he wryly recognizes that entomology is his metaphor. If he finds a new beetle he will gain immortality; his name will be attached to the insect and forever enshrined in an insect book. He knows. He knows that what he does to insects, life does to him. Even before he is physically trapped in the sandpit, he lies in the sun itemizing himself: his classification, his identification papers, driver's license, all the numbers on all his papers—he is the sum of the cards in his wallet. He knows that like the butterflies and beetles he collects he too is "formulated, sprawling on a pin . . . pinned and wriggling on the wall." Even so, he cannot give up his metaphor—as he struggles to escape the sandpit he carries his paraphernalia on his back—he tries to climb the cliffs with the net, the camera, the specimen box, the flasks. Spiritually, he is trapped.

At the bottom of the pit lives a lonely woman (Kyoko Kishida) whose husband and child have been killed in an avalanche of sand. She is starved for company, for sex, for help to dig at the continually slipping and sliding sand which threatens to sweep her and her village away; but mostly she is starved for value. Without the sand to dig no one would bother about her. She is a cog in the process, only necessary as long as the process is maintained, and the process of digging sand by hand is maintained, simply, because it is cheap. The world swarms with cheap labor of no individual value, just as the sand dunes swarm with bugs.

That, in brief, is the condition which initiates the story of *Woman in the Dunes*—physically, how the trapped man gets out; spiritually, how the trapped man gets out.

Obviously, the story, for all its suspense of will he, won't he, escape the pit, cannot be taken literally. As Teshigahara said, while discussing the difficulties he had shooting his film, sand does not and cannot form a dune so high a man cannot climb out. The towering cliffs of sand which surround the hut in *Woman in the Dunes* were especially constructed for the filming in a small area called Hamamatsu, near Mount Fuji, about 200 kilometers from Tokyo. Similarly, sand does not crash in avalanches like snow—although the photographic rendering of these avalanches is kinetically so powerful the audience gasps and ducks. In short, the scientific information in the novel and the film is as accurate as it is inaccurate; the story is as real as it is unreal. Yet Teshigahara, working independently on a very limited budget ($100,000), manages to translate these complexities into brilliant visual terms.

The film begins with the man (Eiji Okada) climbing, his back to the camera, up a mountainous dune of sand. No horizon is visible.

And when he reaches the top, before him stretch mile upon mile of shifting furrowed dunes of sand, that eerily rise and fall without a hint of the nearby ocean, still with no visible horizon—only the omnipresent sand—and in another view the half-buried huts of the poor village.

The man goes about his business, and the film's second image is introduced. The insects the man examines and photographs for his collection, those which have adapted to life in the dunes, are interspersed with images of sand which increase to fill the screen: sand with its crystals enlarged to rock size; sand viewed from high as rivulets moving, shifting; sand thundering down in avalanche; sand sliding, burning, seeping, burying, rotting whatever it touches. It sifts through the roof of the hut and showers on the man as he sits under an umbrella eating dinner his first night as a "guest" in the pit. And soon these images converge. In full screen enlargement, sand crystals clinging to fingers which hold a pair of chopsticks turn these fingers into the caterpillars which the man, entomologist, has dispassionately examined. Sand crystals cling to the throat of the woman as she swallows food, and the pores of her skin, the action of swallowing, become, in enlargement, the grainy pulsations of a giant slug. Finally, sand is an erotic force; it coats the woman as she sleeps naked, her head wrapped in cloth, and turns her to a beautiful piece of sculpture. After a particularly dangerous avalanche which has almost smashed the hut, the man wipes the woman clean; they mate for the first time; sand has provoked one of the most animal, erotic scenes on film.

It is this accumulation of detail, each grain of sand piling upon another, image upon image, slowly building as the film slowly progresses and the struggle of the man to escape becomes more and more frantic, which is simultaneously oppressive—as life is oppressive in its detail—and magnificent. For while this detail graphically equates man with insect, it also predicts the confrontation of the man with himself, his meaningless life, through his confrontation with the elements, sand and water. He is forced to take up a shovel and dig sand because the villagers cut off the couple's water supply. Under such pressure the man has no choice. He digs, but he clings to his former methods of dealing with meaninglessness as surely as he clings to his flasks, his camera, his watch, his specimen boxes, and his western clothing. And through his methods—deception and ingenuity—he does manage to escape.

He constructs a rope, attaches a scissors to it as an axe, and like a mountaineer, with the "axe" fixed in a sandbag at the rim, he hauls himself painfully hand over hand up the sixty-foot cliff of sand. He drags himself over the top and runs, runs anywhere, in any direction, through the darkness followed by shimmering darting lights which are actually the lanterns of the villagers who follow him without chasing him and save him from death in quicksand and laugh at his blind flight and his screams for help and lower him inch by inch in a basket back into the pit.

Once more the man is trapped, but now the confrontation is unavoidable; he digs the sand and his desire for water, to see the ocean, almost reduces him to an animal before the grinning voyeurism of "them," the villagers. Despite all the symbols one could (if one wished) decipher from the film, how relieving it is to find "them"—the oppressive unknown "them" which haunts so much modern western literature—here clearly identified as the villagers, the coöperative, the people who jeer, leer, but come down into the pit to help when the woman has a miscarriage—the same people who sell the worthless salty sand for building. They are an actual force to deal with, they exist in a human range of good to evil; while at the same time they are the social abstractions which cause the man, the struggler, so much frustration, and the woman, here the recipient, so much pain. It is this continual reference from the concrete to the abstract, from the idea to its visual representation, from the spiritual to the physical, which gives the film its power; and it is exactly this reference which makes the film so disturbing.

There are also lapses in the film. At times the musical score is obtrusive; one does not need its weird atonality to emphasize what is obvious. Nor does one need the cut-aways to roaring avalanches of sand after the erotic scenes have gone beyond what can be tastefully depicted on screen. Here the inference of disaster, of temporality, is excessive. Also, the scene where the villagers gather at the rim of the pit, demanding a sexual show from the trapped pair, is excessive with drums, masks, dancing, flares on goggled faces which are far more inhuman than any mask.

The conclusion of this colossal accumulation of detail and reduction of life to its essential elements is almost predictable. At the same time it is bleak in its oriental-western synthesis. In its oriental aspect, there is an implication that to live is to dig sand; there is no progress, for sand continually flows back into the place which has been dug out with such tremendous effort. Nor, finally, does it matter. Yet the conclusion is western in its affirmation of individual dignity, possible through individual creative effort, even at the bottom of a sandpit. Through "Hope" the man has discovered a way to use sand as a natural pump for obtaining the pure water which the village badly lacks; that is his contribution. It is also a commitment, which the villagers have already sensed because of his relationship with the woman. And when the woman is taken to the hospital, a rope ladder is left for the man to use as he likes, to climb out of the pit, go away or stay. Predictably, he chooses to stay.

As the trapped man, Eiji Okada gives a remarkable performance. At the beginning of the film he is a blandly handsome nonentity, very like the architect he played in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour.* At the conclusion of *Woman in the Dunes,* as he walks freely across the sand and as each step he takes is erased by a following puff of wind, he has aged; he has a face; he has stature. He stands at the ocean looking at its power, which is hardly different from the power of sand. Then he returns to the pit and the hand he dips into the tub of water he has collected is specifically a human hand, moving in wonder at its accomplishment. He has discovered his own power. He is free because he is not desperate to escape. His spiritual freedom is physical. His duality is resolved. His synthesis is perhaps best illustrated in the view of him in kimono, holding a portable radio which plays western music.

Both the novel and the film were tremendously successful in Japan, perhaps because they express the hostile reaction of the oriental intellectual to the westernization of his life, the superficialities of western dress and music, the dehumanization which seems to be the inevitable companion of scientific progress. Yet in *Woman in the Dunes* there is an underlying accusation that this reaction is short-sighted—that it is a nostalgia for simplicity not much different from the American nostalgia of back to Nature, back to Thoreau's dream of sauntering through the woods, to Whitman's dream of wandering down an endless open road. In *Woman in the Dunes* it is precisely the man's scientific ability—his recognition of the filtering powers of sand, his construction of an apparatus to continue the filtering and to store the water—which completes his humanization and gives his life meaning. The converged image of sand and insect is replaced with the image of the human hand and human face; the equation between man and insect is destroyed. What we have here is a monumental effort to reconcile science with philosophy; that is, to affirm science in human terms, as a tool, even if it means metaphorically reducing the context of life to a level—to a sandpit—in which it is possible, metaphorically, to re-invent the wheel.

While this effort of reconciliation contains an affirmation of individual dignity and the reduction of man to his fundamental condition, it goes beyond it in complexity. Nor can I say that the reconciliation is successful; perhaps that is why the film is so disturbing. One hears the voice of old man Voltaire saying, tend your own garden; one knows that the garden is as large as the world. One also knows that the garden is a sandpit for most of humanity. And the reduction is, itself, a nostalgia; simplicity is impossible.

Both the author and director of *Woman in the Dunes* know this. The film ends with the Tokyo man, the entomologist, classified as missing person. The novel, more explicitly, begins and ends with the man declared legally dead. In these terms there can be no "message," only an observation about the danger and gratification of knowledge which the inscription of the novel amplifies: Without the threat of punishmen there is no joy in flight.

—JUDITH SHATNOFF

BEHOLD A PALE HORSE

Director: Fred Zinnemann. Scenario: J. P. Miller, from the novel by Emeric Pressburger. Photography: Jean Badal. Music: Maurice Jarre. Columbia.

To describe a film as "serious" and "raising important issues" is almost to damn it with faint praise. One thinks immediately of the earnest oversimplifications of Stanley Kramer, the gorgeous juggernauts of David Lean, the precise theatrics of Sidney Lumet. The mere aim of seriousness seems to lead to the grand manner, and the grand manner leads to poses, compromises and cant. It's easy to blame the influence of Hollywood for this, and it is true that the star system and the demands of the box-office have vitiated many a promising idea. But this isn't the whole story. There is something in the very thought of a serious movie that seems to make directors self-conscious, striking attitudes of false solemnity. Thus Kazan's last American-made film, *Splendor in the Grass,* was a personal drama, and toward its end he was able to attain a penetrating calm; but in *America America* he was making an important saga, and all his vices of visual rhetoric came crowding back. Among American directors, at least, there seems to be only one safe way of tackling important issues: with the detachment of satire or some kind of fantasy. John Frankenheimer's *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May,* Stanley Kubrick's *Lolita* and *Dr. Strangelove*—films like these have set a pattern of effective but oblique seriousness.

With the advantage of hindsight, one isn't surprised that it is Fred Zinnemann who has successfully broken from this pattern. All of his films have been marked to a greater or lesser extent by a quiet perceptiveness. Even the military blood and thunder of *From Here to Eternity,* with its clashing of stereotypes, is memorable for its scenes of personal emotion, like Donna Reed smilingly pouring out her troubles to Montgomery Clift. In recent years Zinnemann has become quieter and quieter, even when dealing with such solemn issues as are raised in *The Nun's Story.* With *The Sundowners* (1960), his last film before *Behold a Pale Horse,* he seemed to be definitely abandoning any assault on the heights of dramatic conflict, for this was little more than a leisurely slice of life from the Australian outback. Yet the film had two great virtues: though lacking in excitement, it was never boring; and it captured the rhythm of the sheepherder's life, an idiosyncratic mixture of ruggedness and relaxation.

Now, four years later, Zinnemann has found a story of emotional and dramatic intensity that suits his reticent style. It might seem that he had a steep price to pay. To begin with, the title sounds pretentious, especially when you discover that it comes from the same part of the Book of Revelations as *The Seventh Seal.* (It is when the fourth seal of the angel's book is broken that one beholds "a pale horse; and his name who sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.") Zinnemann's pale horse is saddled with an even heavier burden: an international cast – Italian, French, Egyptian, English – led by two Hollywood stars, all of them pretending to be Spanish. And yet, against all odds, the horse completes his journey with nothing worse than an occasional stumble.

The time is 20 years after Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War. Manuel Artiguez (Gregory Peck), a rabid Spanish Republican

Both the author and director of *Woman in the Dunes* know this. The film ends with the Tokyo man, the entomologist, classified as missing person. The novel, more explicitly, begins and ends with the man declared legally dead. In these terms there can be no "message," only an observation about the danger and gratification of knowledge which the inscription of the novel amplifies: Without the threat of punishmen there is no joy in flight.

—JUDITH SHATNOFF

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living in exile in the French town of Pau, has continued to make periodic raids across the border. He has a sworn enemy in Captain Viñolas of the *guardia civil* (Anthony Quinn), who refuses to recognize Artiguez as anything more idealistic than a bandit. Thus, even before the action begins, the film raises an important issue: when, if ever, should a cause be abandoned; and when, if ever, does idealism turn into pig-headedness or worse? (The issue may seem rather remote as applied to the Spanish Republicans; but what about the Chinese Nationalists and the Cuban exiles, not to mention the many nonpolitical equivalents?) Zinnemann never makes this issue explicit, and no one in the film discusses it; but it runs as a strong and disturbing undercurrent throughout.

No attempt is made to arouse sympathy for either Artiguez or Viñolas: both are brutal men whose minds run mainly, though not quite entirely, along the well-worn grooves. It must be said at once that Gregory Peck is not up to this kind of part: his gestures and expressions have become accustomed to quite different grooves, and much of the time they automatically belie the ruthlessness he tries hard to assume. He may slap a priest with conviction, because after all the actor is a man; but he cannot convincingly maltreat a boy. Thus the character of Artiguez is blurred, as if seen through warped glass—and yet there are lucid moments, like the close-up of Peck's face, with dark and haunted eyes, when he is considering whether to make a last dangerous raid into Spain.

Before the credits, a brief montage of the Spanish Civil War is linked impeccably to a fictional shot of Artiguez unwillingly giving up his rifle as he crosses the border into exile in 1939. After its leap of 20 years, the film reopens in an atmosphere of calm. Paco, the young son of a Republican who has just died under interrogation by Viñolas, is leaving to join the exiles. As he walks through the Pyrenean valleys he sees a handsome bull in a nearby field and turns to admire it briefly with a whispered *"Eh, toro, toro!"* The implication—that the boy is as thoroughly Spanish as any who remain behind—is a shade obvious, but Zinnemann does not linger on it. Nor does he force a comparison between this scene and a similar insight into Viñolas, which comes later. In our first view of the police chief he is on horseback, executing mock *picador* passes around a bull: though a brutal man, he enjoys the exhilaration and ritual of the *corrida* even when the bull is left unscathed. Watching Viñolas is a man whose identity is never explained and who never reappears: but his face looks aristocratic and, since he offers to give Viñolas the horse he is riding, we presume he is wealthy. With easy economy, Zinnemann lets us see (instead of telling us) Viñolas' relations with the Spanish "Establishment."

Once in France, Paco calls on an exile named Pedro, who lives in a hamlet near the border. Unlike Artiguez, Pedro has somehow managed to follow the lost cause without becoming embittered, and Zinnemann captures this irrepressible happiness in a beautiful little sequence. From an upstairs window, Pedro's wife looks down at the tiny figure of Paco in the street: she is completely silhouetted, and her face remains in shadow when she turns away to wake Pedro. We never do see her face clearly, and she never reappears in the film; and yet her graceful silhouette in itself personifies an enigmatic contentment. Pedro wakes swiftly, with a grunt not of reluctance but of satisfaction. He looks out of the window, hailing Paco, and his cheerful voice can still be heard as he rushes downstairs to greet him. On seeing this sequence, I suddenly felt sure that Zinnemann actually *was* going to overcome the handicaps of his international star cast and possibly pretentious theme.

Paco moves on to see Artiguez. (Here, in Pau, Zinnemann avoids the pitfall of easy picturesqueness, showing us neither stunning views nor decorative dilapidation. Many of the location scenes are shot under an overcast sky or just after rain. The exiles' quarter of Pau looks poor but matter-of-fact—and there is not a single click of castanets or thrum of a guitar!)

Paco asks Artiguez to make another raid into Spain in order to kill Viñolas, but Artiguez laughs at him. "My father wouldn't have died," says Paco, "if he'd told what he knew about you." Shouting "What your father did was his affair, and what I do is mine!" Artiguez pushes the boy out.

Now comes the central dramatic conflict, and with it the critical test of the film's integrity. So far Zinnemann has captured much of the density and randomness of real life, selecting and shaping but not distorting it. Can he preserve this approach in the face of a strong drama whose poles of conflict, like those of a magnet, will tend to drag each character and incident toward one extreme or the other, strengthening the drama but weakening its credibility? For in a realistic film, where everything must be channeled through the appearances of real life, too neat an interlocking of incidents and reactions will clash with the "unneat" images and sounds that convey them. When one sees a character in a street or in a cluttered room, with all the possibilities of action and reaction implied by those random settings, it is painfully obvious when the character's behavior is deflected even slightly, in order to prove a dramatic point, from the real-life probability of the situation.

Back in Spain, Artiguez' mother is dying. Viñolas sees this as an excellent opportunity to capture his old enemy, and he lays an ambush in and around the hospital. The mother, however, calls for Father Francisco (Omar Sharif), a young priest who is about to leave on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. No, I don't want to confess or anything like that, says the old woman, who is as vehemently antireligious as her son; but you will pass through Pau on your way to Lourdes, and I want you to warn Manuel not to come. The priest, taken aback, makes a noncommittal answer and leaves. He is summoned by Viñolas, who tries to find out what the mother wanted; but his crude interrogation is interrupted by the news that the mother has died. After a flurry of vexation, Viñolas hits on a solution: an informer will go to Artiguez to tell him that his mother is still alive and asking for him. The priest, forgotten, sits through all this planning: Zinnemann cuts rapidly from face to face around the room, continually returning to linger on the priest as he silently tries to make a decision.

Making decisions is the bugaboo of many "serious" films. Pathetic fallacy rides triumphant as the decision-maker is swayed now this way, now that, by wind and weather and the world around him; or else all action stops while he leafs back through a montage of memories. Zinnemann has a better idea of how decisions usually have to be made. As Father Francisco walks abstractedly down the street, a taxi screams to a halt beside him: another priest has come to fetch him because it is time for his group to leave for Lourdes. So Father Francisco, instead of being able to think quietly, is caught up in a rush of action. He wants to stop and discuss his problem with the father superior, but he cannot do that without missing the train for Lourdes, and he has been looking forward for years to this pilgrimage.

Zinnemann uses this rush of action to fit the tempo of the film to Father Francisco's inner conflict. Up till now there has been no tight continuity in any of the sequences: they have been made up of scattered fragments, almost as casual as the surface texture of life itself. But now the individual scenes fuse together, as if under the heat of Father Francisco's moral anguish, taking on a rhythmic unity that derives partly from the cutting, partly from the urgent movements within each scene, and partly from the recurring close-ups of Father Francisco's face.

By contrast, there *is* one element in this sequence that struck me as too dramatically neat. One of the other priests going on the pilgrimage is mentally unbalanced as a result of having been manhandled by Artiguez during one of his raids. The priest's infirmity is brought in with exemplary unobtrusiveness; but the coincidence *seems* far-fetched simply because it makes so neat a dramatic point. Moreover, another

priest in the party actually refers to this infirmity—and to the fact that it was caused by Artiguez—at the very moment that Father Francisco has made his decision and, in the train, is writing to tell Artiguez that his mother is dead. Again, the coincidence itself is not farfetched—it is natural that the priests should be discussing an affliction which they hope their pilgrimage will cure—but the dramatic irony has a literary elegance that is unsuited to the screen.

These flaws are by no means serious enough to mar the sequence, and I have described them at length only to show the difficult tightrope that Zinnemann is walking all the way through the film. Later there is another coincidence which, on paper, might seem even riskier, yet comes off perfectly. After various misadventures, the priest is kidnapped by Artiguez, who doesn't believe him ("Why should you, a priest, do anything for me?") and proposes to confront him with the informer to see which one is lying. As they sit waiting, Artiguez looks curiously at this (to him) strange creature from another world, and says: "What made you become a priest?" Father Francisco starts his reply by going back to his childhood in a village called Lorca, and at this Artiguez interrupts with astonishment: "You were born near Lorca? Why, so was I! How strange—I've never thought of priests as being born at all." And for a brief while the two are talking as man and man, not as cleric and anticleric. Now, the coincidence of their birthplace is less probable than the coincidence of the afflicted priest, but it convinces because it is not loaded with dramatic significance. If it marked the inception of some kind of change in Artiguez' views, we would certainly jib at it; instead, it simply establishes a brief and fragile link of humanity which sets the two men's differences into poignant relief. In less than a minute the link snaps, and Artiguez is his surly self again.

In leaping to this scene I have passed over many felicitous episodes, but it would be tedious and unnecessary to dissect the entire film. It is enough to say that between Father Francisco's decision and his kidnapping by Artiguez the sequences become fragmented again, until the mutual impingement of the two men raises the film's dramatic intensity back to the fusing point. The continuity here is keyed to the stillness and dark shadows of Artiguez' ramshackle apartment, where cleric and anticleric stand out in scene after scene as sharply as the pools of light that illuminate them. In scene after scene, too, Zinnemann cuts slowly but rhythmically from Artiguez' suppressed impatience—rising to give the priest of glass of wine, reaching to take the glass away—to the puzzled but calm patience of Father Francisco.

In ending the film, Zinnemann does more than keep his balance: this is no longer a tightrope-walking act but an elegiac dance. Indeed, the ending almost justifies the title; not in the Bergmanesque sense, but in the extraordinary resonances of its quiet realism. Artiguez decides that he will make his raid after all, first braving the ambush to see his mother's body. No explicit motives are given for this decision, but there are several implications: that the shake-up of recent events has made Artiguez doubt the usefulness of his role, and doubt is smothered in action; that he fears the onset of inactive old age; defiance of Viñolas; and sheer force of habit. This, to my mind, is the last and stiffest test of the dramatic action—to lead up to the climax without pulling any strings—and the film passes it with ease.

It is no surprise, of course, that Artiguez is trapped in the hospital before he reaches his mother's body. A bullet fells him. As he lies helpless on the floor, a *guardia civil* with a submachine gun runs up but stops some yards away, pumping bullet after bullet into Artiguez with the frenzy of a man faced with a monstrous legend. The camera swoops in for a sudden, stark close-up of Artiguez' face as he stares blindly upward; and then, briefly, there is a luminous slow-motion shot of Paco kicking into the air the football that Artiguez once gave him. This shot is not a sentimental piece of symbolism: even before one can start to think

about its possible meaning, the image has made its own immediate impact as the last surging of life within Artiguez, that spark which was common both to the boy he once was and to the embittered man he became. Then the camera draws far back, and Artiguez is just a thing on the floor.

Now comes the noisy jubilation of the police, and the congratulations showered on Viñolas. Next, amid silence, we see the corpses of the policemen that Artiguez killed being carried into the mortuary. After them comes Artiguez, and the camera follows his waxen profile until it is set down beside the profile of his mother, a meeting beyond death. Back to noise again as Viñolas assures newspapermen that Artiguez was nothing more than a bandit, and then strides out to his car, to be borne away amid a triumphant blaring of its siren.

The very last scene of the film surveys the crowd that has gathered outside the hospital. It is unmistakably a real crowd, not a collection of extras, and they recall the newsreel scenes with which the film opened. Their expressions and their uncertain shifting betray one overriding emotion: bewilderment. And this is precisely right. The scene is not a formal flourish but a climactic statement, for bewilderment is indeed our common human reaction in the face of violent death—the breaking of the fourth seal of the Apocalypse.

What Zinnemann has done in *Behold a Pale Horse* is to unite the traditional well-rounded drama of the Anglo-Saxon cinema with the "open," imagistic treatment of contemporary European directors like Truffaut and Antonioni. The mere attempt sounds disastrous. And yet the resulting hybrid turns out to be a superb and vigorously healthy specimen.

This would be astonishing indeed if Zinnemann had had to imitate someone else's style. But the "openness" and imagism have long been latent in his own, needing only the right script to bring them into full and authoritative action. *Behold a Pale Horse* is not astonishing; it is simply a revelation. —WILLIAM JOHNSON

THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA

Director: John Huston. Script: Tennessee Williams. Photography: Gabriel Figueroa.

Let's begin with the perils of the outer jungle. Beyond the bad notices is the incontestable fact that both Huston's and Williams' reputations are on the wane. Then, too, their respective specialties (idealistic eccentricity on the one hand and high neurosis—the kind fraught with traumas and epiphanies—on the other) have grown to be somewhat *demodé*. And there is also the problem of compatibility. Huston is the confident, swaggering, seasoned old-timer with a penchant for directing his films on horseback; Williams, meanwhile, has never challenged our conceiving of him as the ingrown, simpering analysand who is most comfortable on his psychoanalyst's couch. Apart from a shared taste for the feel of leather under them, a more disparate pair of talents is scarcely to be imagined. Add to this the copious reportage engendered by the location shooting in Mexico, most of it aiming to depict a harried, embattled, artistic, sensitive Richard Burton caught fast in the jaws of corruption (Ava Gardner and Sue Lyon being its two principal fangs); poor Liz Taylor looking worriedly on; Huston supervising the proceedings, on screen and off, as though it were all one of Artaud's Theater of Cruelty experiments; and Williams himself, the devil's surrogate, taking everything in with supreme amusement. With coverage like that, any end product emerging in the form of film seemed already doomed to secondary importance. Finally there was MGM's decision to sneak the film into New York via Lincoln Center, this despite the one-in-a-hundred chance that any bid to acquire that institution's dubious credentials would be other than a *faux pas*.

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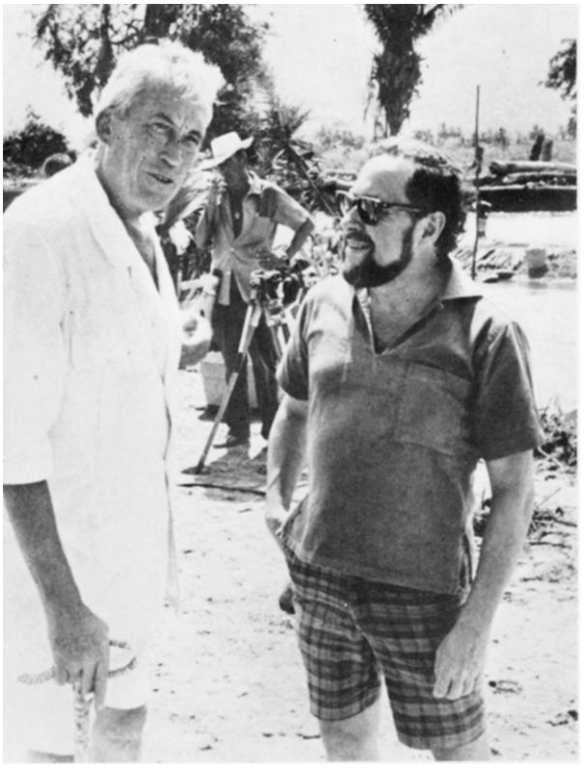

Huston and Williams
on the set of
Night of the Iguana

A curious thing about the film itself is that it bears almost no relation to the publicity threatening to envelop it. Both for Williams and Huston it represents a kind of backpedaling to the 'thirties, when it was fashionable to bring a seemingly random collection of characters together in some isolated, possibly exotic locale where individuals could interact and important themes could pervade without the interference or dilution introduced by urban clutter. So, in *The Night of the Iguana,* after a prologue in which Burton, playing the Reverend T. Lawrence Shanon, experiences a nervous breakdown on the pulpit of a small Virginia church and denounces the prudery and insularity of his congregation, the scene shifts immediately to the backroads of Mexico, where, by now defrocked and employed as a tour guide, he is conducting a party of aging, female, Texan ignoramuses on a south-of-the-border bus excursion. Hounded by Sue Lyon's adolescent overtures and harassed by her bellowing bully of a protectress (Grayson Hall), Burton commandeers the bus and drives through the jungle to a crumbling old hotel called Costa Verde, of which Ava Gardner is the earthy proprietress. Presently Deborah Kerr and her ninety-year-old father Cyril Delevanti come on the scene. The two earn their livings by selling sketches and reciting original poetry, but at the moment they are penniless, though by no means without dignity.

Now that everyone is gathered under the same roof, each is free to bandy bits of wisdom, trade illumination for illumination, exchange fragments of relevant personal history, indulge desultory latent vices, and perhaps even be considerably changed. Some of this does succeed. Much does not.

Films made from plays or novels have, evidently from some disparity in the media, a tendency either to aggrandize trivial themes or trivialize grandiose ones. Sometimes this is beneficial. Ideas interpreted on a scale different from the one in which they were conceived frequently accumulate new meaning along the way. Huston's rescaling—you might call it "cinematizing"—of *Iguana* results in a reduction of meaning, yet sometimes the results are surprisingly beneficial. Listening to the protagonists reel off accounts of their spiritual difficulties and arrive verbosely at poetic solutions to them, it becomes patently clear that Williams' thinking is no longer abreast of the times. Both his social criticisms and his counter-moralizing are obsolescent. The flaws in the American unconscious which seemed so egregious when he first began writing now appear rural, homely, already far too battered to merit Williams' grandiloquence. There is a scene, for instance, in which Richard and Ava decide jointly to avoid putting an end to Grayson Hall's vicious rankling by telling her she is a latent lesbian because they are sure the revelation would crush her. Somehow this no longer holds up. Williams has fallen behind, has been overtaken by America, and Huston's reinterpretation, whether by deliberate deflation or plain vulgarization, often acts to soften the blow.

Watching *The Night of the Iguana* as Huston's film rather than Williams' play—which is not quite impossible—other difficulties arise. Half the time the dialogue appears wholly unrelated to the action; one or the other is more often than not superfluous, and both together are excessive. It is like watching one ball game on television and listening to another on the radio: you need two minds to follow the action. Huston has simply failed to find the images necessary to maintain coherence. The talk and cinematography move at different speeds, and the effect can be dizzying.

As for the performances, Richard Burton again proves to be a screen "presence" in the best sense. Except for those instances in which the script compels him to pontificate, it is hard not to pay attention to him. His suffering seldom becomes insufferable, and his wry delivery of verbal barbs leaves you saying silently: "Take that!" Ava Gardner comes close to bringing off one of those masterfully appropriate bad performances that are so much in vogue, but only close. Sue Lyon elects simply to be rather than act, and she most certainly is. Grayson Hall is unrelentingly bitchy, but the shoddiness with which the motivation for her spleen is presented precludes real credibility.

Credibility indeed is the central problem of *The Night of the Iguana.* Its principal theme is the state of being at the end of one's tether, as frequent cuts to an iguana at the end of *its* tether repeatedly remind us. Whatever power the stage version had was mustered by dint of rhetoric, the gathering force of anguished oratory. But Huston, as good as he is with *mise-en-scène,* is most at home in films that are laconic, verbally thrifty. Consequently, for lack of imagery to support all the talk, the credibility of the action collapses. Williams' thunder erupts, has its moments, but ultimately disintegrates into the clatter of tin cans. What makes this all so unfortunate is that there is a lot of nascent good in the film, though in the end it has to be placed alongside the thousands of other movies which afford evidence that seeing is by no means believing. —STEPHEN TAYLOR

THE FIRST DAY OF FREEDOM

At a time when Kawalerowicz is still in far-off Bukhara shooting the spectacular *Pharaoh* ("the Polish *Cleopatra*"), when Wajda is working on a historical romance, when Polanski is making a thriller in London, Aleksander Ford follows his own path, outside the crisis that has gripped the Polish cinema for the past two years. He made films in Poland before the war; he will go on making films.

The crisis for the other directors is above all one of scripts. Polish directors have of course ordinarily drawn on literary sources for their scripts, as do their colleagues everywhere. But in Poland this has involved some severe complications, the result of which has been a certain lull. Kawalerowicz has made no film since *Mother Joan of the Angels;* Wajda had a long series of proposals turned down; Polanski has taken a vacation in England.

In Poland one hears various opinions on the sources of the crisis. To some Poles, it stems from the fact that Polish film-makers have simply exhausted the war-and-occupation theme, but do not yet see how to cope with the problems of contemporary life—twenty years after the war, and when Polish society has been thoroughly transformed by a program of drastic industrialization. To others, the problem is chiefly political, stemming from a reintensification of the ministry's script-approval pressures: the Polish economic situation has deteriorated in the past year (chiefly due to falling prices of coal, Poland's main dollar export) and this has brought a general tightening of controls in the face of anticipated discontent. Both these factors may interact: the tightened pressures may have left directors unwilling to come up with much except safe historical films or spectaculars. In this situation interest in Poland is directed toward the new film by Wojciech Has (not yet quite ready for release) and a film by a young student from the Lodz film school, Jerzy Skolimowski. Skolimowski pieced *Identi-*

Watching *The Night of the Iguana* as Huston's film rather than Williams' play—which is not quite impossible—other difficulties arise. Half the time the dialogue appears wholly unrelated to the action; one or the other is more often than not superfluous, and both together are excessive. It is like watching one ball game on television and listening to another on the radio: you need two minds to follow the action. Huston has simply failed to find the images necessary to maintain coherence. The talk and cinematography move at different speeds, and the effect can be dizzying.

As for the performances, Richard Burton again proves to be a screen "presence" in the best sense. Except for those instances in which the script compels him to pontificate, it is hard not to pay attention to him. His suffering seldom becomes insufferable, and his wry delivery of verbal barbs leaves you saying silently: "Take that!" Ava Gardner comes close to bringing off one of those masterfully appropriate bad performances that are so much in vogue, but only close. Sue Lyon elects simply to be rather than act, and she most certainly is. Grayson Hall is unrelentingly bitchy, but the shoddiness with which the motivation for her spleen is presented precludes real credibility.

Credibility indeed is the central problem of *The Night of the Iguana.* Its principal theme is the state of being at the end of one's tether, as frequent cuts to an iguana at the end of *its* tether repeatedly remind us. Whatever power the stage version had was mustered by dint of rhetoric, the gathering force of anguished oratory. But Huston, as good as he is with *mise-en-scène,* is most at home in films that are laconic, verbally thrifty. Consequently, for lack of imagery to support all the talk, the credibility of the action collapses. Williams' thunder erupts, has its moments, but ultimately disintegrates into the clatter of tin cans. What makes this all so unfortunate is that there is a lot of nascent good in the film, though in the end it has to be placed alongside the thousands of other movies which afford evidence that seeing is by no means believing. —STEPHEN TAYLOR

THE FIRST DAY OF FREEDOM

At a time when Kawalerowicz is still in far-off Bukhara shooting the spectacular *Pharaoh* ("the Polish *Cleopatra*"), when Wajda is working on a historical romance, when Polanski is making a thriller in London, Aleksander Ford follows his own path, outside the crisis that has gripped the Polish cinema for the past two years. He made films in Poland before the war; he will go on making films.

The crisis for the other directors is above all one of scripts. Polish directors have of course ordinarily drawn on literary sources for their scripts, as do their colleagues everywhere. But in Poland this has involved some severe complications, the result of which has been a certain lull. Kawalerowicz has made no film since *Mother Joan of the Angels;* Wajda had a long series of proposals turned down; Polanski has taken a vacation in England.

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fication Marks: None together from exercises made during his studies; it is a highly personal work rather in the Greenwich-Village line: a series of scenes of a young man with Weltschmerz, his girlfriend, his house, his indecisions, his walks in the street, etc. But it is at least not hackneyed in plot, since it has none. (Skolimowski wrote the scripts for *Innocent Sorcerers* and *Knife in the Water,* however, and is thus clearly an interesting talent.)

It has also seemed to me that the crisis is related to the tradition of nostalgic romanticism that informs Polish culture generally, and can be seen in the work of Wajda, Has, and Munk. These directors all deal with life in the immediate present, and sometimes in magisterial fashion. But the handling has always been in terms of a counterpoise with the war: the perspective of these directors is inescapably fashioned through a sort of ironic balance between past and present. This may be passionate and hopeless as in Wajda, ironic and detached as in Has, comic or a bit grisly as in Munk—but always the war is there as a kind of touchstone. Without it, one suspects, these directors might be at a loss.

This is not an accusation, of course: a visit to Poland teaches one that without the war as a touchstone much of Polish society would be at a loss. Indeed, no doubt the crisis, to the extent it relates to this question, only shows how intimately the film reflects social problems. (Cinema, I think, is like a donkey which will sometimes in its own fashion follow a carrot, but will not budge for the stick.) The film problem is like the general social problem: how to escape from bondage to the past? Perhaps only a new and younger generation will achieve this in politics or in films. Jerzy Stawinski, who wrote the scripts for several of Wajda's films, most recently the episode for *Love at Twenty,* has lately turned director himself. He too is conscious of the nostalgia problem, but his new film is something of an expansion upon the Wajda episode: a modern young man confronted by his father who was in the war. Only Polanski, in his chilly, heartless, masterful *Knife in the Water,* has fully worked in the present; and in Poland they say, not entirely as a joke, that there are no really good Polish directors—Polanski being a French one. . . .

All this does not touch Ford, who has a solid foundation in popular acceptance, the approval of the regime, and his own curious detachment. He is a trained art-historian, lives in the suburbs, and spends his time in bookstores rather than with the film crowd. His new film is based on a stage play, and in this as well as a certain willingness to be visually dramatic it will be considered old-fashioned or academic. The story centers on a young Polish officer who, as the Nazis retreat, befriends a German doctor and his daughters. (The oldest has just been raped by unidentified hooligans, in a spectacular scene that clearly keeps Ford in the same class with Bergman in these matters; and the film will probably have censorship problems abroad. Censorship has just been established in Poland too, but no one yet knows how it will work.) The plot, which involves the return of the girl's wartime Nazi boyfriend, who machineguns hundreds of Poles and gets her to man the gun after he is shot, is obviously melodramatic; it is also strongly moral in an officially acceptable sense, dealing as it does with the uselessness of revenge, the necessity to build anew, and the danger of national identifications, especially German ones, leading to futile slaughter. But it does involve some ironies: the family-ridden intellectual who was "free" to write in the prisoner-of-war camp, the camaraderie of the men who were in the Warsaw uprising, the bearlike Russian officer out of *Chapayev.* Jan, the young Pole, in the end spots the source of the fire and, suspecting it is the girl, shoots to stop it, despite half loving her. He climbs the ruined church tower, as she had done to find her lover there, and sees them both dead. The panoramic camera rises slowly over the town, and we end on the smoke of battle receding in the distance.

The style of *First Day of Freedom* is very strong visually, especially in the opening prison-camp scenes and at the end, with the battle; it

is lit dramatically, with deep shadows and careful highlighting; the movement of actors is vigorous. (One can understand why Ford wrote his dissertation on Michelangelo.) The zoom lens is used for some startling widescreen effects, and Ford is not afraid to use the big screen for close-ups of objects, as for instance in a scene when bombers are approaching: glassware vibrates, a lightbulb flashes fitfully on and off. The cutting is brisk; there are no lingering dubieties here, and evidently no great subtleties of language. The world is harsh, cruel, uncomprehending, vengeful; still, it is necessary to try to be good. (Ford juxtaposes with the sexual restraint of his hero and the German girl another scene of her sister jumping into bed with a Polish officer; the sister goes on like a teen-age existentialist.) What is in doubt in such films is never values, but the outcomes of action. As in a Hollywood film, the film-maker assumes that he and his audience are in agreement about values, and will share a view of the events portrayed if they are shown clearly and without distortion. It is unnecessary, perhaps, to be severe with such assumptions when they are in another land—all one can do is wish they were true. We cannot yet really tell, I think, whether they are more apt for lasting film-making than the dubieties that underlie Antonioni or Fellini or Godard or Bergman in *The Silence*. But they certainly hail from "another country."

—Ernest Callenbach

BANDE A PART

(Band of Outsiders) Director: Jean-Luc Godard. Based on the novel "Fool's Gold," by D. and B. Hitchens. Photography: Raoul Coutard. Music: Michel Legrand. Anouchka Films/Orsay Films.

Godard's latest film to reach the States raises questions of development which can't be answered until distributors import *Le Mépris* and *Les Carabiniers*—is Godard's corrosive cynicism evident in all three films, or only in *Bande à Part*? After so many experiments with collapsed, telescoped, and restricted, almost atomized, narrative devices, has he returned to conventional narrative form? Most of *Bande à Part* (the notable exceptions are the fight between Franz and his uncle's accomplice, and the sliding series of dissolves that present the culmination of Franz's seduction of Odile), proceeds in unruffled narrative manner, prodded and interrupted only by an omniscient narrator (Godard?) who freezes and distances the action by explaining what someone feels so crudely and obviously that the character is deliberately reduced and satirized. One judgment seems clear; *Bande à Part* is the coldest, most reductive film Godard has ever made. It is also, except for *Breathless*, the most powerful yet seen here. But the absences tell: gone are the jump cuts, the audacious bridging pans, the stop-motion, the humor, and the sympathy of *Breathless;* the formal narrative control, the judged distance, the reserve, and the commitment to a naturalism which becomes transcendent and passionate in *Vivre Sa Vie* (with very flawed results). The trio Godard assembles in *Bande à Part*—Odile (Karina the schoolgirl who drifts into a plot to rob her rich aunt, Franz (Sami Frey) the tough yet vulnerable hood who plans the robbery and seduces and abandons Odile, Artur (Claude Brasseur) Franz's malleable sidekick who nurtures a stereotyped passion for Odile—are more isolated and adrift than all Godard's other characters. Godard successfully captures their emptiness and isolation, but consequently expends the first half of the film in minutiae and surface byplay; his pace lags because his characters are so damaged he must allow them to drift and bumble into their action.

But once Godard establishes Franz's patient yet intractable singlemindedness and callousness, and fixes Odile's hopeless infatuation with Franz, the robbery is projected, the film snaps tight, and drives relentlessly towards the hovering destructive fatality. Godard hints not only at Odile's betrayal and abandonment, but also her murder; his dénouement, however, is more complex. That wayward but inexorable fatalism (*Breathless, Vivre sa Vie*) strikes; Franz has been forced to reveal the robbery to his uncle

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and an accomplice, and after Franz and Artur subdue Odile and her aunt, and locate the hoarded money, the uncle and friend arrive at the aunt's chateau and the friend shoots Artur down. (The killing is a triumph, for Godard mixes a jumble of motives, a gangster burlesque, and a poke at Truffaut's *Shoot the Pianist,* yet the scene engrosses and jolts.) Odile, already shaken and terrified after Franz roughs her up and abandons her, manages to escape, stunned, with Artur. The film ends with a series of dissolves, taking us from Artur and Odile, racing down the highway in Artur's ubiquitous sports-car, to some island paradise, where the pair, refreshed, cleansed, and financed, work at loving each other. "The further adventures of this pair," the narrator assures us, "will be presented in Technicolor and CinemaScope."

The ending reinforces the distancing cynicism of the narrator's role in the entire film, but skews the action, which has been working toward the destruction of Odile's innocence by Franz; Godard's attitude towards his characters runs against his plot. But the cynicism of the narrator and the ending is reinforced by Godard's almost total denial of sympathy to his trio; here Frey and Karina's great performances slightly counteract Godard's coldness. Even Godard's preoccupation with how Hollywood mannerisms, styles, and conventions water down into the life-styles of his outsiders (which Belmondo integrated, with the Bogey bits, in *Breathless*) is crudely imposed in *Bande à Part;* the quick mimes of western gun play, and the jump starts and insistent circling of Artur's car, are pasted onto characters too limited even to fake or play.

But with its flaws, and its chilling reductiveness, *Bande à Part* is compelling, dominated by Godard's sure narrative control and Coutard's barren, sombre, finally dominating Paris suburbs. The questions it raises about Godard's development are almost equally provocative.

—Norm Fruchter

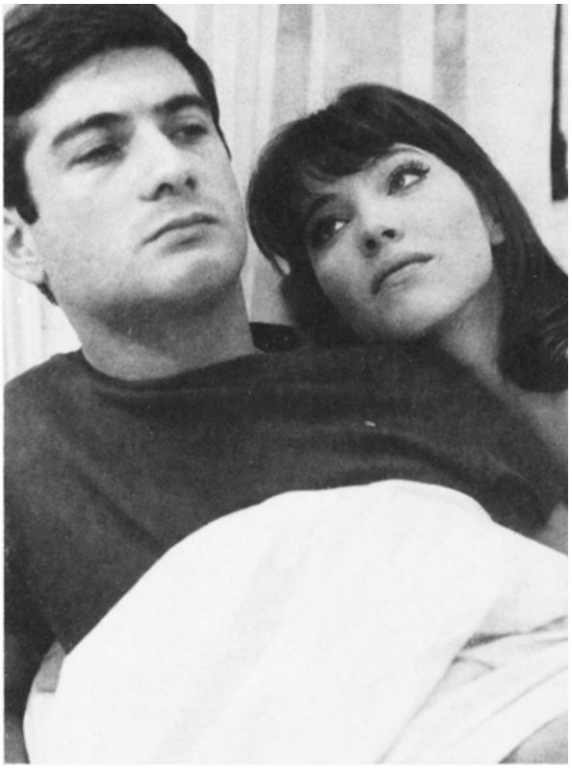
Jean-Luc Godard's
Une Femme est une Femme

UNE FEMME EST UNE FEMME

(A Woman Is a Woman) Written and directed by Jean-Luc Godard. Photography: Raoul Coutard. Music: Michel Legrand. Producers: Carlo Ponti and Georges de Beauregard.

Une Femme est une Femme arrives here three years late. Jean-Luc Godard made the film in 1961, his third after *Breathless* and *Le Petit Soldat.* From films in black and white about a young hood running from the cops and finally too tired to run or a French draft-dodger in Switzerland during the Algerian War caught in No-Man's-Land among FLN *vs.* French Fascist underground activities, Godard suddenly crossed into color and a basically comic theme. The woman who is a woman is Angela (Anna Karina) who wants her lover Emile (Jean-Claude Brialy) to give her a baby. Ovulating and firmly decided on the necessity of immediate impregnation, she fails to persuade Emile—he wants no children before they marry and that depends on him winning bicycle races —and finally resorts to their mutual friend Albert (Jean-Paul Belmondo) who has clearly been hanging around for a while hoping, somehow, someway, to get to her. The life force satisfied, she immediately goes back home to Emile and confesses and Emile, hung between believing her and his unwillingness to believe her, takes her to bed that same night to cloud, forever, the origins of their first child.

This love minuet is presented with a fine splashy comic use of color—certainly among one of the best ever—and a razzle-dazzle jump-cutting pace that almost never bogs down. A consciously playful relationship with the cinema audience is established by winks, gestures, sometimes direct address. That this sort of thing has been bastardized in such heavy-handed tripe as *Tom Jones* does not lessen Godard's achievement in maintaining a steady light touch which not only brings these moments off unaffectedly but allows him to use a whole herd of devices for disrupting the conventions of a closed fictional story intent on the



Karina and Brialy in
Une Femme est une Femme

creation of its own "reality." Titles are flashed across the screen while characters freeze into immobility, explaining that "Angela and Emile are truly in love but . . ."; music is used arbitrarily for particular comic effects; improvised bits and visual gags come pouring out one after another. Less interesting are the stock references to other Nouvelle Vague films—including a walk-on by Jeanne Moreau—which can however be missed totally without any great damage to one's response.

All this style distances and cornices the action, creating a wacky never-never land out of a strip-tease joint, a bare apartment, and a neon-lit night-time Paris. But, as in other Godard movies, the camera continually adores two objects: Karina and Paris, which carry the emotional charge of the film. Where Brialy and Belmondo are cast and played as effective stereotypes, of a slightly prissy young lover and an all-around hustler respectively, Karina, with her single-minded concentration on wanting a

baby, breaks out of the myriad comic framing devices to become a character whose situation *matters.* And as such, she becomes a character who betrays. Godard's anarchism is of the kind that suicidally races toward fatality rather than choosing the dream of the possible elimination of fatality by violence. In Godard, people always betray and vitality dies (Belmondo in *Breathless,* Karina in *Vivre Sa Vie,* Sami Frey in *Bande à Part.* Similarly, the frothy cosmos of *Une Femme est une Femme* is completed by a betrayal, by a partial destruction—whose child *will* it be?—of the bonds that have been created between Angela and Emile. And incidentally of friendship as well, since Albert betrays Emile through the same act. But this is a comedy and can end happily with Emile and Angela sweaty in bed, a flourish of music, and wide smiles. Yet, amid the sweep of Coutard's night-time Paris that separates individuals rather than linking them, that always seems shining with a nostalgia for lost joy, the fatality has been even here, the betrayal *is,* and some fragment of emotional vitality has died in the service of something mechanical. —HENRY HEIFETZ

THE LUCK OF GINGER COFFEY

Director: Irvin Kershner. Screenplay: Brian Moore, from his own novel. Photography: Manny Wynn. Music: Bernardo Segall. Producer: Leon Roth.

Actors and actresses are still pretty important, as Robert Shaw and Mary Ure demonstrate in *The Luck of Ginger Coffey.* Shaw has a bravura role in the title part, but a fat part can be even more demanding than a lean one and Shaw never falters. Miss Ure's part is less colorful and one of which I expect she's getting tired (how many times has she been the spunky wife of the exciting ne'er-do-well?) but she brings to it a marvelous conviction and concentration.

Ginger Coffey is a "New Canadian" from Dublin who has failed to make a go of it in Montreal, and as the film opens he has promised his wife that they will return at once to Ireland where they have friends and relatives. But Ginger, whose "luck" is all bad because his expectations are all delusions of grandeur, has already spent the passage money. When he lies to her about the job he has taken (he is a proofreader at forty-five a week and says he's a sub-editor at seventy-five) she leaves him and gets a job as a saleswoman. Ginger wheedles their teen-aged daughter into joining *him,* and his wife lets the girl go to Ginger knowing that disillusionment will soon end the child's attachment to her bluff, charming father. Ginger fights hard, carrying two jobs at once and pleading with his editor for a promotion to a job in keeping with his notions of himself, but his glamorous vision of what's right for "a man like me" costs him the one real piece of luck he ever has—costs him both his jobs, and his dignity. In a police-court dock on a charge of indecent exposure (for urinating in a doorway in the dead of night), he sees his wife in the courtroom and uses the stand as confessional, at last pleading his real smallness and loneliness instead of his imagined importance and independence, and the film ends with a glimmering of hope for Ginger and his wife.

Shaw is a huge, square-faced man with a neck like a keg and a rich, booming voice, and he plays Ginger—an embodiment of bluff and blarney and oversized Irish charm—at a nervous, agile, hippity-hop tempo, running across squares, leaping lightly across gutters, trotting briskly around the gym at the YMCA, which invests the stereotyped figure with a pathos, a childish gawkiness, that discovers a reality within the type.

Miss Ure's portrayal of the wife admits of no such easy description; she is simply an actress of such subtlety, such force and presence, that her roles come to life the instant she speaks or tilts her head or crosses her arms or walks across the room. Her performance in *Ginger Coffey* is no triumph, for there is no triumph in the role, but it is flawless: perfection in a small compass.

Manny Wynn has photographed Montreal very acutely in the exterior shots, but the film won't make you want to live there. Or marry a winning Irishman. —JACKSON BURGESS

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P. M. HODGENS*

Entertainments

Lilith. Robert Rossen tries to do too much again; *Lilith* is another rather dismal film one wishes one could like. Rossen's Lilith is a sort of succubus in a mental institution; he apparently wants to explain it all dramatically, but no one could. He has tried to limit the point of view to the young man who becomes involved with her, and that doesn't work either. The pace is tortuous, there is no balance between realism and subjectivity, there is a superfluity of notions and there is a lack of connections, despite a lot of aural and visual overlapping and echoing. The hero seeks work or refuge at the institution; he finds the heroine in a web of symbols, and succumbs; and at the end she's catatonic and he's asking for help. The film can barely sketch the hero's problems, despite some clumsy exposition; and it cannot begin to fathom Lilith's, despite an equally clumsy attempt at the last minute. Lilith remains a symbol of something, even if she is poor Jean Seberg. Warren Beatty, as the hero, loses touch convincingly enough, but Miss Seberg seems too level-headed. All this almost makes up for things like *David and Lisa* and *Sundays and Cybele,* but that is not much of a recommendation. Rossen adapted, produced, and directed the film.

The Masque of the Red Death. Producer-director Roger Corman has a fairly firm command of this sort of thing by now—the flames to suggest hell-fires or prefigure earthly ones, the monochromatic and distorted illusions, the flights, the agonies, and even the comic relief. Since his budget and his script (by Charles Beaumont and R. Wright Campbell) were better than usual this time, *The Masque of the Red Death* is most effective; it is even, as all tales of supernatural terror ought to be, a religious work, and if the theology is inconsistent, it still seems to work. Since even Vincent Price is satisfactory this time, the only serious objection can be to Corman's usual attempt to make too much of his climaxes; not content with the horror and the point, he tries to make a bloody ballet out of it—or a Modern Dance, anyway—and also adds a few too many Deaths. Corman's *The Secret Invasion* (with another script by R. Wright Campbell) is an equally bloody, almost as fantastic account of an impossible mission which only Raf

*All items are by Mr. Hodgens unless followed by a special signature.

MALAMONDO

(A review—sort of—by Harriet R. Polt)

Hi Linda

Last night me and Gary saw the coolest movie. Honest it was neat! Its called Malamondo and it doesn't have a plot or anything but its all about these teen agers in Europe and all the far out things they do over there. You ought to go see it!

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Lilith. Robert Rossen tries to do too much again; *Lilith* is another rather dismal film one wishes one could like. Rossen's Lilith is a sort of succubus in a mental institution; he apparently wants to explain it all dramatically, but no one could. He has tried to limit the point of view to the young man who becomes involved with her, and that doesn't work either. The pace is tortuous, there is no balance between realism and subjectivity, there is a superfluity of notions and there is a lack of connections, despite a lot of aural and visual overlapping and echoing. The hero seeks work or refuge at the institution; he finds the heroine in a web of symbols, and succumbs; and at the end she's catatonic and he's asking for help. The film can barely sketch the hero's problems, despite some clumsy exposition; and it cannot begin to fathom Lilith's, despite an equally clumsy attempt at the last minute. Lilith remains a symbol of something, even if she is poor Jean Seberg. Warren Beatty, as the hero, loses touch convincingly enough, but Miss Seberg seems too level-headed. All this almost makes up for things like *David and Lisa* and *Sundays and Cybele,* but that is not much of a recommendation. Rossen adapted, produced, and directed the film.

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A Jester's Tale. Karel Zeman's spoof of war—here the Thirty Years' War—makes use, like *Baron Münchhausen* and *The Deadly Invention*, of his special animating techniques. The characters are live, but many of the settings are composed of blown-up drawings or etchings superimposed on the live-action footage. "Frame" sections of the film and interspersed episodes of narration are often composed of animated etchings and drawings: an eighteenth-century drawn horse suddenly crumbles, etc. For the most part, the machinery works very well and often to great comic or atmospheric effect. Zeman also establishes atmosphere (he has a fine eye for visual details) by such tricks as speeding up the motion of clouds above a field through which his lovers wander. The satire is pretty pointed, and most of the jokes, though not novel, come off with great success. And blessedly the film is not too long.

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(By various authors. Warsaw: Polonia Press, 1962. No price given.)

The *Nouvelle Vague* and the new Polish Cinema began at about the same time, but American film-goers have only recently taken notice of the Poles—ironically, as the Polish cinema has been experiencing a crisis for the past two years. Our interest in Polish films has been whetted by the features seen here and by circulating exhibitions of Polish film posters and group showings of short *avant-garde* films, many from the film school at Lodz, which, to the eyes of an outsider, seem fresh and accomplished. These range from animated films (cartoons and puppets) to documentaries on the Second World War. Polanski's *Two Men and a Wardrobe* and *Mammals* are imaginative and beautifully stylized didacticism; the Polish conventions are as intense and saturated with meaning as their anarchist and apocalyptic American counterparts—Slick or Kaye. Tadeusz Markarczynski's *Life Is Beautiful*, which invites comparison with the work of Connor or Vanderbeek, is a kaleidoscope of contemporary carnivals, night-club revels, Hiroshima, death camps and pop songs—it is a social film and an aesthetic experience.

History as experienced by individuals is often the subject of the Polish feature film. Andrzej Wajda takes as his subject the nature of heroism and the Polish experience in World War II. Like Fellini he is a romantic, a myth-maker, yet critical of the myth that he affirms. Part of the brilliance of Wajda's achievement is a function of a creative tension that exists between the brutality and complexity of history and his heroic sensibility. Wajda was trained as an artist before studying film at Lodz and he brings to the film a sensitive eye for light and color. In *Ashes and the Diamond* the gray light works as a metaphor of the spiritual condition of the hero. The color and photography of *Lotna* are as exciting as that in the last banquet scene in Eisenstein's *Ivan II*. Wajda like Eisenstein is a

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History as experienced by individuals is often the subject of the Polish feature film. Andrzej Wajda takes as his subject the nature of heroism and the Polish experience in World War II. Like Fellini he is a romantic, a myth-maker, yet critical of the myth that he affirms. Part of the brilliance of Wajda's achievement is a function of a creative tension that exists between the brutality and complexity of history and his heroic sensibility. Wajda was trained as an artist before studying film at Lodz and he brings to the film a sensitive eye for light and color. In *Ashes and the Diamond* the gray light works as a metaphor of the spiritual condition of the hero. The color and photography of *Lotna* are as exciting as that in the last banquet scene in Eisenstein's *Ivan II*. Wajda like Eisenstein is a

a ferocious "nymphomaniac" who lusts for the Sultan's daggar, as she tells us at the beginning. Poor Peter Ustinov, as the hero, finds himself in a simple part as a simple clown, and among the stars of the film only Maximilian Schell can seem serious enough—but not too serious—to create much conviction or interest. Fortunately, where Dassin indulges his interest in the glorification of the theft itself, which remains the center of interest, his considerable talent for staging involved detail makes *Topkapi* a colorful, intelligent, partial success.

A Jester's Tale. Karel Zeman's spoof of war—here the Thirty Years' War—makes use, like *Baron Münchhausen* and *The Deadly Invention*, of his special animating techniques. The characters are live, but many of the settings are composed of blown-up drawings or etchings superimposed on the live-action footage. "Frame" sections of the film and interspersed episodes of narration are often composed of animated etchings and drawings: an eighteenth-century drawn horse suddenly crumbles, etc. For the most part, the machinery works very well and often to great comic or atmospheric effect. Zeman also establishes atmosphere (he has a fine eye for visual details) by such tricks as speeding up the motion of clouds above a field through which his lovers wander. The satire is pretty pointed, and most of the jokes, though not novel, come off with great success. And blessedly the film is not too long.

—HARRIET R. POLT

Books

CONTEMPORARY POLISH CINEMATOGRAPHY

(By various authors. Warsaw: Polonia Press, 1962. No price given.)

The *Nouvelle Vague* and the new Polish Cinema began at about the same time, but American film-goers have only recently taken notice of the Poles—ironically, as the Polish cinema has been experiencing a crisis for the past two years. Our interest in Polish films has been whetted by the features seen here and by circulating exhibitions of Polish film posters and group showings of short *avant-garde* films, many from the film school at Lodz, which, to the eyes of an outsider, seem fresh and accomplished. These range from animated films (cartoons and puppets) to documentaries on the Second World War. Polanski's *Two Men and a Wardrobe* and *Mammals* are imaginative and beautifully stylized didacticism; the Polish conventions are as intense and saturated with meaning as their anarchist and apocalyptic American counterparts—Slick or Kaye. Tadeusz Markarczynski's *Life Is Beautiful*, which invites comparison with the work of Connor or Vanderbeek, is a kaleidoscope of contemporary carnivals, night-club revels, Hiroshima, death camps and pop songs—it is a social film and an aesthetic experience.

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keen student of dramatic and literary conventions—*Lotna* is a chivalric epic of World War II, the epic assertion gradually undermined from within.

The authors of *Contemporary Polish Cinematography* note two predominant modes in Polish cinema. One, a trend toward expressionistic stylization, reminiscent of *Calgari* and the Russian drama in the 1920's, is best represented by Wajda. More recently there has been a trend toward "a specific rationalism, ironic tone, a polemic within traditional concepts." This trend, less romantic yet still characteristically Polish, can be seen in the work of the late Andrzej Munk, who in *Eroica* and *Bad Luck* peoples the world with little men and shows acts of heroism accomplished by anti-heroes. A related trend is the concern with smaller incidents, with rendering the character of more ordinary persons and the essence of small psychological conflicts. This is evident in the work of Has and Kawalerowicz, and in Polanski's *Knife in the Water.* (After heavy official criticism of this film, Polanski is now reportedly working in England.)

Contemporary Polish Cinematography has been published at a time when we are in need of a compact source of background material on the Polish cinema. Available in English, French, and Polish, in less than two hundred pages it presents a solid encyclopedic account of the Polish film from its beginnings until 1962. (Unfortunately it slights foreign influences.) The book is profusely illustrated, contains biographies of directors and actors, and has a filmography of all feature films and prize-winning short films made in Poland since 1949. It begins with a summary of the industry before the war, focusing primarily upon Aleksander Ford and Wanda Jakubowska. It has chapters on documentary, animated film, and experimental film. (The material on short films is as comprehensive as that on the feature film.) The authors attempt to discuss trends, place the major film-makers in an historical context, and give a brief formal analysis and critical evaluation of their work.

About a third of *Contemporary Polish Cinematography* deals with the nature of the state-organized Polish cinema. There is little on the problems of bureaucratic censorship, which is evidently responsible for the current predominance of safe historical romances, and is a crucial factor in the production system. (But then, there is little in American film publications about the problems of financing a film that is suspect politically or morally or aesthetically in the United States.) In this section there is material on films by amateurs, the organization of production, the Film Institute at Lodz, film publications, and cinema-clubs, where films are shown and discussed.

In Poland the socialist state has carefully guided and stimulated the growth of a film culture. Scriptwriters and film directors, after training at the Film Institute, are organized in eight guild-like production units which are supervised by an administrator: the Minister of Culture. The production units, however, are creative groups—although their scripts must be submitted to the ministry for approval, the film is made only under the supervision of senior film directors—men like Kawalerowicz, Ford, Bossak, Rybkowski. The high quality of the films is a result not only of the personal talents of the directors, but of their extensive schooling and relative freedom from commercial obligations. However, good films alone do not make for film culture; the audience that views the films must be educated. To accomplish this in Poland, film discussion clubs were sponsored by the government and by 1962 40,000 Poles had joined. Film classics, significant contemporary feature films and *avant-garde* experimental films are shown and discussed. Although the program to develop discussion leaders hasn't fulfilled the government's expectations, the authors proudly report that "some film directors have established such a friendly relationship with the clubs . . . they take every occasion to discuss their new films. Sometimes the directors make changes in the final cutting, as a result of these discussions." —MICHAEL KLEIN

Correspondence & Controversy

CINÉMA-VÉRITÉ

We at Drew Associates appreciated very much the attention paid our films in the three articles on *cinéma-vérité* by Colin Young, Peter Graham and Henry Breitrose (Summer 1964). As a cameraman-filmaker and associate of Drew Associates, I would like to offer some comments.

As both Colin Young and Henry Breitrose suggest, the term *"cinéma-vérité"* has been used "loosely," particularly by European writers who now call almost any film with a camera jiggle a new experiment in *cinéma-vérité*. They lump together all sorts of fictional experiments, interviews and standard documentaries if the technique seems to resemble direct cinema technique. Most of these films have absolutely nothing in common except celluloid.

There is a *cinéma-vérité* technique which is the result of the way we are forced to work. We are attempting to capture what happens, to move with our characters without interfering in what they are doing. We are thus forced to use hand-held cameras and mobile sound equipment. Despite our best efforts the camera sometimes jiggles. This is the technique. It is not a form.

To draw a literary analogy, it is as though critics began treating all first person novels and poems as autobiography because they all share with autobiography the use of the first person singular.

Recently this fuzziness has become silly. At a symposium on *cinéma-vérité* at the Huntington Hartford Museum in New York one speaker suggested that 12 hours of shooting on the Empire State Building was fine *cinéma-vérité*. At the same meeting Jonas Mekas described an amusing mix-up of this sort at the Venice Film Festival. He had photographed a Broadway play, *The Brig* with *cinéma-vérité* techniques and sent the film to the Festival. There the jury awarded this fictional, staged film first prize as a *documentary!*

Faced by such foggy thinking and lack of definition we are tempted to search for another term to call the films that we are making, but whatever its historical derivation *"cinéma-vérité"* has come to have a special meaning among American film-makers and we ought to try to come to some general agreement about the meaning of the term. Colin Young has made a valiant effort in this direction.

First off, there are some things that *cinéma-vérité* is not. These films are not fictional. Writers do not write the characters' lines or suggest themes for them to act out. These films are not directed or staged. In fact there is no director. Although snatches of interviews sometimes creep into the films (if we cannot avoid it) these films are only distantly related to interview compilations. These films are not about the Empire State Building or other objects. They are about people.

The *cinéma-vérité* film-maker is a special kind of film journalist who is trying to record what really happens more truly than a reporter taking notes. He turns the camera on because he thinks something important or beautiful, sad or funny is happening before him and he wants to share that vision with the viewer. If there is a story, it is not one that he created, but rather one that he placed himself in the way of watching, a real-life drama.

None of this means that the film-maker necessarily forfeits his point of view, and most of this talk about objectivity is beside the point. Probably no *cinéma-vérité* film-makers including the Maysles, think that they are totally objective, and those critics who enjoy blasting at the impossibility of complete objectivity are bravely destroying strawmen.

On the other hand all of these films seem to reach a higher intensity and power when the viewer is convinced that the film-maker has presented him with a fair view of the characters and subject so that he can judge for himself the comedy or tragedy of the characters and their situation. If he is successful, the film-maker will usually be surprised at the diversity of points of view which viewers attribute to him. What happens is that people form their own point of view on the material presented and assume that the film-maker must have had that point of view in making the film.

For ages good writers have known that revealing a character through action was far more effective than telling the reader what to think. This is also true in film-making and is one of the important differences between *cinéma-vérité* and the ordinary documentary. But again this has to do with technique, not form. A *cinéma-vérité* film could be quite biased.

Now to keep the record straight about some of Drew Associates films, commented upon in the three articles. It was indicated that we might have hoked up some of the films with make believe. For instance Peter Graham complains that at the end of *Susan Starr*, "the film-makers overemphasize her friendship (is it really love) with another pianist." Perhaps, in a single viewing on TV Mr. Graham missed some scenes. Susan's feelings are clear in her actions and the film plainly shows Susan getting married to the young pianist, and in fact she did.

Henry Breitrose complains the "Close-up shots of the facial tic of one of the coaches in [*Mooney vs Fowle*] are referred to again and again as the [football] game nears its close. The problem is that this is the coach of the winning team, which by the time the tic is cut in is so far ahead that victory is all but guaranteed." A closer look at the film will reveal that the tic is not "cut in." It is shown exactly when it happened as a close look at the film will reveal. In one continuous shot the camera zooms in on his trembling face, pulls back slowly as he shouts, "I'm ready, I'm ready," and as the crowd counts the last ten seconds of the game and the camera pulls back slowly to wide angle, the coach is lifted on the shoulders of his supporters and carried on the field. This is one continuous shot. No cuts.

And that is a good example of the power and excitement of *cinéma-vérité* at its best. It is not logical for the coach to be so nervous or frightened and no script-writer could get away with it, but it did happen which proves that real life is sometimes more interesting and revealing than most script-writers usually make it. The problem is, if any, that some viewers are so used to hokum that they have trouble believing reality when they see it.

One last comment on Drew Associates films. Peter Graham often refers to them as Drew-Leacock films which is probably more embarrassing to Rickie Leacock, than to anyone else. Robert Drew founded the Company and its films carry the name of the Company. Leacock has been a photographer, editor and producer on some (not all) of the films as a part of a team, and in fact he is no longer a part of Drew Associates. Leacock is a great talent and friend and deserves recognition, but in fairness to others involved, the following facts should be noted.

Of the ten films co-produced by Drew Associates and Time Inc., Donald Pennebaker (also no longer a part of Drew Associates) was principal cameraman on more of the films than Leacock. Gregory Shuker was producer on more of the films than Leacock and others edited larger portions than he.

Though Leacock is often credited with making *Jane* and *Susan Starr*, another film-maker, Hope Ryden, was in fact responsible for their conception and production.

All but two of these films were produced by teams headed by film-makers other than Leacock. Leacock's contribution was important until June, 1963, but these films are not in any sense "Drew-Leacock" films.

—JAMES C. LIPSCOMB

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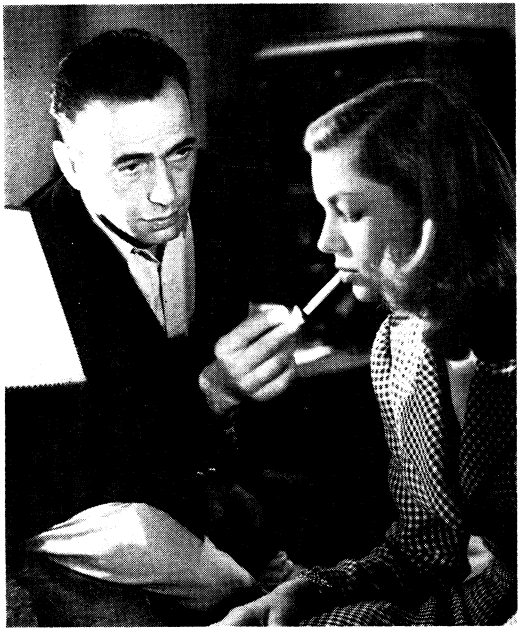

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