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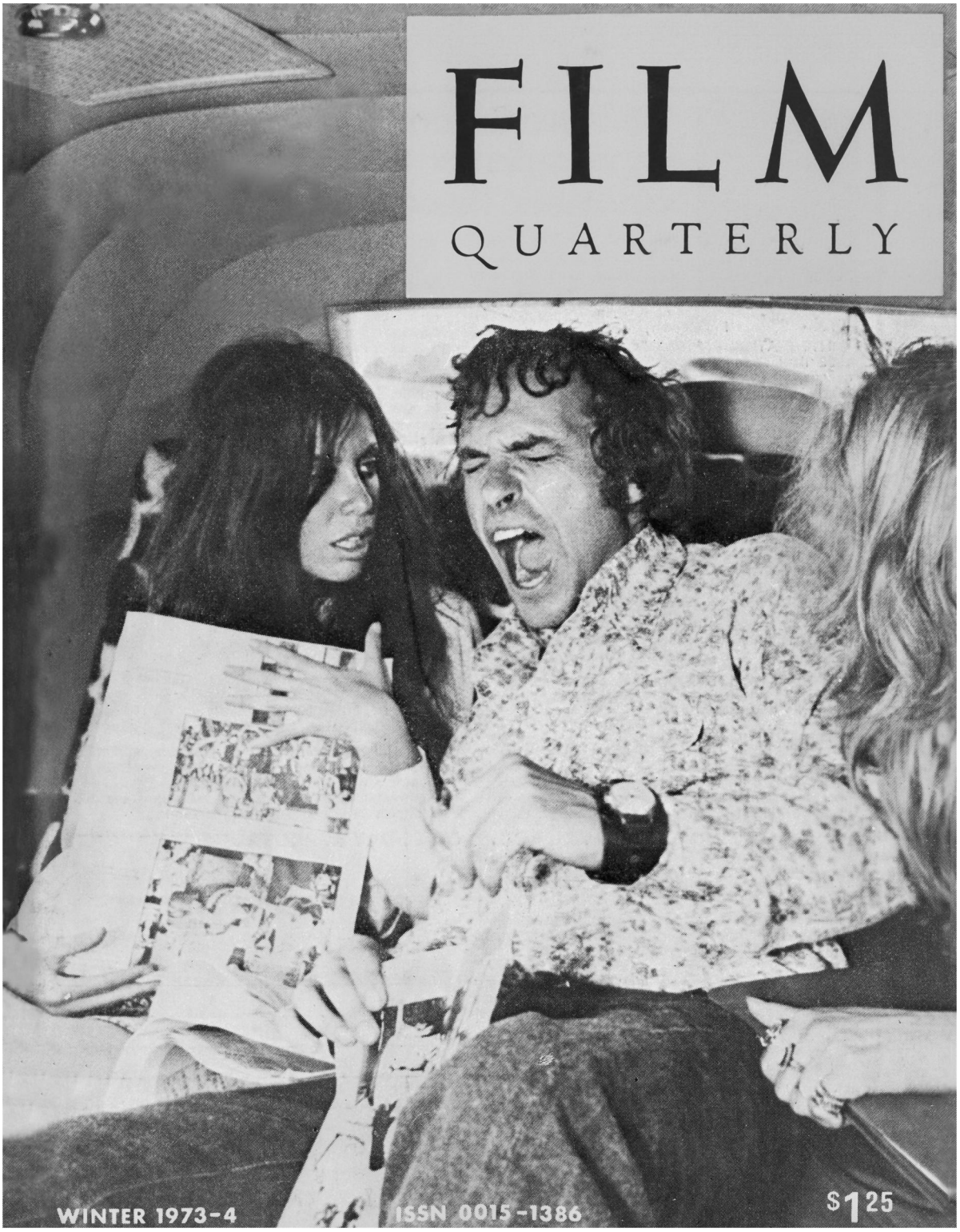

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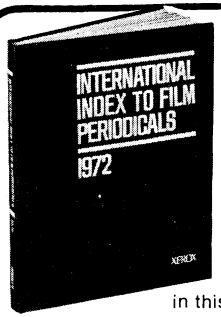

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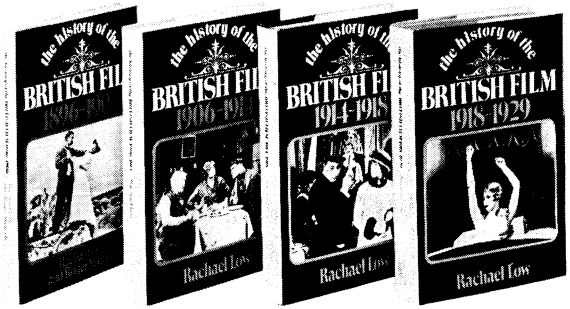

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MARSHA KINDER and BEVERLE HOUSTON

Truffaut's Gorgeous Killers

The central character in many of Truffaut's films is a profoundly seductive woman steeped in the archetypal mystery of the *belle dame sans merci;* she uses her sexual liberation like a *femme fatale,* to destroy a hero who is either sensitive and needy, or who mistakenly believes that his rationality will enable him to cope with her magic. Truffaut's earliest films present a combination of attraction and hostility in response to this kind of woman. In *Les Mistons* (1957), a group of boys tease and torment a young woman who is awakening their adolescent desires; they cannot forgive her amorous behavior with her fiancé, who later dies in an accident. In *The 400 Blows* (1959), the young boy is most vulnerable to his seductive, adulterous mother, who ends up by coldly rejecting him and confining him in an institution. In *Soft Skin* (1963), even the loving wife and mother finally turns and shoots her unfaithful husband. The *femme fatale* dominates *Jules and Jim* (1961), *The Bride Wore Black* (1968), *Mississippi Mermaid* (1970), and *Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me* (1973). All these films reveal the magnetic power of the romantic fantasy, which is held in tension with a deflating comic irony. Though the power of this woman remains unabated throughout these films (in fact, she is completely triumphant in *Gorgeous Kid*), there is a shift in balance between the romanticism and the irony. After *Jules and Jim,* though the heroes are still hopelessly drawn into the seductive fantasy, Truffaut does not evoke a parallel reaction in the audience. The *femmes fatales* are presented with increasing ironic distance and the struggling heroes become more and more absurd. This trend is continued in *Day for Night* (1973), Truffaut's latest film, where the ridiculous male victim is even more dangerous than the seductive female. As in *Gorgeous Kid,* their relationship is an object of mockery; but it no longer merits the central focus, for Truffaut at last introduces viable alternatives.

Jules and Jim is unique in its even balance between the two forces and between two views of Catherine (Jeanne Moreau) as the liberating muse and the irresponsible tyrant. This combination gives her omnipotence over the lives of Jules (Oskar Werner), the delicate German whose rationality leads him to study entomology, and Jim (Henri Serre), the tall, dark Frenchman who develops into the sensitive writer-adventurer. After tormenting the two of them with her changes of heart, she plunges her car off the end of a bridge in a fit of pique, taking Jim along for the fatal ride. Jules, though astonished, is basically relieved. Hitchcock provides the conventions and tone for *The Bride Wore Black,* where Truffaut moves further into irony, focusing on the aesthetics rather than the ethics of murder. Julie (again played by Jeanne Moreau) kills with style and verve, suiting the seduction and the *modus operandi* to each victim's tastes. As the "wronged woman" whose bridegroom was accidentally shot on the church steps by a group of men cleaning a gun, Julie is romantically justified in her vengeful hunt (one of her victims paints her as Diana, conveniently providing bow and arrow). When she is finally arrested, the only man left unmurdered is the one who actually fired the shot; however, she takes care of him in prison with a carving knife. Though she ends up behind bars, no one has escaped her power and, in her own terms and those of the film, she's a smashing success. In *Mississippi Mermaid,* the romance is provided by Catherine Deneuve's exquisite person, her clothes, and the exotic settings. Her appearance—in flowing white, and carrying a birdcage —delights the lonely plantation owner (Jean-Paul Belmondo) who has acquired his bride by mail. Later he learns that not only is she an

impostor, but, in cahoots with her ruthless lover, she has murdered the real bride. Yet love conquers all, bringing forgiveness from her husband, who is moved to aid her in another murder. His continuing adoration becomes profoundly absurd as this divine Julie tries several times to murder *him*. Finally, he succeeds in being alone with his beloved in a mountain retreat—which she transforms into a deadly trap. In *Gorgeous Kid,* the audience is not for one moment allowed to share the romantic illusion of Stanislas Previn (André Dassolier), who longs to see the vulgar and utterly selfish Camilla Bliss (Bernadette Lafont) as a helpless but redeemable victim of a nasty childhood, and as a great *artiste* on her way to stardom. While she has the sexual energy and comic resilience of a Moll Flanders, the sociologist hero, to his ruination, forgets that she is a potent maneater who began precociously by killing daddy. After heroically proving her innocence for the one murder she didn't commit, this poignant fool winds up in jail, betrayed into taking the rap for her latest killing. In *Day for Night,* Alphonse (Jean-Pierre Léaud), a babyish movie star, is jilted by a scriptgirl named Liliane (played by Dani) who runs away with a stuntman in the middle of the shooting schedule. Although she is deceitful, irresponsible, and self-centered, Liliane is not a killer. Her actions, words, and clothes (she wears a T-shirt that labels her as a "Wild Thing") all clearly indicate that she is not the marrying kind. Early in the film she warns Alphonse, "It's stupid to be jealous, or else go all the way and commit murder." Yet, he constantly clutches at her snatch, insisting, "That's mine, keep it for me, in sacred trust." Her reasons for not wanting to marry him are sound: "He's a spoiled brat who won't grow up. He needs a wife, a mistress, a wet nurse, and a maid. . . . He wants the whole world to pay for his unhappy childhood." When she leaves him, he sulks like a baby and wallows in his misery. Clearly he loves to be the victim and chooses his women accordingly: "My affairs have always ended badly. I thought women were magic." His indulgent masochism makes him dangerous: he petulantly holds up the movie

"Belle dame sans merci": Jeanne Moreau in JULES AND JIM.

and tries to destroy the marriage of the woman who comforts him. While confirming this pattern, his role within the inner movie takes him all the way. He plays the young husband whose wife falls in love with his father; in the end, he shoots his father in the back.

In all of these films, a second important contrast is created between willfulness and accident. The films move toward a more skeptical view of chance, implying a rejection of the romantic view of lives shaped by fate. Prepared for their kismet by having seen the stone sculpture of the "eternal female," Jules and Jim meet Catherine and recognize the face; inevitably she becomes their muse, the feminine force destined to shape their lives. The film is full of chance meetings, especially the one where the three are joyfully reunited after finding each other in a movie theater. Catherine insists that

the future of her relationship with Jim be determined by whether he succeeds in getting her pregnant. Although Catherine feels she can transform chance into a kind of creative spontaneity (as when she jumps into the Seine, electrifying the complacent men), this quality is revealed as a destructive willfulness, fully realized in the impromptu suicide. *The Bride Wore Black* focuses on a series of deliberate murders, framed by two accidents—the shooting of the bridegroom, which triggers the plot, and the final coincidence that brings hunter and hunted into the same jail. Yet, the single-minded determination of Julie's revenge somehow denies that her husband's death was accidental, and her extraordinary prowess suggests that the bizarre final encounter is also exactly as she planned it. As in these two films (as well as *Shoot the Piano Player* and *Two English Girls,* both of which open with comic accidents), the events of *Mississippi Mermaid* are launched by the fortuitous shipboard meeting of the mail-order bride and the pair of killers. While pursuing Julie, the husband just happens to see her on TV. Yet these accidents are overshadowed by the elaborately evil plotting of Julie and her lover, and the apparently willful masochism of the husband. *Such a Gorgeous Kid* places even stronger emphasis on the dangerous machinations of the killer, in contrast to the self-destructiveness of her victim. Camilla rationalizes her murders by calling them "fate bets" (e.g., take away daddy's ladder—will he notice or not?). In the 2-to-1 fate bet where she tries to exterminate husband and lover, she hears Fate whispering: "On your way, sister. Get the lead out and move!" Comic repetition reveals that this attitude is completely self-serving, allowing her to evade responsibility for her action. Similarly, Arthur, the puritanical exterminator, uses chance to rationalize his sexual transgressions; every time he and Camilla have sex, they must re-enact the accident that first brought them together. But on that occasion (as in most of her sexual exploits), Camilla is willing to take credit for her performance: "Fate was doing her part and I reckoned I must do mine." The sociologist, on the other hand, tries to exonerate her for both sex and murder. He uses clichés of love and psychosocial causality to ignore the blatant facts and deny Camilla's responsibility; finally, this attitude blinds him to what the audience clearly sees—that sooner or later she will do him in. From a romantic perspective, *la belle dame* in each of these films could be seen as the embodiment of Fate for her male victim. But Truffaut seems to move toward a psychological inevitability implicit in *Jules and Jim* and blatant in *Gorgeous Kid* and *Day for Night;* the selfish woman will manage to find a man who likes to suffer, and *vice versa.* In *Day for Night* the conflict between willfulness and accident is placed in the context of art. The director of the film (played by Truffaut) struggles against countless unforeseen circumstances in the attempt to shape and control his movie: the personal lives of the actors and crew keep intruding —marital problems, love spats, pregnancy, a dying son and mother. Finally, one of the stars (Jean-Pierre Aumont) is killed in an automobile accident, forcing the director to change the ending. At first he sets out to make a great work of art; but as the problems mount and he is pressured by time, finances, and people, his aspirations grow more modest—he hopes only to finish the film. Yet as we watch the process, we see that Truffaut knows how to take advantage of the accidents. As the players meet their crises, he incorporates their feelings and their dialogue into his script, enriching the meaning and value of his film. As an artist, he must develop a balance between control and spontaneity.

Truffaut carefully controls settings and environment to create the tone and particular interplay between romance and irony unique to each film. In *Jules and Jim,* the vulnerability of the young men is linked to the nostalgic setting where they formed their friendship—Bohemian Paris with its narrow stairways, miniature courtyards, picturesque streets and cafés. In the country, the romance is emphasized by the impressionistic visuals; sunny settings and sweeping long shots create a dream-like quality. The freeze shot is used to capture fleeting moments. The World War I footage and the Nazi book burnings of the late thirties provide a sharp

contrast, reminding us that the romantic dream can lead to its own destruction. In *The Bride Wore Black,* each set is a test for Julie. She must select the appropriate costume and personality to dominate whatever scene she enters. At a swank cocktail party, she is dazzling in white. Going low-profile in a school teacher costume, she takes over the suburban household of her third victim, locking him in a narrow cupboard to suffocate. Her reclining portrait totally dominates the studio of the artist (victim #4); proud of her portrait (and her other accomplishments) she leaves it intact, which leads to her arrest. *Mississippi Mermaid* presents a series of extremely romantic settings: the lush vegetation and intense sunlight of the Reunion Islands; the charming old French house in the country; the decayed Antibes night club; the isolated mountain cabin. These environments provide a dreamy or exotic surface behind which the scheming, the sordid, and the deadly are played out.

The opening visuals of *Gorgeous Kid* immediately contrast the worlds of Camilla and Stanislas. Behind the titles, color-filtered negative images rush by to light, bouncy music, evoking Camilla's superficial gaiety. Then suddenly, the film cuts to an image of a shelf of books and a quiet sound track, evoking the traditional humanism of the sociologist. The contrast is further developed through the two groups of sets. Scenes involving Stanislas take place in the musty confinement of an empty courtroom within the barred prison, or in his small, crowded office. In both locales, the camera frequently focuses on his tape-recorder, emphasizing the sociological investigation. Instead of soft visuals evoking romance, as in *Jules and Jim* and *Mississippi Mermaid,* the detailed realism of *Gorgeous Kid* invites irony. Camilla's life (developed largely through flashbacks) also takes place in the world of everyday reality, but with much greater color and variety. The first house she encounters is messy and crowded, and the lower portion is full of large, dangerous machines; later she chooses a rat-infested gothic castle for the scene of her double murder attempt. Other important sets present tawdry, sleazy version of the conventionally glamorous world of show biz: Sam Golden's night club (this third-rate European parody of an American rock star is immortalized in a huge billboard); ugly, crowded dressing rooms; backstage scenes with dancers grotesquely wigged and made up. When she escapes from prison and is running away from the high, grey walls, the camera suddenly pulls back, revealing her in the middle of a huge, utterly empty field, implying that her freedom will be as desolate as her confinement. This shot evokes the final image in *400 Blows* where, after the boy has fled from prison, the camera reveals him standing at bay; but the sea behind him is more romantic, more fruitful than this barren landscape. *Gorgeous Kid* is also full of symbols used with irony: the innocent white lamb that crosses little Camilla's path after she has finished off daddy; the neon sign of future promise that appears over her husband's shoulder as she is about to abandon him; the flexible piping wielded by her exterminator lover. Truffaut leads us to scorn both these heavy-handed symbols and our impulse toward psychologizing when Stanislas responds to Camilla's desire for a banjo as sublimated penis envy.

This spirit of parody extends to the whole process of sociological investigation. Frequently Truffaut offers glaring comic contradictions between the visual flashbacks and Camilla's account of her life (so carefully preserved on tape) as in the patricide where she innocently asks, "How could I know my father was up there?" or her "dignified" reaction to her husband's violence, when she claims she acted like the Queen of England, but in the flashback she screams, "You crummy motherfucker!" But Stanislas *never* learns the truth of the flashbacks, and even flees to avoid the corroborating evidence of the prison guard from Camilla's home town, who smacks his lips over her early sexual exploits. The film's typical shot is a zoom in to the face of a character, but this investigative technique is unrevealing. As the lawyer begins to seduce Camilla, the camera pulls in for a tight close-up of his earnest, smitten face. Only much later do we learn the extent of his exploi-

tive corruption.

In many ways, *Gorgeous Kid* is the farcical flip-side of *The Wild Child*. Both films focus on scientific investigation, but treat it very differently. In the earlier film, the highly contrived, elegant, spare interiors emphasize the positive, humanistic values of rational inquiry, and the woodland exteriors are beautiful in their moonlit mystery. Both films present an encounter between two people possessing entirely different bodies of knowledge—the civilized and the wild. *The Wild Child* focuses on what the nature boy has to sacrifice in order to acquire the benefits of civilization, thereby stressing the values of both worlds (and developing a tragic vision, since both choices involve loss). But the darkly comic *Gorgeous Kid* emphasizes the inadequacies of both worlds; the professor's civilized naivete does not protect him from Camilla the predator. As she tells him, when they've reversed positions around the prison bars: "Jail's funny. There's them that know and those that don't. So now you know, like me." On the other hand, Camilla's wild days are ruthless and homicidal; in a world like hers, no one would be safe.

In *Day for Night* the wildness and humanism are combined in the world of movies. As in *Gorgeous Kid,* show biz is a zany world full of tantrums and sexual antics. The jealous wife of the production manager shrieks at the big shots, "Your movie world, I think it stinks." Both stars proclaim that it's "a rotten life" and decide to quit movies for good. But we don't believe them—partly because the film stresses, in contrast to the wildness of their private lives, the great vitality and satisfaction in the creative effort. Practically everyone on the crew works hard from early in the morning to late at night. Instead of focusing on the glamor of the movie sets, Truffaut treats them with romantic irony. We go behind the scenes and see in action the cranes, weather machines, cameras, trick candles, and prompter cards, and then the camera moves in, hiding the equipment and emphasizing the illusions it can create. This comic breakdown of illusion not only deflates the sentiment (as we watch them shoot the climactic kitchen scene through a window streaked with phony rain, Truffaut shouts, "Remember, no sentimentality in this scene"), but also wins our admiration for the ingenuity and wit of the operation. After hearing that Liliane has run off with the stunt man, Joelle (who has just enjoyed a quickie with one of the crewmen who happened to help her change a flat tire) quips: "I'd drop a guy for a film. I'd never drop a film for a guy." Like Truffaut, she knows not only how to take advan-

Film-making as work and life: DAY FOR NIGHT.

tage of fortuitous accidents, but also where the real satisfactions of show business lie. At the peak of Alphonse's absurdity, he steps into the hotel corridor in his nightshirt and poutingly declares to Truffaut: "I need money to go to a whorehouse." Instead, Truffaut gives him some good advice: "People like you and me are happy only in our work." As in *Wild Child* and *Gorgeous Kid,* we again see images of books in the hands of a civilized man; but instead of a scientist, this time it is Truffaut, the film-maker, exploring his roots in the works of Buñuel, Godard, Welles, Hitchcock, Bergman, Bresson, Rossellini, and Dreyer, with whom he helps to form an impressive cinematic tradition. *Day for Night* is Truffaut's *8½,* his *Contempt,* his *Immortal Story,* his *Discreet Charm,* his *Passion of Anna,* and he explicitly places his work in the proper context, dedicating it to the Gish girls. The recurring dream sequences suggest that he has civilized his own "wild child" through his art. At first we see an anxious child with a cane running down a dark, deserted street (reminiscent of the opening in *Shoot the Piano Player*); in the next version the child is impeded by an iron gate (evoking images from *400 Blows* and *Wild Child*); but in the final dream sequence we discover that the gate is guarding a movie theater, which the boy successfully invades in order to rip off promotional stills from *Citizen Kane,* the masterpiece of a precocious genius.

In Truffaut's films, the basic polarities are developed along sexual lines: the men rely on will, civilization, and reason; the women are the wild, natural creatures who rely on chance. But paradoxically, the rational men are more susceptible to fantasy, and the women, who are the romantic objects, are more capable of cynical irony. The primary problem for most of Truffaut's men is that they never quite grow out of adolescence. Growing up is the main theme of *Les Mistons* and the autobiographical series, in which Jean-Pierre Léaud grows up in real time. His vulnerable sensitivity and his need for love are most sympathetic in *400 Blows* because he *is* a child who cannot be expected to deal with the selfishness and corruption of the world around him. As we watch him age in *Love at Twenty* and *Stolen Kisses,* he is clearly trapped in adolescent yearning. In *Bed and Board,* now married, he tries to live out his fantasy in an affair with an Oriental woman, but returns to wife and child. Actually, he is drawn to her parents, suggesting that his conception of maturity is a comfortable, static, bourgeois existence. In *Two English Girls,* Léaud provides an alternative to these films; though he still bears an autobiographical connection with Truffaut (being the author of a novel about two men in love with the same woman), he portrays a different character. The darling of an over-protective momma, responsive to every woman he encounters, he moves back and forth between burning passion and cool detachment. His feelings become the subject matter for his art, but his personal growth is stunted. Léaud is least sympathetic in *Day for Night* as the totally self-indulgent baby, who at one point retreats to carnival dodg'em cars as a means of expressing his frustration. In *Shoot the Piano Player* all the men are dangerous babies including Charlie, who manages to commit murder without dropping the role of kid brother. Truffaut seems to identify strongly with the child, which may be the source of his extraordinary skill with child actors. In *Gorgeous Kid* he mocks himself through the baby film-maker, whose unedited footage (which he is at first unwilling to release) documents Camilla's only innocence. The precocious film buff is treated more seriously through the dream sequences in *Day for Night,* where he is identified with the mature film-maker. (In one transition, the dream gate becomes the entrance to the film studio.) No matter what their age or experience, Truffaut's men are always capable of losing themselves in an adolescent passion that proves to be their downfall. In fact the only grown-up men in Truffaut's films are Dr. Itard in *The Wild Child* and the director in *Day for Night*—the only roles played by Truffaut himself. In *The Wild Child,* the boy is externalized and becomes a foil for the rational humanist. Truffaut abandons sexual romance, and confronts directly the conflict between the wild and the civilized, the

child and the adult. This dualism is rendered more personal in *Day for Night,* which combines the autobiographical films with the others. Truffaut's two sides are separated and exaggerated: Léaud plays the ridiculous adolescent while Truffaut himself is the mature authority figure.

In developing his female characters, Truffaut has usually focused on the threat posed by women who try to break through social conventions and live out their own desires. Until *Day for Night* Truffaut was unable to explore this aspiration without focusing on destruction. In his earlier films, as he moved from *Jules and Jim* to *Gorgeous Kid,* his attitude grew increasingly negative. This pattern is reflected in the women's names. In *Jules and Jim,* Catherine, who identifies with Napoleon, is linked by her name with the Empress of Russia, one of the greatest female tyrants of all time. Through her resemblance to the stone carving, Catherine is also infused with a timeless, mythic, female power that can manifest itself in any age or nation. In *The Bride Wore Black* and *Mississippi Mermaid,* the woman is called Julie, evoking Strindberg's play *Miss Julie*—which moved Catherine to jump into the Seine in protest; its freedom-loving heroine is, of course, destructive to men. The women in the later films no longer possess Catherine's mystic force; their power comes from either diabolical cleverness or ethereal beauty. In *Gorgeous Kid,* the heroine has sunk from empress to whore. Her combination of names — Camilla Bliss — evokes not Garbo's languid lady, but a comic sexuality, which is exactly the source of her power. Camilla's dreadful performances with banjo and song are grotesque in comparison with Catherine's charming little performance with guitar and lover in *Jules and Jim.* Camilla as siren could lure only the deaf, but the people seem to love it.

In relationship to other women, Catherine is polarized with Gilberte, Jim's patient girlfriend, who is clearly no match for the heroine. The promiscuous young girl who smokes like a choo-choo train deflates the seriousness with which Catherine takes her own adventures. But in *Gorgeous Kid,* only other women can see through Camilla. At first, Clovis's mother seems like a worthy opponent, but she is ultimately done in by Camilla's death trap. Sam Golden's explosive wife, however, kicks Camilla out of her husband's bed, and later tricks her with the corrupt lawyer. The prison matron can control Camilla, but only with institutional paraphernalia. Camilla is polarized with the mousey secretary who, though helpless, is able to see right through her. After their first encounter, she calls her a slut, and constantly tries to tell Stanislas what she really is—a tramp, a whore, a nymphomaniac. Far more accurate than the scientist, she predicts, "I bet she even raped the exterminator," and tries to convince him: "She's not a victim. She's a menace." But like Gilberte, she can only sit and wait.

These *femmes fatales* have in common a profound selfishness and irresponsibility, which make them a menace to everyone, especially men. The question arises, then, is it possible in Truffaut's vision for a woman to exercise seductive power and break out of conventional limitations without becoming a wild killer? If a basically "nice girl" transgresses sexual lines, either through self-sacrifice (like the wife in *Shoot the Piano Player* who goes to bed with a man to help her husband's career), or through a deliberate attempt to gain freedom (like the artistic sister in *Two English Girls*), she may have to pay with her life. And even nice girls are capable of being bitchy. In *Shoot the Piano Player,* the hyper-sensitive Charlie is horrified by the way Lena torments her lecherous boss. She helps to provoke the fight in which Charlie unwillingly kills him. Yet, like his wife who committed suicide, Lena is the one who is accidentally killed; again Charlie is the sensitive survivor.

There are, however, some exceptions. Truffaut's first positive unconventional heroine is the teacher (Julie Christie) in *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), a film that stands outside both lines of Truffaut's work. She succeeds in luring the book-burning hero (Oskar Werner) away from a dehumanizing, repressive society. But her rebellion serves a return to books, Truffaut's favorite symbol of traditional humanism. Not

until *Day for Night* do we find a heroine (played by Jacqueline Bisset) who really takes an important step forward. At first, we suspect she's going to be another siren. Her name is Julie, and that usually means trouble in a Truffaut movie. She is a famous movie star who, after a serious "breakdown," married her doctor. Thus, when we see her interviewed by reporters, we expect her to conform to the stereotype of the neurotic, childlike sex symbol (epitomized by Anita Ekberg in *La Dolce Vita*). But instead she turns out to be a strong, independent, mature woman who works hard and well as a professional actress. Unlike other Truffaut heroines, she is noncompetitive and friendly with other women. Even though she is critical of Liliane's abrupt departure, Julie defends her to Alphonse and perceptively predicts that she will become the victim in her relationship with the stunt man. Julie's one mistake is sleeping with baby Alphonse—to keep him from falling apart or leaving before the film is completed. It may be adultery, but it's also team spirit. Her value system conforms to that of Truffaut and the costume girl—work and humanism above bourgeois mortality. But naughty little Alphonse responds to this mercy-fucking by calling her husband next morning to say: "I love your wife. I slept with her. Set her free." In this crisis, Julie suffers pain and guilt, for her older husband had left his wife and children in order to devote himself to her and to "make her into a responsible adult." Apparently he has succeeded, for Julie is able to cope with the situation, continue her work without holding up production, and even be forgiving and sympathetic with poor Alphonse. When her husband offers her a pill to calm down her nerves, which she tries to refuse, we begin to suspect that she really doesn't need him anymore; she seems to take it to reassure him of her dependency. Yet her generous spirit may again be somewhat self-defeating, for she has already told Truffaut that she's decided to live alone and he has quickly incorporated this decision as the right ending for his script. In the film within the film, she plays a young English girl who rejects her young husband (played by Alphonse) when she falls in love with his father (played by Alexander, the actor who dies in the car crash). She decides to leave them both; the deaths of her elderly lover in the film and the actor who plays the role suggest that in her own private life she may, indeed, live out this independence. The name of the inner film is *Meet Pamela,* which may evoke the 18th-century English novel *Pamela* (just as *Two English Girls* brought to mind the Bronte sisters, as several critics have suggested); in Richardson's novel, as in Truffaut's *Day for Night,* we meet a new kind of heroine.

Jacqueline Bisset and Truffaut: DAY FOR NIGHT.

In the earlier films dominated by *femmes fatales,* these lethal women seem to represent not womankind but a romantic individualism that is both seductive and dangerous. This vision is powerful because it encourages the individual to live out pure instinct and overcome limitations imposed by civilization. But what if the instincts are flawed? What if sublime intensity (through love and art) is also an invitation to violent death? These issues are developed most explicitly in *Jules and Jim,* but they are of central concern even in the farcical *Gorgeous Kid* where the habits of love are subtly linked with war. The film ends with the secretary sitting at the typewriter, sweetly waiting for her lover to emerge from prison, while the sound track offers the strains of "J'Attendrai," the famous French

waiting song of World War II. In the midst of the melodramatic scramble to save the "innocent" Camilla, the camera gives us close-ups of Kodak kittens and puppies, reminding us how easily we can be manipulated by art. Truffaut pursues this mockery in *Day for Night* where the crew struggles to get a shot of an adorable fluffy kitten lapping up milk in a love scene. (Finally, they are forced to bring the scrawny studio cat as a stand-in.) Even on the set, no one can resist the helpless and adorable. If we are foolish like Stanislas, this is how we will react to Camilla. The power of art is further undermined when we meet the baby *auteur* who comes up with redeeming evidence. Camilla abdicates responsibility for her own acts and her betrayal of Stanislas in the name of art: her "sufferings" have made her an *artiste,* she claims, and Stanislas (if he survives) will be able to write the great novel.

Day for Night holds a very important position in Truffaut's canon. As content, the filmmaking process becomes his vehicle for expressing kindness, wit, and wisdom, the values which must tame the wild. The film functions as a reaffirmation of art, allowing the full realization of Truffaut's powers that were present in his finest films—*Shoot the Piano Player, Jules and Jim,* and *The Wild Child.* It also succeeds in integrating the autobiographical films with the others and striking a balance between wildness and humanism, chance and willfulness. This development is also reflected in his treatment of men and women. Both Truffaut the director and Julie the actress are successful professional artists and responsible adults whose generous social virtues transcend the romantic illusion and selfish cruelty so pervasive in the earlier films.

CHARLES W. ECKERT

The Anatomy of a Proletarian Film: Warner's *Marked Woman*

Marked Woman was produced by Warner Brothers-First National in 1937, based on an original script by Robert Rossen and Abem Finkel, and directed by Lloyd Bacon. It is, to give it its fullest definition, a topical, proletariat-oriented gangster film. As such, it must be understood within a complex tradition of films, and against a backdrop of depression issues. The analysis I shall attempt respects the context of the film and centers upon three crucial problems.

The first concerns a striking contrast between the cool, rigidly controlled emotions typical of the scenes that develop the melodramatic plot and a different order of emotions spanning a spectrum from despair to rage, that appear in a series of interspersed scenes (and in the crucial final scene). The affective center of the film seems displaced into another dimension than the melodramatic, a dimension that the latter scenes define.[1] The second problem concerns the way in which the moral and social dilemmas are developed. And the third concerns the significance of the prime-mover of the plot, the gangster-racketeer: since he is a heavily stereotyped fig-

waiting song of World War II. In the midst of the melodramatic scramble to save the "innocent" Camilla, the camera gives us close-ups of Kodak kittens and puppies, reminding us how easily we can be manipulated by art. Truffaut pursues this mockery in *Day for Night* where the crew struggles to get a shot of an adorable fluffy kitten lapping up milk in a love scene. (Finally, they are forced to bring the scrawny studio cat as a stand-in.) Even on the set, no one can resist the helpless and adorable. If we are foolish like Stanislas, this is how we will react to Camilla. The power of art is further undermined when we meet the baby *auteur* who comes up with redeeming evidence. Camilla abdicates responsibility for her own acts and her betrayal of Stanislas in the name of art: her "sufferings" have made her an *artiste,* she claims, and Stanislas (if he survives) will be able to write the great novel.

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The gangster "takes over" the Club Intime.

ure bringing with him not simply the swagger and jargon of dozens of previous incarnations but a specific aura of significances and values, understanding him requires what we might call a "theory of the gangster," the development of which will take us beyond *Marked Woman.*

However disconnected these analytical concerns may seem, they are, I believe, aspects of a single unified intellectual operation that affects almost every detail of the film. It may be helpful to define this operation and to sketch in the conclusions I will be moving towards before entering upon an extended analysis. My major contention is that the ultimate sources of *Marked Woman* and its tradition are in class conflict; but the level at which the film-makers perceive this conflict, and the level at which it is lived by the fictional characters and perceived by the audience, is existential rather than political or economic. It is in the lived experience of the depression, in the resentment directed at those who "caused" the depression, and in the sense of disparity between being poor and being rich, that this popular notion of class conflict originates.

The expression of the conflict in the films, however, is almost never overt. It is instead converted into conflicts of a surrogate nature—some ethical, some regional, some concerned with life-style, some symbolized by tonal or aesthetic overlays created by the makers of the films. The analysis of this elaborate secondary structure requires close attention to the processes of condensation and displacement by which latent content is converted into manifest content. I would like to avoid jargon for its own sake, but Freud's terms and their strict definitions are essential for an understanding of the processes involved (I shall give definitions at the appropriate point in the analysis). I hope to show that the effect of these operations is to attenuate conflicts at the level of real conditions and to amplify and resolve them at the surrogate levels of the melodrama. This solution is not

always successful, however; it can lead to dialectical play between the real and disguised conflicts, the effect of which is to make the usually opaque operations transparent. I believe that this is what happens in *Marked Woman* and that it is the chief source of the atypical feel of the film and of the forceful and unsettling character of a number of its scenes.

But all of this can only be clarified after we have recalled the film and its topical basis. *Marked Woman* capitalized upon a sensational trial reported almost daily in the *New York Times* between May 14 and June 22, 1936. Because the details of this trial strongly influenced Rossen and Finkle, and because the trial provides a body of real analogues to the fiction of the film, I shall review it first. I will then give a summary of the film designed to make the disjuncture between the melodramatic and the strongly affective scenes apparent, while giving enough detail to familiarize the reader with the whole film and to provide material for the subsequent analysis.

THE TRIAL

Charles "Lucky Luciano" Lucania won his place in the pantheon of depression Mafiosi by cornering a market more durable than liquor—the brothels of New York. His method was that of the simple "take-over," with promises of protection from the law and fair treatment for all concerned. The reasons why the State of New York decided to get Luciano were as politically and socially complex as those that drove Capone out of Chicago—and fortunately need not concern us here. The State's instrument was a task force set up under as ambitious a prosecutor-cum-politician as the country contained, Thomas E. Dewey.

Dewey began by raiding the brothels and arresting almost one hundred women as material witnesses. In its early stages the trial was high-spirited, with an absurdly Runyonesque cast: "Jo-Jo" Weintraub, Crazy Moe, "Little Davie" Betillo, Cokey Flo. But as the trial centered more and more upon the women, whose testimony would make or break the prosecution's case, the proceedings became a bleak window upon a world of exploitation, drab servitude and occasional terror.

Nancy Presser said that one of Luciano's men drove her into prostitution by threatening to "cut me up so that my own mother wouldn't know me."[2] And Thelma Jordan said "I knew what happened to girls who had talked about the combination. The soles of their feet and their stomachs were burned with cigar butts for talking too much. . . . I heard Ralph [Liguori] say that their tongues were cut when girls talked."[3] Liguori also threatened that if any of the women testified against the combination "their pictures would be sent to their home town papers with stories of what they were doing for a living."[4]

Another of the women, Helen Kelley, testified to the economics of prostitution. She had quit an underpaid job to become a prostitute and in her first week made $314. After a friendly booker persuaded her to quit and go straight she took a job as a waitress averaging twelve dollars per week. After a year of this she went back to the booker "to solve an economic problem."[5]

The conditions of the prostitutes' lives influenced Rossen and Finkle, as we shall see, but the real issue of the trial was the conviction of Luciano. To this end Dewey faced two obstacles —convincing the women that they would be protected from retaliation, and convincing the jury, and the public at large, that prostitutes were "worthy of belief" in a court of law. When he found that his star witness's life had been threatened, he spent hours persuading her to testify, and then fatuously described to the court the sense of "responsibility" that the experience had aroused in him. And when he had finally gotten his conviction, he assured the court that it was in no sense a personal victory; credit rather belonged to "the men who prepared the case through months of grueling, hard work. . . ."[6]

And where were the "confessed prostitutes" who had been barely "worthy of belief" at this moment of sharing the spoils? They left the House of Detention and "were sent to Special Prosecutor Thomas E. Dewey's offices in the Woolworth Building, where they received, as

fees, sums ranging between $150 and $175"—barely a half week's earnings for a working prostitute. "Many said that they planned to return to their home town," or so the *Times* sentimentalized.[7]

From the trial Luciano went on to organize the prison at Dannemora, then the New York dock workers, then the international drug trade. Dewey became Governor of the State of New York and candidate for the presidency in 1944 and 1948. The women, who had served both men equally well, disappeared, as they do in the film, into the fog.

THE FILM

Now let us summarize the film that Warner's made to capitalize upon this trial, with particular attention to the affective split referred to earlier. In the first sequence Johnny Vanning (Eduardo Cianelli)enters the Club Intime, a dinner-club that he had just taken over and intends to convert into a "classy" night-club and gambling room. He informs the women who work there, among them Mary Dwight (Bette Davis), that he has all the clubs in town and the women who work in them "sewed up." He intends to "organize" the place and to give the women protection from the law. In the course of the sequence he fires one of the women who looks too old to be a hostess, is asked by Mary to let her stay on, relents, shows an interest in the outspoken Mary, and is repulsed by her. Emotionally, all of the dialogue is muted: Vanning is a study in icy cynicism; the women are apprehensive and morose. The tonalities established in this initial sequence are those that dominate the melodrama throughout.

The next scene shows us five of the women in an apartment they rent together: homey curtains, department-store art, an air of proletarian domesticity. They enter depressed, discussing whether they should continue to work for Vanning. One of them suggests that working in a factory or as a waitress would be preferable. Mary suddenly interrupts with the first strongly felt language in the film: "We've all tried this twelve-and-a-half-a-week stuff. It's no good. Living in furnished rooms. Walking to work. Going hungry a couple of days a week so you can have some clothes to put on your back. I've had enough of that for the rest of my life. So have you." And as for Vanning and his hoods,

The women at home.

"I know all the angles. And I think I'm smart enough to keep one step ahead of them until I get enough to pack it all in and live on easy street the rest of my life. I know how to beat this racket." This insight into the real conditions of the women's lives is so strongly assertive that it momentarily diverts our attention from the melodrama. The dilemma is as real, and as compelling, as it was for the Helen Kelley of the trial.

In the third sequence, we are back at the Club. The women introduce themselves to the "chumps" who have come to be bilked of their money, then two of them sing songs compounded equally of cynicism and sentiment. Mary picks a man named Crawford who pays for his gambling losses with a bad check, leaves with Mary and is tailed to his hotel by Vanning's men. Mary returns to her room and is surprised by the visit of her innocent kid sister, Betty, in town for a football game. As the girls help Mary in her explanation that she is a fashion-model, the police enter with the news that Crawford has been killed and that Mary is implicated. All of the women are taken in, including Betty.

Enter David Graham (Humphrey Bogart) a jejune, dedicated prosecuting attorney who tells his chief that he thinks he can get Vanning with the aid of the women implicated in the murder. He takes Mary to his office and threatens to indict her if she does not testify against Vanning. Then, in the middle of the scene, Graham becomes pontifical and infuriates Mary:

GRAHAM: Now, Mary, we're trying to help you.
MARY: I'm doing all right.
GRAHAM: For how long? Until Vanning gets as much as he can out of you and then throws you in the ash can? Now, we're trying to put a stop to that—help people like you. But there's nothing we can do unless you're willing to help yourself. Now, why don't you give us a break?
MARY (passionately): What kind of break have you ever given us? Outside of kicking us around every chance you get. There's only one kind of a break we want from you, and that's to leave us alone. (Voice rising) And let us make a living in our own way! Or is that asking too much? (Long pause) Anything else you want to know?

The outburst is over quickly, and the scene ends with Mary sullenly uncooperative. But we have been given another insight into the conditions and psychology of the women that diverts our attention back to the realities of the Luciano trial—and the depression itself.

In a series of rapid scenes Vanning's lawyer Gordon (John Litel) develops a plan to ruin Graham: Mary will be told to "cooperate" but a bought witness will destroy Graham's case. When Mary is called in to see Graham again, she pretends to be terrified of Vanning, but otherwise willing to cooperate. The characterization of Graham in this scene seems intentionally self-righteous. He tells Mary, "You're not the only one in the world who was born with two strikes against them. I probably got kicked around just as much as you did. I didn't like it any better than you do. The only difference between us is that—well, I did something about it, you won't."

Pretending to be challenged by Graham, Mary agrees to testify. The emotions of the courtroom scene are largely played out in the faces of Mary and Betty. Mary allows herself to be accused of "entertaining" men after hours and grimly accepts the shame; Betty cannot look at her sister. The exchange between Graham and Mary at the end of the scene is cold: "Thanks for the ride." "So long chump, I'll be seeing you."

Back in the apartment the contained emotions of the courtroom explode. Betty is convinced that her friends will have read their story in the newspapers and that she cannot go back to school. In a scene of mercurial emotions she and Mary bicker, then collapse weeping in each other's arms: again it is the women's exploitation and despair that is forced on our attention.

In the next scene we discover Betty sitting alone in the apartment, obviously unhappy. Emmy Lou enters and invites her to a party at Vanning's where, under the spell of liquor and gaiety, Betty accepts the advances of an experienced lecher. When she returns to the apartment with a one-hundred-dollar bill, Mary knows where she has been and is furious. Betty says that she is no different from Mary, that she

has the right to lead the same sort of life. Then she goes back to the party.

On a balcony, against a background of drunken high life, she is again cornered by her would-be seducer. As she struggles to escape him, Vanning comes out and strikes her for "putting on an act." Betty falls, hits her head, and is killed. Emmy Lou, the only sympathetic witness, is warned to keep her mouth shut. Mary learns of Betty's disappearance from the party and confronts Vanning, with a threat to "get" him if anything has happened to Betty. She then goes to Graham—now reluctant to trust her—and says she will provide evidence against Vanning. While they talk Graham receives a report that Betty's body has been fished from the river.

Graham comes to the women's apartment and pleads with them to help him and Mary prosecute Vanning. But the women feel that the law isn't for them; besides, another gangster will take Vanning's place. Shortly after Graham leaves, defeated, Vanning enters. In the film's most powerful scene Mary accuses Vanning of Betty's death and swears she will tell the DA. Vanning calmly orders the other women into the next room, nods significantly to his strong-arm man, Charlie, and follows the women out.

It would seem that the melodrama can no longer be played out in terms of glacial confrontation. And yet it is. The camera stays in the room with Vanning and Mary's friends. First, in a long shot, we see a picture jump on the wall from the violence of the beating in the next room. As the beating continues, then is followed by a silence cut by an anguished scream, we move from one woman's face to another—each an ambiguous study in fear, rage and acceptance. Quite forcefully we are reminded that the women have no strength of their own, no recourse for help, and no choice but to accept this denigration by the men who exploit them. But is it their condition, not the cruelty of Vanning, that the visual treatment underlines.

Graham then sets out on a search for the only witness he can hope to shake, Emmy Lou. Vanning learns of Graham's search and sends his men to get her first. In a melodramatic chase scene, Emmy Lou escapes from her pursuers. In the following sequence we are in a hospital room with Mary and her three remaining friends. Mary is wrapped in bandages, her face swollen and her eyes bruised. Her friends assure her that she will be all right and that her scars can be disguised. Her reply is one of the most telling lines in the film: "I got things wrong with me that all the doctors in the world can't fix."

As Mary tells her friends that she can't pretend the beating didn't happen, Emmy Lou enters. Both she and Mary weep as they recall Betty, and Emmy Lou agrees to talk to the DA. One of the women argues against provoking Vanning: "You want to keep on living, don't you?" Mary, her voice partly muffled by her bandages, says, "If this is what you call living, I don't want any part of it. Always being afraid. . . . There must be some other way for me to live. If there isn't, I—well, I'd just as soon put a bullet in my head right now and end it." A powerful *Angst* penetrates this scene, for which the physical metaphors are Mary's battered face and listless voice. At this point Graham enters the room and is told that all of the women are ready to testify.

We are next in Vanning's jail cell. Gordon tells him he must make a deal, but Vanning says that he doesn't make deals. Then he launches into a speech that indicates to us that madness and the blindness of the gods have descended upon him—that he is now marked for destruction.

VANNING: You think I care for money? All I care about is to make people do what I tell them.
GORDON: You're crazy, Johnny.
VANNING: Yes, maybe I am. Maybe I ain't. I just know one thing. I ain't gonna let no five crummy dames put the skids under me now. Get word to those dames. If they talk, sure as my name's Johnny Vanning, I'll get 'em.

In a brief scene, the women, who have been imprisoned for their own protection, look out the window and see one of Vanning's hoods staked out in the street. Then we are in the courtroom again. One by one the women take the stand and deliver damning evidence against

Vanning and his men. Mary is the last, and as she recounts the details of her beating, she turns the right side of her face toward the camera. We see why she had screamed so desperately in the earlier scene: Charlie has cut an X in her cheek —Vanning's mark for those who double-cross him.

The verdict is assured, but Graham's summation and appeal to the jury remains to be heard. The speech obviously transcends its function in the trial and is directed at the audience as a kind of thinking through of all of the issues presented in the film.

You should consider not only Vanning the murderer, but also Vanning the Vice Czar, who at this very moment is exacting his staggering tribute from a supine and cowardly city. . . . Out of all the teeming millions of this great city only five girls had the courage to take their very lives in their hands and accuse Johnny Vanning. In spite of all the threats of reprisal . . . they were ready to appear before you to testify. And let me be the first to admit the truth of the accusations that were brought against these girls in a desperate effort to discredit them. Frankly they're . . . they're everything the defense has said they are. Their characters are questionable, their profession unsavory and distasteful. Oh, it's not been difficult to crucify them. But it has been difficult to crucify the truth. And that truth is that these girls in the face of sheer, stark terrorism did appear in court, expose themselves to the public gaze, told the truth about themselves, told the world what they really are. Well, then, surely you must believe that they were telling the truth when they testified that Johnny Vanning was responsible for the death of Betty Strauber.

In two short scenes the jury returns a verdict of guilty and the judge pronounces a sentence of 30 to 50 years, with the warning that if anything happens to the women the full sentence will be served. As reporters rush toward Graham, the five women rise slowly from their seats. "Well, that's that," Mary says. "Come on kids. Let's go." Then they walk unnoticed from the courtroom. As the women descend the steps, Graham appears at the door. He calls Mary back.

GRAHAM: You're the one who should be getting the congratulations, not me.
MARY: Um um. I don't want them.
GRAHAM: But where will you go?
MARY: Places.
GRAHAM: But what will you do?
MARY: Oh, I'll get along, I always have.
GRAHAM: Mary, I'd like to help you.
MARY (curious . . . and interested): Why?
GRAHAM: Why . . . because I . . . because I think you've got a break comin' to you.
MARY (still curious): And?
GRAHAM: And I'd like to see that you get it.
MARY (suddenly dejected): What's the use of stalling? We both live in different worlds and that's the way we've got to leave it.
GRAHAM: I don't want to leave it that way. I once said to you that if you ever started helping yourself I'd be the first one to go to bat for you, and that still goes. No matter what you do or where you go, we'll meet again.
MARY: Goodbye, Graham. I'll be seeing you.

Mary descends the steps to join her friends as a melancholy blues theme swells on the sound track. As they walk into the engulfing fog, the camera picks them out in a series of close-ups. The women stare straight ahead, their faces erased of all emotion, almost of life—walking deliberately toward the fog as if they accepted it as their natural element. Behind them, in the bright doorway, there are voices: "How about a couple of pictures of our next DA?" "What do you mean DA? If he isn't our next governor, he ought to have his head examined."

STRUCTURE

Marked Women is vintage Warner's *cinéma brut* —aesthetically spare, almost devoid of metaphoric effects achieved with the camera or lighting. Any veneer of meaning upon that projected by the faces and words of the actors most likely originates in our empathy for the women's conditions and the sense that these are mirrored in the barren *mise-en-scène*. Because of this aesthetic minimalism, the structural split that I have outlined in the previous summary is all the more forcefully experienced. One set of scenes develops a standard melodrama concerned with the outrages and the eventual destruction of a stereotyped villain. Another set, composed of Mary's outbursts to her friends and to Graham. her quarrels with Betty, the study of the women's faces while Mary is being beaten, Mary's

thoughts of suicide, and the striking conclusion (all of them strongly affective), comprise a separate order of experience. And yet there seems to be some necessitous link between the two orders, as if one gave rise to the other or was a precondition of its existing: how else could they maintain so dialectical a relationship throughout the film?

Perhaps we can begin to understand the reasons for the split by looking closely at the scenes concerned with the real conditions of the women's lives. Each of these scenes is characterized by forceful emotion and some attempt to conceptualize the dilemmas that the women face. These attempts, as I shall show in detail later, are frustratingly confused: there is no clear analysis of their situation or the causes of their misery, but rather a muddled pointing at this, that, or maybe that—an obfuscation that paralyzes the mind. At this level the exploited have no exploiter—or, at best, a faceless one called "life" or "the way things are." The true exploiters—the capitalist system, sexism, pernicious ideologies—are vaguely immanent in some of Mary's outbursts, but recede like ghosts as quickly as they are glimpsed. The degree of emotion in these scenes seems directly related to their dead-endedness. There are no answers to the women's questions; the intense confrontation with reality leads only to a stifling semantic cul-de-sac from which they—and we—must escape. And the escape is exhilaratingly easy: we merely leap into the alternative reality of the melodrama.

This leap is typical of what are usually called "proletarian" or "socially conscious" films of the thirties and very early forties. One can specify the exact moment at which they occur in such films as *Public Enemy, Crime School, Dead End, Angels with Dirty Faces, Invisible Stripes, The Big Shot, They Drive by Night* and others. The leap is by its nature dialectical (from one order of experience to an opposite order); and we therefore encounter a series of inversions. To return to our immediate example, *Marked Women,* we find, first of all, an inversion of emotions: from scenes of weeping, depression, and apathy we move to melodramatic scenes in which the characters project the sort of controlled affect epitomized in the terms "tough," "smart," and "smooth." Spontaneity has no place in this world; if the face breaks at all, it is into a smirk or a leer; and the expression is as calculated as a grammarian's comma. There is also an inversion of activities: from circular, frustrated behavior we move to highly motivated actions, saturated with purpose. One is out to serve one's interests, to rid society of corruption, to "get" somebody.

Obviously, all activities and emotions at this level are surrogate. And any return to the depiction of real conditions may bring this fact home to the audience and destroy the illusion, and the function, of the melodrama. In *Public Enemy, Crime School,* and similar films the depiction of real conditions is limited to the first third or half of the film. These depictions often function as explanations, and partial exonerations, for criminality. Once the melodrama asserts itself strongly, however, there is no break while it runs its course.

But it is precisely this clear function of the melodrama that is lacking in *Marked Women.* Not only do the real conditions assert themselves in scenes throughout the film, they dominate the crucial final scene. The dialectic comes close to being a contradiction as we realize that the expected denouement of the melodrama has been frustrated. There is also, as a close viewing of the film would demonstrate, occasional penetration of the attitudes typical of the real conditions into the melodrama — alienation, apathy, and confusion. As I will show in the next section, the whole ethos of the melodrama is affected—the women are not altering their conditions and that the destruction of Vanning does not accomplish anything.

Certainly the massive dose of reality infused into the film by its topical sources could be responsible for these effects. But there are other and more proximate causes. Through analysis of passages in which the ethos is developed we can perhaps come closer to them.

ETHOS

Since every ethos presents itself as a unified

body of polarized conceptions we need for our analysis a methodology attuned to polarity. The form of structural analysis developed by Lévi-Strauss, although idealist and limited in vision, can help us here. Two of Lévi-Strauss's insights are specially provocative: that a dilemma (or contradiction) stands at the heart of every living myth, and that this dilemma is expressed through layered pairs of opposites which are transformations of a primary pair. The impulse to construct the myth arises from the desire to resolve the dilemma; but the impossibility of resolving it leads to a crystal-like growth of the myth through which the dilemma is repeated, or conceived in new terms, or inverted—in short, subjected to intellectual operations that might resolve it or attenuate its force. We can best locate the important ethical dilemmas in *Marked Woman* by close inspection of individual scenes.

In preparation for what follows, an extensive structural analysis of *Marked Woman* was made, the recounting of which would demand more interest and patience than I can presume in a general audience. The method, however, is illustrated here. My selection of only a few passages for analysis is motivated by an additional consideration: the fact that *Marked Woman,* like most works of popular art, relies upon a few dilemmas and a limited number of transformations of them. It is initially difficult to grasp the relationships between transformations and to find one's way to the crucial dilemmas. Only concrete examples will illustrate what I mean. Let us begin with a very simple but typical transformational set found in a song sung by one of the women in an early nightclub scene (the two songs in the film, by Harry Warren and Al Dubin, seem expressly written to reflect the women's attitudes, or chosen because of their content).

City people pity people
Who don't know a lot
About the night life,
But they are wrong.
Though they may be witty people,
They don't know that folks
Who lead the right life
Still get along.

To a plain old fashioned couple
Let me dedicate my song.

They're not sophisticated people,
And though they're only common folk,
You don't know how I envy people
Like Mr. and Mrs. Doe.

They don't know much about swing music,
They wouldn't care for risque jokes,
But every morning birds sing music
For Mr. and Mrs. Doe.

The lyric continues, developing variations on the basic oppositions found in these stanzas, so that we wind up with the following essential pairs (in the following analysis a colon means "is opposed to," a double colon means "as," and brackets indicate an implied term):

witty people : people who lead the right life
[modern people] : old fashioned people
sophisticated people : common people
swing music, risqué jokes : the music of birds
wreath of holly : garden
[nightclub life] : home life

All of these are rather obviously transformations of a simple, more basic pair, city life : small town life (with agrarian overtones). This opposition is amplified in the film through the use of many codes of dress, speech and taste. Workingclass apartment decor clashes with penthouse decor, Mary's plain dresses with her silver lamé hostess gown, Emmy Lou's curled blond hair with Betty's plain brunette, Graham's law-school English with Mary's terse vernacular. The city : small town opposition, which has a long history in the Hollywood film, turns up frequently, and somewhat unexpectedly, in many gangster films. For instance, it utterly polarizes such films as *The Roaring Twenties, King of the Underworld, High Sierra,* and *It All Came True;* and it has crucial functions in *Little Caesar, The Big Shot, Public Enemy* and others. We can return to this opposition later; for the moment I merely want to define the primary opposition that the song transforms into many pairs. As we look over these oppositions we note that all of them are simple transformations, with one striking exception—the opposition "witty people" : "people that lead the right life." We can reduce

this to the crucial terms "witty" and "right." The opposition is at first sight illogical. "Witty" demands as its antonym a term that implies witlessness: the common adjective "dumb" (dumb cop, dumb blonde) is perhaps the proper one. "Right," of course, demands "wrong." As we read the opposition, then, we take "witty" as a metonym for "wrong" and "right" as a metonym for "dumb." Because the opposition demands interpretation, it is the most foregrounded and active in the song; and because of its doubled metonymic character it comes across as a pair of dilemmas: why, we ask, is wittiness wrong? Why is dumbness right? These simple dilemmas are, by context of the song, related to the primary opposition of city life and small town life. Before analyzing this relation let us note the appearance of these dilemmas in other parts of the film.

Mary Dwight's first outburst directed at Vanning contains these lines directed both at Vanning and at her conditions: "I know all the angles. And I think I'm smart enough to keep one step ahead of them until I get enough to pack it all in and live on easy street the rest of my life. . . . I know how to beat this racket." Mary's concerns, seen in the larger context of American puritanism, are self-centered and hedonistic, and therefore "wrong." If we miss the point here, we cannot miss it in Graham's remarks to Mary just before they receive news of Betty's death (a kind of moral punishment for Mary): "You know what's right and you know what's wrong. You know better but you just won't do anything about it. You choose to think that you can get through the world by outsmarting it. Well, I've learned that those kind of people generally end up by outsmarting themselves." And, finally, there is an almost syllogistic example in the argument between Mary and Betty:

BETTY: If I can't live one way I can live another. Why not? I'm young and pretty and . . .
MARY: And dumb!
BETTY: But you're smart! You can teach me the rest.

There are other examples which show the dilemma bound up in the use or disuse of one's wits. But how is it related to the regional opposition represented by city : small town? More specifically, is either opposition seminal for the other and therefore the "crucial" dilemma we are seeking? We should first recall some key references: Mary and Betty came from a small town; Betty feared returning because of a scandal; and the women in the Luciano trial were threatened with exposure in their home-town newspapers. Mary's wrong use of her wits should probably be seen, then, as a city-oriented trait, something she has learned through contact with men like Vanning. But there is something recessive about the city : small town opposition, and it seems more in keeping with the emphasis in the film to see the right : wrong opposition as seminal. If we did, we would arrive at a familiar characterization of the film: we would see it as a kind of exemplum or moral fable. And yet such a definition would have to ignore the scenes that seem most striking—those in which the women are depicted as disconsolate, angry or apathetic. These are not morally toned attitudes as are those of hedonistic ambition and egotism. If there were a primary pair to which all the oppositions we have so far mentioned were related, as well as the opposition between real conditions and melodrama, one would feel that the analysis was more trued to the whole film and that it respected the complex interaction between ideas and emotions that the film maintains.

For a fresh start, let us look at a quite different set of oppositions, one found in a song sung immediately before the one already analyzed:

Ain't it funny that paper money
Don't seem like genuine jack?
And every check has the knack
Of jumpin' and bumpin' and bouncin' back?
I like nothin' but silver dollars
And I've collected a few.
When silver starts in ringin',
It rings so true.

My silver dollar man,
He ain't a tie-and-collar man.
A rough and ready man,
But he's a mighty steady man.
And though he can't supply

A lot of luxuries that I demand,
He never leaves me till he leaves
A bit of silver in my hand. . . .

Obviously the major function of the song is to valorize the poor: the poor man is the true man; she would love him even if he had no money (his poverty and his class valorize him). But there is more at work in the song. The principal oppositions are:

rough and ready man : tie and collar man
silver dollars : paper money
[sufficiency] : luxury

Class consciousness (and class prejudice) figure strongly in this complex, however tritely conceived. And we are suddenly made aware of the absence of class oppositions of this sort in the song previously cited, and in the film as a whole. Prostitutes, the song reminds us, follow their trade, like the Helen Kelley of the trial, "to solve an economic problem." Only Mary's early allusions to making "twelve and a half a week" and going hungry two days out of seven strikes at the heart of her dilemma—and the force of this passage is vitiated by the immediate characterization of Mary as greedy for "easy street" luxuries to be won by the (wrong) use of her wits. Or at least it apparently is, since our attention is shifted to the ethical (and implicit regional) dilemmas defined earlier. This movement from incipient class or economic protest to ethical dilemma can be found elsewhere, and in crucial scenes: in Mary's encounters with Graham in his office, in Graham's visit to the apartment, in the hospital scene, and in the obtuse summary for the prosecution. But all of this only compounds our problem: what do we have here—merely obfuscation as the result of censorship, or another form of transformation?

Deduction has probably taken us as far as it can, so let us proceed inductively. If we posited that the roots of *Marked Woman* are in class opposition and that its ethos is the product of "displacement" as Freud defines this term (the substitution of an acceptable object of love, hate, etc., for a forbidden one), we would be able to see the relation between class opposition and ethical dilemma as both the product of censorship and as transformational. The irresolvability of crucial dilemmas in myths leads to their transformation into other dilemmas. The intent is to resolve the dilemma at another level, or to somehow attentuate its force. If class opposition is regarded as seminal, its displacement into ethical, regional and other oppositions can be seen as both the result of conscious censorship and a myth-like transposition of the conflict into new terms. The latter is an unconscious or less-conscious procedure whereby the *force* of the opposition is diminished while its form and some of its substance are retained.

The effect in the film is for the ethical and regional dilemmas to function as displaced, and partly defused, class oppositions. They can still *feel* like class oppositions and be treated as such by the writers and director; the city with its penthouses and limousines can function as reified capitalism; wittiness can be allied to the manipulations of financiers; all of this can be given high resolution by the use of visual coding—skyscrapers, tuxedos, one-hundred-dollar bills; but every thrust of class or economic protest is sufficiently blunted to avoid breaking the skin.

But all of the relations I have examined need a more exact formulation, one that must include a major figure that I have so far only mentioned —the gangster. As the autarch of the universe the women inhabit, his class affiliations, his goals and his psychology need close examination.

THE GANGSTER

Unquestionably *Marked Woman,* like many films of its genre, transmits a sense of compassion for the poor and the exploited. But at the level of real conditions we cannot tell why the poor are poor nor who their exploiters are. Instead of real opposition and conflict we encounter substitute formations—principally dialectical movements between such feeling states as anger and apathy or despair and sentimentalism. Sentimentalism seems to function as the most retrograde of the many possible states. As a tendency toward passive compassion, toward meditative solipsism, it contains nothing insurrectionary, no components of hostility or criti-

cism. It cannot be a coincidence that so many proletarian films head unerringly toward sentiment in their final reels. When, in *The Roaring Twenties,* Eddie (James Cagney) lies dying on the steps of a church while *Melancholy Baby* is heard on the sound track and his motherly friend Panama weeps over him, a lumpen *pietà* mitigates whatever social criticism the film has made.

Opposition is only fully manifested when we make the leap into melodrama. This leap is subjectively fulfilling and clarifying: the exploited now have an exploiter in the gangster—a figure subjected to an almost cosmic overdetermination. If displacement is the principal Freudian mechanism at work in the ethos, it is largely condensation that produces the gangster. Condensation, to give it its simplest definition, is a process whereby a number of discrete traits or ideas are fused in a single symbol. Each component is usually an abbreviated reference to something larger than itself, a sort of metonym that must be interpreted properly if we are to understand its discrete significance as well as its relation to other components in the symbol. By 1937 the figure of the gangster had acquired a remarkable symbolic richness. Every personal mannerism and every artifact of his world resonated with meaning. And he had also become a *vade mecum* for anyone in search of a scapegoat. The judge, in his presentence speech to Johnny Vanning pronounces him "a low and brutal character, an unprincipled and aggressive egotist." Vanning is guilty of "every vicious and reprehensible crime."

Such attempts to blame the gangster for all important civic ills were, of course, abetted by the tabloid exposés of criminals like Luciano. But it would be short-sighted, and ultimately confusing, to look to real criminals for the prototypes of Johnny Vanning. We must start with the gangsters found in the films themselves and note their most common traits. Although the discussion will initially take us afield, it should lead us to a more exact understanding of Vanning, his relation to the women he exploits, and his function in the structure I have outlined. In a film made up of many specificities, he is the most generalized, and traditional, object.

We must distinguish, first of all, between two almost antithetical images of the gangster. The first obtained between 1927 and 1931 and was projected by such actors as John Gilbert, Conrad Nagel, Walter Huston, William Boyd, Lowell Sherman, Richard Dix and Monte Blue. The type is basically Anglo-saxon, aristocratic, polished in speech and bearing, and dressed in the formal clothing of the wealthy (often white-ties and tails or morning suits). The same actors could, and did, readily play the roles of aristocrats and pillars of the community. Walter Huston, for instance, appeared as a bank president in *American Madness* (1932) and as the President of the United States in *Gabriel Over the White House* (1933).

The class image of this species of gangster was frequently commented on by reviewers. Speaking of John Gilbert in *Four Walls* (1928) the *New York Times* reviewer said, "Mr. Horowitz is so careful regarding the cut of his clothes, the selection of his necktie, the spotlessness of his linen and the combing of his hair that one could never imagine him as a killer living on Manhattan's east side, but rather a broker with an apartment on Park Avenue."[8] And of Monte Blue in *Skin Deep* (1929), "The gangster chief is always to be seen attired in excellent taste. . . . Curiously enough, the master mind's henchmen are usually the lowest underworld types, presenting a ludicrous contrast."[9] Curious indeed, but not inexplicable. So much did the gangster resemble a blue-blood financier that he needed crude, proletarian sidekicks to make his criminality manifest.

The physical image, demeanor and speech were most important, but, in addition, the early gangster was often an explicit capitalist in his methods. Huston in *The Ruling Class* (1931), headed what he called a "board of directors" who received checks according to what they had accomplished. And this whole group of gangsters frequently dealt in "gilt-edged securities," diversified their interests, and invested in businesses. Their principal occupation, of course,

was boot-legging, an activity that required organization, the careful division of "territories," and legal and political manipulation.

Class conflict and implicit criticism of the world of business and finance are unmistakable in these films, lying so near the surface that they frequently shoulder their way free. It is interesting that films of this era dealing directly with capitalists and "millionaires," of which there were a great many, took the uncontroversial form of love romances, fantasies (inheriting a fortune) or comedies. The mask of the gangster film, fragile as it was, seems to have provided the right degree of displacement needed at this time for class criticism.

While this first generation of gangsters still dominated the screen, the second had made its appearance in the person of George Bancroft, the star of *Underworld* (1927), *Tenderloin* (1928), *Thunderbolt* (1929), and *The Mighty* (1929). Bancroft's lower-class origins were egregiously conveyed by his simpleton grin, his oversize hands and nose, his rough vitality and illiteracy. He is the most important progenitor of the type elaborated by Cagney, Robinson, Gable, Raft (in his early films), Carillo, Muni, McLaglen, and Eduardo Cianelli (Vanning). The shift in type must be the result of many forces. Before the stock-market crash the aristocratic gangster may have absorbed some of the resentment normally directed at the wealthy; but public attitudes were suddenly less mild; they were, indeed, sour and embittered. Instinct and a sense of the audience's mood must have played their parts, along with the rise of proletarian sympathies, the clamor against glorifying the criminal, "Latinizing" as a method of rendering the criminal comic (Raft, Carillo) or of making him an acceptable scapegoat (Cianelli), and other factors.

The end result, however, was to invert the class image in terms of physical appearance and life-style and to bring the forces of displacement and condensation into full, compensatory action. In general, the gangster retains his taste for formal dress, silk scarves and spats, but he usually looks *arriviste* or anthropoidal when wearing them. His capitalist affinities are more covertly projected by his language, his philosophy and his methods.

The advent of sound, of course, makes displacement into language possible and somewhat lessens the need for forceful visual coding. The gangster's speech, however, is not simply a substitute code—it is a partial disguise. The accent and vocabulary tells us that he is lower class; and yet a lexicon of business terms surrounds him like an afflatus: "I got a *job* for you," "I *own* city hall," "This is a *business,*" "Let's give him the *business,*" "The *business* end of a gun." When, in *The Roaring Twenties,* a young lawyer tells Cagney, "This isn't my kind of law. I started out to be a corporation lawyer," Cagney, who has invested his bootlegging profits in a fleet of 2000 cabs, says, "This is a corporation. We're making money." In the opening scene of *Marked Woman* Vanning strolls about the Club Intime giving orders in his broken Italianate English that demonstrate his organizational astuteness even as they reveal his illiteracy. But there is no need to elaborate this all too familiar element. What is important is its function as one trait in the condensed figure of the gangster.

Equally active are the conceptions that the gangster is egotistic, ruthlessly acquisitive, and ambitious to control or torment other people. The formation is, of course, the classic Freudian anal-sadistic. These two traits, when they appear in adults, are usually fused. It is important, therefore, to note that they are frequently presented as separate poles of the gangster's character, between which a contradiction may arise. A clear statement of the contradiction is Vanning's "You think I care for money? All I care about is to make people do what I tell them." The formulation is at least as old as *Little Caesar:* "Yeh, money's all right, but it ain't everything. Naaa, *be* somebody. Look hard at a buncha guys and know that they'll do anything ya tell 'em. Have your own way or nothin. *Be* somebody!"

The anal-sadistic formation is, of course, appropriate to the real capitalist character, but the emphasis upon sadism to the exclusion of acquisitiveness has an obscuring effect upon the

gangster's identity, since it tells us that the formal clothes, limousines and penthouses are not his goals in life. Capitalists, in popular mythology, may be predominantly interested in controlling people, too, but they are always interested in wealth, and their sadism is not self-destructive or insane. Their cruelty reflects their alienation and loneliness—they are men who can possess Xanadu but not Rosebud. This pernicious conception, designed to placate the dispossessed, is also latent in those scenes in which the gangster finds himself alone; but it is not central. The sadism of the gangster functions more as a device than a trait: when it asserts itself we know that he is marked for destruction and that the melodrama will shortly complete its course.

Robert Warshow's well-known analysis of the tragic arc of the gangster's life is germane here.[10] The definition is, however, almost exclusively formal and generic; although it accounts well for the gangster's function in the melodrama, it misses an important function of the melodrama itself. The class criticism displaced upon the gangster's methods, tastes and acquisitiveness is obscured by his transformation into a sadistic villain who deserves his death solely for his cruelty. His exploitative methods, unlike those of the wealthy, are ultimately crude and palpable, and he can be brought to the bar of justice or shot like a mad dog without guilt.

Clearly, many more forces impinge upon the portrait of a gangster like Vanning than upon his aristocratic predecessors. The total effect is to almost obscure his significance behind a semantic welter, making him both exploiter and one of the exploited, indeterminate in class, after money but contemptuous of it, deserving of his death but somehow pitiable. His most important function, however, is to be the exploiter, to cause civic corruption, and to create the existential hell that Mary Dwight and her friends awaken to every morning. Vanning's penthouse is the reified suffering of his enslaved "girls," and his white silk scarf is the badge of his class. But lest we smell out his precise identity, we are faced with his illiteracy, his disinterest in money, and his madness. The Charles Foster Kanes of Hollywood have their flaws, but they die in beds reeking of mystified capital, reverentially pitied by those they have exploited, awesome to the end. Only obfuscated capitalists like Vanning are sent to prison—or die, like Little Caesar, in the litter behind a billboard.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the analysis I have attempted to stick to the task of applied criticism. I have deliberately slighted discussions of methodology because the prospect of validating the several methods I employ and then pushing all of that abstract lumber ahead of me through so lengthy an analysis was, frankly, overwhelming (it would also make a monograph of what was intended to be an article.) I trusted, I hope correctly, that the many methodological articles now appearing in film magazines would provide a rear-projection against which my analysis would seem to move. My essential ingredients are Marxist, Freudian, and structuralist; but I would argue that the mixture is not heretically eclectic: structures and their permutations are central to each form of analysis, making them complementary and intrinsically suited to the task of illuminating a work rooted in class conflict. The idealist tendency of structuralism does not, I believe, invalidate it for a specific role in an on-going materialist criticism: the description of transformational operations. The *substance, causes,* and *significance* of these operations must, of course, be sought for in the material realms of history and psychology—and I have, at least, begun this search.

But I have not yet sorted out the relations between the levels of opposition that were defined in the discussion of the ethos. The analysis of the figure of the gangster serves, I believe, to support the contention that *Marked Woman* is rooted in class conflict. It would be absurd to argue that this insight exhausts the film; but it does satisfy the requirement for an *optimal* criticism: one that illuminates the aesthetics, form and content of a work, as well as its relation to its era and to its creators. Class opposition, as we have seen, is displaced into a number of surrogate conflicts, most of which obtain at

Bette Davis and Humphrey Bogart: MARKED WOMAN.

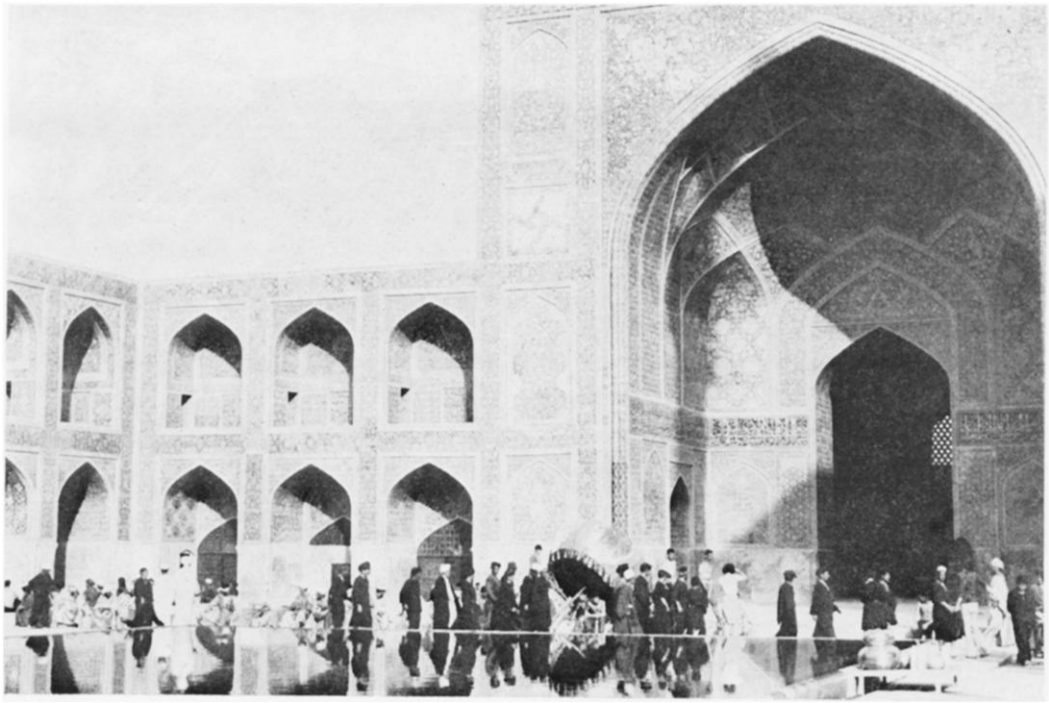
the level of the melodrama where the exploited face an unequivocal exploiter. Ethical dilemmas appear first. The intensity with which they are expressed seems proportionate to the intensity of the real-life dilemmas they displace; and their muddled logic reflects, in part, a struggle between desires to articulate and to repress class conflicts. As we move up the chain of displacement to the regional oppositions, class conflict is more covertly represented; as a result, there is less need for obfuscations and the oppositions are clearly and richly developed through the use of many codes. There are, in addition, tonal overlays (toughness, sentimentality) which cover the film like a skin, masking the real and substitute conflicts alike, and enticing the audience into solipsism and false emotion.

Marked Woman was produced toward the end of a rather bone-weary tradition. It is often mindlessly trite and perfunctory. But its makers had read their way through a depressing court record of real exploitation and suffering, and they approached the task of making the film somewhat as adversaries. If, limited by ability, temperament, and studio realities, they could only produce another melodrama, they could at least deny it a full life. By centering their attention upon the women, they mitigated some of the worst effects of the melodramatic form—and most certainly lessened their personal sense of venality.

As the women descend from the courthouse steps we know that they face a world without Vanning, but one in which they will still be exploited. If their exploitation is not analyzed, it is at least acknowledged and located in the real world. And yet — and yet — the melancholy blues theme rises on the sound track. Sentimentalism beckons: after all they are only women and their lot is suffering. Suddenly everything that has been gained seems perilously compromised. But against the music the camera pits the faces of the women. Bette Davis and the other actresses, who must have understood it all better than the men they worked for, cut through the swelling mystification with tough, implacable expressions. Let the Warner's music weep; the women are as alienated as the street, and they will not be sentimentalized.

NOTES

1. Readers familiar with Althusser's "The 'Piccolo Teatro': Bertolazzi and Brecht" reprinted in *For Marx,* trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Random House, 1969) will recognize both my indebtedness to this essay and the many ways in which I deviate from it. I have also benefited from Karyn Kay's study of *Marked Woman,* "Sisters of the Night," *The Velvet Light Trap* (Fall, 1972), pp. 20–25.
2. *The New York Times,* May 26, 1936, p. 2. I follow the *Times* account throughout because of its immediacy. There are more elaborate reports in Hickman Powell, *Ninety Times Guilty* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1939), and in issues of *Liberty* magazine published soon after the trial. Warner's acquired the rights to the *Liberty* material (which was based on interviews with only two informants, "Cokey Flo" Brown and Mildred Harris) and used it as the ostensible basis for the film.
3. *Ibid.,* p. 2.
4. *Ibid.,* p. 2.
5. *Ibid.,* May 21, p. 4.
6. *Ibid.,* June 8, 1936, p. 8.
7. *Ibid.,* June 13, 1936, p. 6.
8. *The New York Times Film Reviews,* I (New York Times and Arno Press: New York, 1970), p. 465.
9. *Ibid.,* p. 558.
10. "The Gangster as Hero" in *The Immediate Experience* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1962), pp. 127–133.



GIDEON BACHMANN

Pasolini in Persia: The Shooting of *1001 Nights*

"My ambition in making films is to make them political in the sense of being profoundly 'real' in intent: in choosing the characters, in that which they say and in that which they do. That is why I refuse the political fiction film. One of the least appetizing things of the past few years are precisely those fashionable political films, these fictional political films, which are the films of half truths, of reality-unreality, of consolation and of falseness. They are made to pacify the consciousness. Instead of arousing polemics they suffocate it. . . . I avoid fiction in my films. I do nothing to console, nothing to embellish reality, nothing to sell the goods."

Pasolini started travelling because he hates Catholic holidays in Rome. Christmas in the Libyan desert, Easter trips to North Africa and Saudi Arabia. Finally he began to shoot abroad: *Oedipus Rex* in Morocco, *Medea* in Turkey, and *Canterbury Tales* where Chaucer had placed it. He may not be escaping Catholicism, but he is escaping its geographical orbit: for his latest film, *1001 Nights,* he went to Ethiopia, Eritrea, Yemen and Persia, and before finishing it, will have shot in India and Nepal.

The feeling of a man escaping from his roots is borne out by the first impressions on the set: behind his camera, which he operates himself, he seems a man in a hurry, fraught by restrictions of time and space. He works fast, with great precision, and sure of himself. If a set-up is too complicated, he will choose another; if a crew member is clumsy, he will patiently re-

place him, doing the job, more often than not, himself. Where other directors will manage 10 important shots a day, Pasolini will manage 40. Because the shots seem to be there, ready, in his head, and putting them on celluloid is just a necessary, technical obstacle between his imagination and the viewer. He seems to want to get it over with, free himself of his mind's image, of his obsession; spew it out as fast as possible. Two cameras are constantly ready: simple 35mm Arriflexes without sound and without blimps, one loading while he shoots with the other. Sound is too cumbersome and time-consuming; he will create it later, in the studio, with the help of a few fragments recorded on location. The director of photography only measures the light, the camera operator hands Pasolini the lenses. The shots are set up by the director himself, decor details are decided or adjusted by him directly, the actors placed, with minimal instructions, in the scene at the last moment, eye at the camera's viewer. One feels strongly that if he could make the film entirely alone, Pasolini would do it. The technique he uses, in fact, is cinematically simplistic. There is nothing fancy except the costumes and the landscape; the first cost him, on this film alone, 500 million Italian lire, more than a third of the film's cost, while the latter has been there for centuries, except that nobody ever thought of using it in a film.

In the incredible courtyard of the Mesjed-esh-Shah in Isfahan I watch him moving the masses of locally recruited extras about: incredible faces, all colors from brown to black, turbaned and betogaed, clothed in silk and brocade. The mosque, built in 1706 by the last of the Safavids, cost less than the film now made in it. And it is one of the most famous and fantastic of the buildings of Islam. It is a wedding scene Pasolini has set here: a tired donkey bedecked with precious cloth, a few dancers in the middle of a princely repast taken on the floor, a staid-looking couple. The bride is, in reality, the precocious 13-year-old son of the owner of a nearby hotel, the one where Pasolini is staying. He speaks, miraculously, Italian (although, like all other actors in the film, he(she) speaks no lines during the shooting). From close by, it's all brass foil and lumber, steel tubular scaffolding and unsewn cloth, but through the camera's eye it's the splendor of the court of Haroun el Rashid. Pasolini has done his research well: the sense of authenticity is there, despite the fable and the fantasy. The immense mosque is real, the reflecting surface of the central pool is real, and the faces are real. And the time element, the rhythm of the speech, the only item that could trip him up, is masterly believable.

Obviously, Pasolini is creating a film style which we find hard to call realistic, but which in effect represents a historical variant of realism. That is why he seeks locations that are not studio-built and faces that seem to be of the period he treats. The exterior aspect becomes more important than the content the actor or decor is meant to carry, and thus they become, in themselves, content. He prefers to have nothing that pretends to be something it is not, and that appears to be one of the reasons he has lost his faith in obtaining political effects through the cinema: the political film, he claims, is like a ball incestuously thrown back and forth between creator and audience, each playing conviction.

In conversation, he readily voices disappointment with those of his critics who seem to have failed to understand his new approach, and who seem to lament his "lost decisiveness." He feels somewhat betrayed by his friends of the left, who do not recognize the kind of "physiognomy-realism" he has attempted to create in his last three films, which he calls his "trilogy of life"—*Decameron, Canterbury Tales* and *1001 Nights.* More than the direct social action he tried creating in his early work, he feels these will penetrate to a much wider audience and make, finally, a more incisive inroad on the mind. A calculation which, in terms of the sheer number of viewers, seems proven by fact.

What he seems to wish, is to let the things themselves speak, without imposing his intelligence upon them. Choosing actors, for example, whose physical presence in itself creates an

Pasolini at the camera.

"imposition of realism." And as he says in response to my question concerning his preoccupation with themes of the past—an apparent contradiction—he wishes to put the present in a dimension of doubt, and the past is the only force that can usurp the present.

His consistency becomes clear as one watches him work. He refuses, in fact, to impose invented meanings upon the things in front of his camera: once these have been created before being photographed (and thus autonomously of interpretation) they remain flat, pregnant only of the content the costume designer and set decorator have intended. The camera does not participate, as in the classic cinema, in the process of creating meaning. It is, frankly, the same method used by Chaplin.

Most of the time, his two cameras remain at shoulder-height, and do not move; but occasionally he impatiently removes one of them from the tripod and follows an action into hand-held detail, his whole small body taut like a dancer. Up there in the dusty high plateau north of Isfahan, in a medieval village still inhabited by stone-age Persians, where not even the weekly truck to Tehran stops, he has rolled out his generators, has set up his lights and tripods, and has found the single tree that grows in this mud-brick village—a pomegranate under which a thirteen-year-old boy is meant to be sexually aroused by a bevy of faded beauties imported for the purpose from Tehran. The poor nude boy manages to be aroused each time the cameras stop.

It is not easy, finally, to make the mental bridge between the content of his films and his purpose in making them. One appreciates the attempt, accepts the theory behind it, but awaits results that go beyond "physiognomy-realism." In the end, despite his disavowal, he is again creating a film form that must be appreciated through the mind.

Evidently Pasolini is searching a new way to express his concerns. The period of disappointment in direct political action is not over, and talking to him one receives an impression of pessimism. Seeking, and not having found—that seems to be his state of the moment, and that would explain why he seems so constantly dissatisfied, so constantly in a hurry. One feels that he recognizes the fact that his work is valid only in the moment of creation, and since the cinema is a dreary, meticulous process, he seems to fear that individual works will take longer to complete than a change of ideology—that his technique may not be fast enough for his developing, galloping ideas. Up here in the Persian desert one feels very clearly that he is traversing his own desert, his own forty years of preparation for another, clearer social view. Perhaps once found, such a view can restore to his works the coherence they once expressed.

The day after I spoke with him, Pasolini, his actors, his cameras, and his crew were all evicted by military emissaries from the courtyard of the mosque. The Mullahs had phoned Tehran and complained—it seems that donkeys were not supposed to enter the holy area, nor was dancing to be allowed within earshot of the Muezzin. The setback gave everyone time to breathe, but for Pasolini it was disastrous; impatiently he consumed his daily green salad with goats' cheese in the plastic, modern hotel coffeeshop, while the production manager flew to Tehran to try and fix things with state visits and baksheesh. Needless to say, shooting soon resumed, somewhat subdued, somewhat lower in key, closer to the human beings, closer to the dust and the slow speed of the country. The splendor of the mosques and the grand design gave way to a personal concern. Perhaps, in a small way, a road was pointed. A road to a small answer to a large search.

JOHN HESS

Auteurism and After

A REPLY TO GRAHAM PETRIE

> *Geist: Is there any recourse for a director?*
> *Schaffner: What you do is fight to get as many cuts as possible, believing that, with the material and with the people with whom you are working, you are going to arrive, in the end, with your cut. Once you hit a certain level—generally it's true —your cut is the one that's shown.*[1]
> *La politique des auteurs states no more than that there are neither good nor bad films but only good or bad cinéastes.*[2]
>
> FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT

Frustrated by the absurdity of latter-day auteurism and dismayed by the low level of most American film criticism, Graham Petrie has launched an attack on what he calls the *auteur* theory. (Although he uses Sarris's term, Petrie does not directly attack the author of *The American Cinema.*) Practitioners of the *auteur* theory, according to Petrie, "by-pass the issue of who, ultimately, has control over a film"; they rely on intuition alone when they claim that a given film bears the imprint of its director; they ignore the realities of film-making in Hollywood (especially in the period from 1927 to the middle forties); they wrongly insist that "the director's contribution is automatically of major significance"; they discuss marginal films which would be better left to sink into oblivion; and,

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they slight, if not reject, the valuable contributions of scriptwriters, cameramen, and actors and actresses. While Petrie's accusations are true of most recent practitioners of auteurism, his article is inadequate for two major reasons.

On the one hand, by focusing on the grossest excesses of recent *auteur* critics, he distorts the importance of these critics and gives an unclear picture of *la politique des auteurs,* its aims, achievements, later development (of which Sarris's *auteur* theory is only one), and its place in film history. After all, the "jeunes turques" who created the *Cahiers* line in the middle fifties revolutionized film criticism, greatly increased the importance of film with relation to literature and the other arts, and created *la nouvelle vague.* What other critical movement has accomplished so much? (Eisenstein *et al* were more theorists than critics.) Petrie's attack on the decadent, heretical perversions of auteurism does not counter this currently popular mode because Petrie does not show how it is a watered down and distorted version of a more interesting, complex, helpful, and valid original: *la politique des auteurs.* Because of this failure to place the subject of his criticism in historical context, Petrie's assault will have no more effect than Pauline Kael's sortie against Sarris's circles and squares.

On the other hand, Petrie offers no clearly progressive alternatives to the present critical quagmire. In general he seems to want us to return to pre-Bazinian impressionism against which the original *auteur* critics so successfully lobbied. He suggests that we burrow into the infinite minutiae of the film industry to determine the exact situation in which each individual film was produced. This xerox, compendia approach to the cinema is not only boring and a waste of time, but it distracts our attention from the aesthetic, economic, political, psychological, and sociological function and meaning of specific films in relation to the society and class which produced them. To invite us "to enjoy a film . . . for its photography, its costumes, its music and even . . . its stars," is asking us to become like the moviegoers of past decades rather than remain aware people who go to see specific films by specific film-makers. In this article I will discuss the two major inadequacies of Petrie's article and suggest some alternatives to Petrie and also to our present dependency on the mystique of the *auteur.*

I

La politique des auteurs was a product of several ideas which coalesced in French film criticism at the end of the forties. One major component was the Christian/realist aesthetic developed by Roger Leenhardt and André Bazin within the general context of Personalism and the *Esprit* group led by Emmanuel Mounier. Leenhardt was *Esprit's* first film critic when the journal was founded in 1932 and Bazin succeeded him after World War II. This Christian/realist aesthetic is perhaps best summarized in Annette Michelson's trenchant description of Bazin's intellectual position: "Bazin's distrust of the analytic technique, of the disjunctive style, of the metaphoric mode is that of the intransigently religious sensibility. This cultivated and discerning man nursed a latent distrust of art itself except as it might implement the revelation of a transcendent reality."[3]

This religious and philosophical aspect of auteurism has been totally ignored by writers on the subject and disappeared completely when auteurism was imported into England and the United States. This is not the place to go into this complex problem. Suffice it to say that religious and philosophical criteria were as important in determining who was and who was not an *auteur* as was a director's ability to express his world view in the film.

Another force that helped form *la politique des auteurs* was the conviction that film was as important an art form as any other, a claim that was always taken seriously in France since the days of Louis Delluc and Ricciotto Canudo. Finally, and most important, there existed the belief that the cinema could be a personal art through which one expressed one's point of view just as the novelist or painter did through his chosen medium. This belief was articulated by

Jean Georges Auriol and his colleagues in *La Revue du Cinéma* (1946–1949). In the pages of this journal, and later in the pages of *Cahiers du Cinéma,* one finds "the notion of the 'divine spark' which separates off the artist from ordinary mortals, which divides the genius from the journeyman."[4] The belief in the cinema as a personal art had its most forceful advocate in Alexandre Astruc whose concept of the *caméra-stylo* influenced the original *auteur* critics.

Thus, when Truffaut and his friends began to write for *Cahiers du Cinéma* in the early fifties, they found a ready-made concept—that of the *auteur,* the self-expressing film artist—which they could use to gain their ends; as Petrie rightly states, these *auteur* critics wanted more than anything else "to make . . . their own films and on their own terms." What Truffaut added to the concept of the *auteur* was *la politique:* a massive, bitter attack on the established French film industry—producers, directors, actors and actresses, critics, and especially scriptwriters.

What Graham Petrie says about auteurism applies *only* to its most extreme post-Sarrisite manifestations. Although there are isolated indications that he is aware of the stark differences between *la politique des auteurs* (*Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Arts,* 1954-1958) and the *auteur* theory (Andrew Sarris, *Film Culture,* n. 22–23, Summer, 1961, and so forth), his lack of definitions and clear distinctions tars them both with the same brush for anyone who is not intimately acquainted with the writings in *Cahiers* and *Arts* between 1954 and 1958. Let us examine Petrie's six basic charges against auteurism and compare them to the tenets of the original *politique des auteurs.*

Petrie begins his attack by claiming that "the *auteur* theory was essentially an attempt to bypass the issue of who, ultimately, has control over a film." This statement has some basis in fact when applied to Sarris; although it is hardly the essence of his theory, Sarris has not concerned himself very much with the issue of control. However, when directed at Truffaut and his colleagues, this charge is absolutely false. As Petrie well knows, Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rivette, and Rohmer were intensely interested in and concerned with this issue. In fact it is not an exaggeration to say that it is one of the main issues of *la politique des auteurs.* These critics' attack on the French film industry was based on their opinion that stupid producers and businessmen should not control films, filmmakers should. They protested bitterly against the French reluctance to take anyone seriously unless he was old and gray; they did not intend to wait that long for the opportunity to express themselves in film. However, they never challenged the capitalistic structure of the film industry; they wanted to work within a reformed system to gain control of the film-making process. Certainly, their efforts to control every aspect of their own films attests to their intense concern with this problem.

As part of his charge that *auteur* critics ignore the issue of who controls a film, Petrie accuses them of not even knowing very much about the film-making process. While this might be true of many latter-day *auteur* critics, the original *auteur* critics learned all there was to know about film-making. They haunted the Paris studios and discussed film-making with directors, actors and actresses, scriptwriters, and the various technicians needed to make a film. They began to make their own films as soon as they could and they worked as assistants whenever possible. Truffaut wrote articles about all aspects of film-making (mostly in *Arts*). The reason these critics appreciated the glimmerings of personal expression in Hollywood movies was because they concentrated on this aspect of the cinema and knew exactly how films were made. The reviews in *Cahiers* and in *Arts* are filled with precisely the kind of practical information that Petrie demands. The most accessible example of this concern for the practice of film-making as opposed to distilling some mystical "personal vision" out of a film is Truffaut's *Hitchcock;* there is little in that book about the director's personal vision and much about camerawork and other related techniques.

Continuing to discuss the issue of control, Petrie charges that *auteur* critics have been un-

able to deal with the fact that a film's visual style might have been the work of others and that the film might not even have sprung "from a deeply felt need of the director's temperament." But the original *auteur* critics were well aware of these possibilities. They felt that real *auteurs,* men like Hitchcock, Renoir, Rossellini, and Welles, understood all aspects of film-making and could by dint of knowledge and force of will control all the significant aspects of a film—directly or *indirectly*. Gregg Toland was responsible for much of the visual style of *Citizen Kane,* but it was Welles who encouraged him to experiment further with deep focus. It was Welles who insisted on that "look." It was Welles who determined the dramatic or symbolic content of each shot. Deep focus is used much differently in *Citizen Kane* than it is in Wyler's *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946). To be an artist worthy of the title *auteur*, a director had to be strong enough to get his way. Truffaut admiringly pointed out how Max Ophuls always reserved for himself the right to quit a project if he did not get his way.[5]

Finally, the issue of control so interested the original *auteur* critics that the in-depth interview became one of their main activities. The *Cahiers du Cinéma* are filled with long interviews with film directors and other *cinéastes.* The focus of these interviews was the director's intentions in a particular film. "Without the possibility of ascertaining the director's *intentions,*" Truffaut stated, "criticism is impossible."[6] Today no issue of a film journal seems complete without at least one interview.

Petrie also claims that the practitioners of auteurism depended solely on their intuition that a particular film "obviously bore the director's personal stamp from beginning to end." Again, this criticism may apply to Sarris and Robin Wood, but to say this in general about *auteur* criticism is utter nonsense. In the first place a typical review in the *Cahiers du Cinéma* or *Arts* never contained an analysis of a film "from beginning to end." In the typical review was some background information about the director, some plot summary, often comments on the value of the script, and then, finally, several examples of the way in which theme, style, tone, or philosophy expressed the director's touch, his personality. The *Cahiers* critics knew film history very well and they were thoroughly versed in the work of their most esteemed directors—films they liked they saw countless times until they knew them shot by shot, word by word. They did not need to call on intuition to determine that a film expressed the personality of a director whose previous films they knew by heart.

The basis of *la politique des auteurs* was never substantively challenged in the fifties (even by *Positif,* which was more political/sociological, but equally auteurist—they preferred Buñuel to Hitchcock). But later when *auteur* criticism, stripped of its philosophical content, was transported to foreign climes, severe challenges appeared. The followers of the *Cahiers* line in England and America were less well prepared than Truffaut and his friends; they could not produce the concrete proof required by their more pragmatic opponents and resorted more and more consistently to intuition. Not being film-makers *manqué,* they were not as aware of the intricacies of film-making as the *Cahiers* critics.

Petrie cites Garson Kanin to support his opinion that conditions in Hollywood during the thirties and forties were not only antipathetic to individual art but made personal expression of any kind impossible. Two points must be made here. First, the original *auteur* critics virtually ignored this period, seeing it as a script- and studio-dominated period which ended the heroic age of the silent cinema. They held up the work of Griffith, Chaplin, Gance, Eisenstein, and Murnau as models for all future film-makers. They did discuss the thirties work of Lang, Von Sternberg, Hawks, and a few others, but primarily these *auteur* critics were interested in contemporary cinema (that of the fifties) and the immediate past. Second, in the American cinema they favored the work of such lesser, often low-budget directors as Hitchcock, Ray, Aldrich, Fuller, Hawks, and the American films

of Renoir and Lang. All these directors were in one way or another outside the mainstream of studio production. In turn they ridiculed the more respected American directors such as Zinnemann, Stevens, Wyler, Wilder, Huston, Ford, and Sturges. This pattern was similar to their approach to the French cinema. They demoted respected directors such as Autant-Lara, Clément, Clouzot, Duvivier, Clair, Cayatte, and elevated such outsiders as Renoir, Ophuls, Cocteau, Becker, and Bresson. This pattern is a manifestation of the *auteur* critics' desire to attack the established industry which prevented them from making films; it also resulted from their fondness for the low-budget, personal film as opposed to the lavish studio product. Clearly, the larger, more expensive, and more elaborate a film is, the harder it is for a single person to use it as a medium of his own expression (*2001* notwithstanding).

The next flaw in Petrie's description of *auteur* criticism is his accusation that all *auteur* critics dogmatically assume that "the director's contribution is automatically of major significance." Petrie adds that this idea gave rise to the opinion that "it is *only* the director who matters and that even the most minor work by *auteur* X is automatically more interesting than the best film of non-*auteur* Y." Here again we are dealing with Sarris's reinterpretation of *la politique des auteurs*. The original *auteur* critics were much more interested in artistry and the art of direction than in film *per se*. Therefore they rarely wrote long analyses of individual films, choosing instead to write about a specific director's work. Thus, because of their critical approach, the director's contribution *was* of major significance *to them*. Furthermore, if the director's contribution was not significant in a film, that director could not possibly be an *auteur* and the film was thus of less interest to them. A film warranted discussion only in so far as it was a vehicle of a director's self-expression. The auteur critics' overriding concern was with artistic self-expression. Therefore, they constantly compared film directors with other artists—novelists and painters in particular. As *la politique des auteurs* developed and went abroad, its focus changed from the art of direction (i.e., the construction of scripts, the setting-up and shooting of scenes, the direction of actors and actresses) to a concern for stylistic and thematic similarities in the work of a single director. Truffaut and his colleagues gained insight into the art of film direction; their successors accumulated lists of names, dates, shots, and plots. The list replaced analysis.

The original *auteur* critics wanted to be film artists and thus they fought against the scriptwriters' domination of the French cinema. Truffaut described the scenarist's film as the enemy, the low point in film-making, and viciously attacked Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost, France's two leading scriptwriters. "When they [Aurenche and Bost] hand in their scenario, the film is done; the *metteur-en-scène,* in their eyes, is the gentleman who adds the pictures to it and it's true, alas!"[7] These critics saw the film director as an artist who could rival the painter, the architect, and especially the novelist. To achieve this status the director had to work his will on the film. If he was able to imprint his personality on a film he did not control, so much the better. The film might not necessarily be a better film, but the director proved himself an artist to be reckoned with. The first *auteur* critics judged directors, not films; their subject of study was the art of direction.

The word *auteur* was very loosely used. Often it was used in a general sense as in "the author of a deed." It is hard to tell when the word carries an evaluative connotation. Beyond Ophuls, Hitchcock, Renoir, Rossellini, Hawks, Ray, Cocteau, and a few others, few working directors were consistently referred to as *auteurs*. And the less successful films of these directors were much more interesting to them than the best films of most other directors. But the labelling, classifying, and ranking of directors which became popular in England and America were not important to the *Cahiers* critics. They wanted to define the nature of film art in such a way that it would mesh with the traditional western European concept of art: a unified, personal

vision of the world dealing with universal themes while at the same time having the "solidity of specification" demanded by Henry James. Their view of art, like that of Leenhardt, Bazin, Astruc, and Auriol, had antecedents in French 19th-century Romanticism as well as in French Classicism. They considered art the product of an artist's individual perceptions and creativity. Only the director of a film was in a position to express himself. Thus the *auteur* critics searched among directors for artists. They studied the films of these artists in order to learn how they created their art. Truffaut once said that film criticism is a kind of combat. For him and his colleagues criticism was not an end in itself, but a preface to making films. But first the hierarchical structure of the film industry had to be changed so that artists could make films as easily as they could write books. After Truffaut and his friends went into film-making, this concern for art in the traditional sense, the desire to change the film industry, and the passionate need to make films disappeared from *auteur* criticism.

Now that the movies *in toto* have been opened up to the intellectual and scholarly analysis they deserve, primarily by the Bazin/*Cahiers* combination, Petrie is perhaps right to say that some films should be allowed to sink into oblivion. But I wonder how quickly he would remove the minor works of Shakespeare, Dickens, Hammett, or Zane Grey from libraries. The *auteur* critics were the first generation of film critics to have all of film history available to them: they were the first generation to know the sound film before the silent film. And this new relationship between the critic and film history radically altered film criticism, film theory, and subsequently film-making itself. Because the *auteur* critics insisted upon judging directors on the basis of their *oeuvre,* the minor works of many directors, including the best ones, have been made available to a much wider audience. Why should I accept Graham Petrie's opinion of *The Sea of Grass* (1947)? I like Kazan's work and want to see the film for myself. And it is due to *la politique des auteurs,* which Petrie is so intent on denigrating, that I will most likely get to see *The Sea of Grass* and many more films like it.

In an attempt to move away from a dependence on directors as *auteurs,* Petrie cites Goulding's *Dark Victory* (1939) and Rapper's *Now, Voyager* (1942) as films which were made by undistinguished directors, but which are nonetheless important as Bette Davis films. Truffaut *et al.* would agree with both claims. The *auteur* critics, especially Truffaut and Godard, were intensely interested in film acting. They discussed and enjoyed *Giant* (1956) as a James Dean film, regretting only that he had to suffer at the hands of George Stevens. *Directeur d'acteurs* was a title of approbation second only to *auteur.* Elia Kazan is an example of a director not considered an *auteur* but highly praised for his work with actors. The *auteur* critics fought against the tyranny of stars in the French cinema because their great popularity could influence the direction of a film. Since these stars did not understand the necessities of film-making, their influence could not be creative and productive. As in the case of scriptwriters (and cameramen, too), the *auteur* critics insisted that their contribution be cinematically valid and support the concept the director had of the film. There is no better proof of their understanding of the various people who make a film than the ease with which they attracted and worked with excellent cameramen such as Decae and Coutard, and able scriptwriters such as Gégauff and Moussey.

II

If we agree with Petrie, as I am willing to do, that *la politique des auteurs,* including its reinterpretations in England and America and its myriad heretical perversions, is now an historical artifact, we are left with the problem of somehow replacing its principles with other, more fruitful ones or of abandoning the desire to see film criticism based on any principles at all. Petrie asks us to seek alternatives to *auteurs,* to reassess our current principles of film criticism, but Petrie himself offers us no more than the stern admonishment "to avoid the dangers of

replacing one culture hero by another and launching into 'The Cameraman as Superstar' and solemn studies of the personal vision of Sol Polito or James Wong Howe." It seems that Petrie objects to the passionate partisanship of so many *auteur* critics, whether French, English, or American; he objects to the *politique,* the anti-establishment orientation of latter-day *auteur* critics who seem intent on dumping all the old impressionistic criteria which define high art and replacing them with descriptions of the beauties of Frank Tashlin. Their concentration on such individuals, their apparent insistence that " 'personality' is some kind of mystic quality that exists in a vacuum, and can be examined in total isolation" disturbs Petrie's sense of propriety, his sense of the reasonable and practical. He offers common sense as an antidote to the excesses of auteurism. However, in the very same paragraph Petrie contradicts his own stated desire to deemphasize the role of the director. He quotes Eisenstein's famous dictum that "it is the director who is responsible for the organic unity or style of the film."[6] "Organic unity of style" sounds like the same kind of mysticism which characterizes recent *auteur* criticism.

The main difference between Eisenstein and the original *auteur* critics was that he and his collaborators worked in a true collective in which conflicting ideas were unified not only by the director but by the force of a common purpose—the glorification of the revolution. In a capitalist film industry, the rewards go to whoever dominates the struggle for profits. The bourgeois *Cahiers* critics, often using family money, got the opportunity to make films—the Marxist *Positif* critics did not get that opportunity. As long as a competitive economic system dominates film-making, Petrie's suggestion that we must begin considering "the cinema as a cooperative art" is nonsense. Capitalist film-making is not a cooperative art; it is a competitive art. And *la politique des auteurs* succeeded so well because its practitioners recognized, understood, and defended this system.

A second path which Petrie thinks our reassessment might follow is toward "a serious attempt to analyze the status of the director in Europe (and perhaps America in the silent period and the last five years) as opposed to the Hollywood of 1927–1967—the heyday of the big studios and producers." It is strange that he offers this curious project as one of two possibilities and then abruptly drops it. I assume that his strikingly Sarrisite list which ends the article is there to whet our appetite for such a project. But what are we to think of this compendium? The *auteur* critics would certainly have agreed with the high evaluations of the listed *cinéastes,* with the possible exception of Ford, Capra, Lubitsch, and Losey. What is proved, however, by demonstrating that Hitchcock had more independence than Renoir, and Chaplin more than Welles? All four are great *auteurs!* Certainly an examination of the economic and power relationships which prevailed throughout the history of the cinema must be undertaken. But this project would not have as its goal the determination of specific directors' relative independence; it would concentrate on the relationship between money and art.

Petrie's actual alternative to *auteurs* is not easy to ascertain; he never directly states one. But an analysis of his several suggestions does produce the outlines of an approach which suspiciously resembles that of New Criticism. The more direct statement of his approach to art, found in the Introduction to his book on Truffaut, will enable us to understand the curious suggestions offered as alternatives to *auteurs* throughout his article. "I am interested in how and why one particularly gifted director uses the artistic means at his disposal—camera, editing, music, dialogue, sound effects, silence, colours, settings, objects, gestures, faces, actors, fictional characters and events—and how and why what he does with these affects us, the viewers of the films."[9] In the first place there is no indication in the introduction that Petrie intends to consider the contribution of the scriptwriters, cameramen, actors and actresses, or other technicians who influenced Truffaut's films. Petrie has hoped to avoid this problem by selecting a director who has had almost total control over

the films he has made. Truffaut's Art is the subject of the investigation. Petrie suggests in his article that we "learn to enjoy" the various formal elements of the films we see—aesthetic pleasure is what Art provides us with. But apparently we can only experience this joy once we have assured ourselves that the artist in question did indeed have full control over all the formal elements involved. This formalist approach takes us back to the pre-Bazinian impressionism against which modern French criticism has struggled.

In the light of Petrie's more direct statement about his approach to art, we can better understand why he quoted Eisenstein's dictum about organic unity, why he is so desperate to know how much actual control a director has had, why he chose to write about Truffaut, and why the most independent directors are listed as "creators" even though Petrie denies the existence of any value judgements in his classifications. One of Cleanth Brooks's famous articles of faith states "that the primary concern of criticism is with the problem of unity—the kind of whole which the literary work forms or fails to form, and the relation of the various parts to each other in building up this whole."[10]

Graham Petrie is a misplaced Fugitive, yearning for the palmy days when art was art and trash was trash. He does not want to pursue the study of a director "into the deepest recesses of the hack and commissioned work that the director may have been forced to turn out." Why a study of Renoir's *Toni* (1934), *Elena et les Hommes* (1956), and much of his early work means penetrating into "deepest recesses" is unclear to me. But, the fact that Petrie wants a "dividing line" drawn between a director's art and his trash follows from his New Critical bias. The effect of the *auteur* critics' love for *les films maudits* and their curiosity about and appreciation of the lowliest genre films was to open up *all* films to serious intellectual investigation and discussion. Petrie wants to overturn this triumph of good sense in the name of Art and return us to the elitism and exclusivity of past generations.

It is only in terms of Petrie's New Critical orientation that we can understand the inordinate significance he gives to the apparent existence of some great films "where directional control has been negligible, or where other contributors have played an equally significant role." According to him an investigation of this phenomenon should be "a major concern of film criticism." Only the New Critic and, ironically, the *auteur* critic could find a great work of art which has no apparent unifying force a fascinating anomaly of major significance. Indeed, the difference between organic unity and personal vision in art is merely a matter of semantics. Both concepts imply and even depend upon the existence of an "unifier" (to use Eisenstein's term), a central, unifying intelligence. In the last analysis, the incoherence of Petrie's article results from the fact that by attacking *auteur* criticism ("at its heart"), he attacks his own position. His traditional brand of bourgeois formalism competes with an ascendant, rebellious brand of formalism for the ears of the public. This is a humorous spectacle, but not one to be taken seriously.

Petrie's "major concern" is not likely to become the main focus of film criticism. When Petrie calls for a reassessment of film criticism, he purposely ignores the three areas from which new discoveries about the cinema and our relation to it are emerging: structuralism, semiology, and Marxist criticism. In his book on Truffaut, Petrie refers to these "uses" of film and while admitting that they occasionally produce interesting insights, he rejects them because they lead to distortions of the films in question. For, according to Petrie, "the arrogance of refusing to respond to or to recognize the *whole* of the creative experience is more an impoverishment than an enrichment."[11]

The basis for Petrie's complaint against latter-day auteurists (whose obsession with themes borders on a kind of bland structuralism) as well as his rejection of the so-called "uses" of film is the issue not so much of control, but of respect for the autonomy of art. Bourgeois formalism demands that art be autonomous, that

its relation to society not be considered, that its value be wholly self-contained. Thus genuine art can exist in the cinema only when the director (or some other artist, man of genius) has absolute control over the final form. Structuralists, semiologists, and Marxist critics all deny the autonomy of art, considering film an ideological link between individuals, groups, classes, and societies. Structuralists see film as the obsessive working out of insoluble social contradictions (wilderness and civilization, for example). Semiologists see film as a complex text transmitted by individuals and groups and received by other individuals and groups. Social and linguistic conventions form the base of many of their insights into the film medium. Marxist critics see films as a product of the classes which produce them. In capitalist countries (where most films are made) films are dominated in form and content by the ruling bourgeoisie and are an ideological weapon in the class struggle. In all three cases the examination of a film's social context becomes more important that the film itself. Social ills, maladjustments, and manipulations come to be seen as more important than their manifestations on celluloid.

The impetus for all three modes of film criticism comes primarily from France. Claude Lévi-Strauss's investigations into myth stand at the root of structuralism. Charles Eckert's recent article and the accompanying bibliography in *Film Comment* (v. 9, n. 3) give an excellent introduction to structuralism (especially as it has been practiced in England). Christian Metz and Roland Barthes are the most influential semiologists; *Cinema* (Beverly Hills, v. 7, n. 2) has provided a valuable "Guide to Christian Metz." Marxist criticism has received new impetus from recent writing in a variety of French journals such as the *Cahiers du Cinéma* (which is now completely dominated by Marxists) and *Cinéthique* edited by Gerard Leblanc. Translations from the French and original articles in the English journal *Screen* (v. 14, n. 1–2) are also important sources for those who do not read French. This mode of criticism has advanced most in America due to the fine writing of Julia Lesage, James Roy MacBean, and Brian Henderson on Jean-Luc Godard's recent political films.[12] Writers in other film journals, namely *Cinéaste* and *Critique,* have made valuable contributions to Marxist criticism, as have the reviewers for many radical newspapers and journals.

The atmosphere of analytical rigor emanating from France since the days of Bazin, the rapid growth of professional film scholarship in this country, and the growing awareness that a new cinema which is more able to contribute to the increasing social changes in this country is needed, combine to insure the trend away from New Critical impressionism toward a more systematic and even scientific examination of the film medium. *La politique des auteurs* and its progeny are now historical artifacts; our only fruitful response to it today is an examination of its origins, development, and influence. *La politique des auteurs* grew out of the socioeconomic, intellectual, and cinematic milieu of France in the decade after World War II; it was a weapon which young bourgeois intellectuals, critics, and film-makers turned against their stuffy elders who still relied on the aesthetic criteria developed for the other arts to evaluate and discuss the few films worthy of serious examination. The *auteur* critics are now part of the establishment they fought against, and a new generation of young bourgeois critics are using certain aspects of structuralism, semiology, and even Marxism against them.

The time for flagellating poor, tattered auteurism has passed; it has had its day, done its thing, and passed on into history. Graham Petrie's frustration with the poverty of much American film criticism is understandable, but "Alternatives to Auteurs" is an inadequate response because it further confuses the controversy surrounding *auteur* criticism and because it fails to note and appreciate the significant reassessment of film criticism and theory which is already well underway.

NOTES

1. *Film Comment,* vol. 8, no. 3 (September-October, 1972), p. 36.

2. *Arts,* No. 653 (January, 1958).
3. Review of *What is Cinema? Artforum,* vol. 6, no. 10 (Summer, 1968), p. 70.
4. Edward Buscombe, "The Idea of Authorship," *Screen,* vol. 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1973).
5. *Arts,* No. 613 (April, 1957).
6. *Arts,* No. 529 (July, 1955).
7. *Cahiers du Cinéma in English,* no. 1, p. 36.
8. *Notes of a Film Director* (Dover, New York, 1970), p. 113.
9. *The Cinema of Francois Truffaut* (A. S. Barnes, New York, 1970), p. 8.
10. *Kenyon Review,* vol. 13 (Winter, 1951), p. 72.
11. *Truffaut,* ibid.
12. Lesage, *Cinéaste,* vol. 5, no. 3 (Summer, 1972), 42–48; MacBean, *Film Quarterly,* vol. 26, no. 1 (Fall, 1972), 30–44; Henderson, *Socialist Revolution,* no. 12.

BRIAN HENDERSON

Critique of Cine-Structuralism (Part II)

This text is concerned with the *Cahiers du Cinéma* text "John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*" and with Ben Brewster's notes on this text in the most recent issue of *Screen.*[1] The *Cahiers* study is most interesting for the method of reading films which it proposes and carries out. Brewster's article reads the *Cahiers* reading. It also seeks to provide the *Cahiers* method with an altered or improved theoretical underpinning. In so doing it seems to turn *Screen's* important work on Christian Metz in a distinctly new direction.

The *Cahiers* methodology is set forth clearly at the outset of the *Young Mr. Lincoln* text.

1. Object: a certain number of "classic" films, which today are *readable* (and therefore, anticipating our definition of method we will designate this work as one of reading) insofar as we can distinguish the historicity of their inscription: the relation of these films to the codes (social, cultural . . .) for which they are a site of intersection, and to other films, themselves held in an intertextual space; therefore, the relation of these films to the ideology which they convey, a particular "phase" which they represent, and to the events (present, past, historical, mythical, fictional) which they aimed to represent. . . .

2. Our work will therefore be a *reading* in the sense of a *rescanning* of these films. That is, to define it negatively first: (a) it will not be (yet another) commentary. The function of the commentary is to distill an ideally constituted sense presented as the object's ultimate meaning (which however remains elusive indefinitely, given the infinite possibilities of talking about film): a wandering and prolific pseudo-reading which misses the reality of the inscription, and substitutes for it a discourse consisting of a simple ideological delineation of what appear(s) to be the main statement(s) of the film at a given moment.

(b) Nor will it be a new *interpretation,* i.e. the translation of what is supposed to be already in the film into a critical system (metalanguage) where the interpreter has the kind of absolute knowledge of the exegetist blind to the (historical) ideological determination of his practice and his object-pretext, when he is not a hermeneute à la Viridiana slotting things into a preordained structure.

(c) Nor will this be a dissection of an object conceived of as a closed structure, the cataloguing of progressively smaller and more "discrete" units; in other words, an inventory of the elements which ignores their predestination for the film-maker's writing project and, having added a portion of intelligibility to the initial object, claims to deconstruct, then reconstruct that object, without taking any account of the dynamic of the inscription. Not, therefore, a mechanistic structural reading.

(d) Nor finally will it be a demystification in the sense where it is enough to re-locate the film within its historical determinations, "reveal" its assumptions, declare its problematic and its aesthetic prejudices and criticize its statement in the name of a mechanically applied materialist knowledge, in order to see it collapse

2. *Arts,* No. 653 (January, 1958).
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and feel no more needs to be said. . . . (An effective reading can only be such by returning on its own deciphering operation and by integrating its functioning into the text it produces, which is something quite different from brandishing a method—even if it is marxist-leninist—and leaving it at that.) . . . (A) materialist reading of art products which appear to lack any intentional critical dimension concerning capitalist relations of production must do the same thing [consider literary work not as a reflection of the relations of production, but as having a place *within* these relations].[2]

What will be attempted here through a re-scansion of these films in a process of active reading is to make them say what they have to say *within* what they leave unsaid, to reveal their constituent lacks; these are neither faults in the work (since these films, as Jean-Pierre Oudart has clearly demonstrated—see the preceding issue—are the work of extremely skilled film-makers) nor a deception on the part of the author (for why should he practice deception?); they are *structuring absences,* always displaced—an overdetermination which is the only possible basis from which these discourses could be realised, the unsaid included in the said and necessary to its constitution. In short, to use Althusser's expression—"the internal shadows of exclusion."

The films we will be studying do not need filling out, they do not demand a teleological reading, nor do we require them to account for their *external* shadows (except purely and simply to dismiss them); all that is involved is traversing their statement to locate what sets it in place, to double their writing with an active reading to reveal what is already there, but silent (cf. the notion of *palimpsest* in Barthes and Daney), to make them say not only "what this says, but what it doesn't say because it doesn't want to say it" (J. A. Miller, and we would add: what, while intending to leave unsaid, it is nevertheless obliged to say). . . .

[T]he structuring absences mentioned above and the establishment of an ersatz which this dictates have some connection with the sexual *other scene,* and that "other other scene" which is politics; that the double repression —politics and eroticism—which our reading will bring out (a repression which cannot be indicated once and for all and left at that but rather has to be written into the constantly renewed process of its repression) allows the answer to be deduced; and this is an answer whose very question would not have been possible without the two discourses of overdetermination, the Marxist and the Freudian. This is why we will not choose films for their value as "eternal masterpieces" but rather because the negatory force of their writing provides enough *scope* for a reading—because they can be re-written.[3]

Since the essay "returns on its own deciphering operation" again and again, its methodology discussions are not limited to the introductory section. After sections on Hollywood in 1938–39, the USA in 1938–39, Fox and Zanuck, and Ford and Lincoln, a section called Ideological Undertaking asks, "What is the subject of *Young Mr. Lincoln?*" The previous sections have established economic and political conditions in the US just prior to the film's making. They conclude that the Republican Zanuck wanted to make a film about the Republican Lincoln in order to promote a Republican victory in the Presidential election of 1940. This explains politically and economically why and how the film was put into production; these factors determine but are not the same thing as the ideological undertaking of the film. The latter is:

the *reformulation* of the historical figure of Lincoln on the level of the myth and the eternal.

This ideological project may appear to be clear and simple—of the edifying and apologetic type. Of course, if one considers its statements alone, extracting it as a *separable ideological statement* disconnected from the complex network of determinations through which it is realised and inscribed—through which it possibly even criticizes itself—then it is easy to operate an illusory deconstruction of the film through a reading of the demystificatory type (see 1). Our work, on the contrary, will consist in activating this network in its complexity, where philosophical assumptions (idealism, theologism), political determinations (republicanism, capitalism) and the relatively autonomous aesthetic process (characters, cinematic *signifiers,* narrative mode) specific to Ford's writing, intervene simultaneously. If our work, which will necessarily be held to the linear sequentiality of the discourse, should isolate the orders of determination interlocking in the film, it will always be in the perspective of their relations: it therefore demands a recurrent reading, on all levels.

7. Methodology

Young Mr. Lincoln, like the vast majority of Hollywood films, follows linear and chronological narrative, in which events appear to follow each other according to a certain "natural" sequence and logic. Thus two options were open to us: either, in discussing each of the determining moments, to simultaneously refer to all the scenes involved; or to present each scene in its fictional chronological *order* and discuss the different

determining moments, emphasizing in each case what we believe to be the main determinant (the key signification), and indicating the secondary determinants, which may in turn become the main determinant in other scenes. The first method thus sets up the film as the object of a reading (a text) and then supposedly takes up the totality of its over-determination networks simultaneously, *without taking account of the repressive operation* which, in each scene, determines the realisation of a key signification; while the second method *bases itself on the key signification of each scene,* in order to understand the scriptural operation (over-determination and repression) which has set it up.

The first method has the drawback of turning the film into a text which is *readable a priori;* the second has the advantage of making the reading itself participate in the *film's process of becoming-a-text,* and of authorizing such a reading only by what authorizes it in each successive moment of the film. We have therefore chosen the latter method. The fact that the course of our reading will be modelled on the 'cutting' of the film into sequences is absolutely intentional, but the work will involve breaking down the closures of the individual scenes by setting them in action with each other and *in* each other.[4]

This is the essay's methodological preface. The reading of the film which follows identifies several systems of oppositions and likenesses, somewhat in the manner of Lévi-Strauss. Thus Lincoln is both the figure of ideal law, which prohibits all violence/desire, and the agent of its inscription, which is achieved only through violence. This doubling complements the film's mass-individual opposition, whereby Lincoln is set apart from others by his sacred relation to law and himself imposes this law on others violently. These systems mutually inscribe the analogy between Nature-Law-(River)-Woman and an allied system of debt and exchange, whereby Lincoln is taught to read, led to knowledge, and given the Book of Law by Woman (his mother, Ann Rutledge, and Mrs. Clay respectively), in return for which he owes Her a debt which can only be paid back by his assumption of his mission (to be the Lincoln of myth) and by his incarnation of the Law.

These systems and their interrelations interest us less than the manner of their inscription by the film and of their reading by the *Cahiers* text. A Lévi-Straussian analysis reduces its object to synchrony and then derives its paradigms. The *Cahiers* analysis performs a second operation. It analyzes how these systems present themselves in the film and how the film negotiates the reader's access to them. They are not presented by the film all at once, they are inscribed, trace by trace, in the film's successive scenes, in its "process of becoming-a-text."

> The principal function of this sequence (Scene 2) is to introduce a number of constituent elements of the symbolic scene from which the film is to proceed, by *varying* it and activating it . . . : The Book and the Law, the Family and the Son, exchange and debt, predestination. . . ."[5]
>
> [Third Sequence] Centered on Lincoln, the scene presents the relationship Law-Women-Nature which will be articulated according to a system of complementarity and of substitution-replacement.[6]

This presentation of the film's systems by its writing is not merely an *ordering,* for that suggests an arrangement of what already exists. "Presenting" is itself a half-wrong term for it suggests a deployment of *presences* and omits the equally important function of absenting. It omits *"the repressive operation* which, in each scene, determines the realization of a key signification . . . [We must study this] in order to understand the scriptural operation (over-determination and repression) which has set it up."[7] This presenting-absenting-conjoining operation is "the dynamic of the inscription." Like the ideological project itself and the selection of discourses which inscribe it, the dynamic of the inscription is over-determined—"an overdetermination which is the only possible basis from which these discourses could be realized, the unsaid included in the said and necessary to its constitution."

The dynamic of the inscription is doubled by a process of active reading, which is necessary to make films say what they have to say within what they leave unsaid. The *Cahiers* concept of active reading involves integrating the reader's knowledge with the film and breaking down the closure between individual scenes. An example is Section 18, The Balcony, which reads the

film's dance scene. This follows the lynching scene, the peak of Lincoln's castrating power to date. Mary Todd leads a passive Lincoln from the dance floor to the balcony.

As soon as he is on the balcony, Lincoln is enchanted by the river. Mary Todd waits for a moment for Lincoln to speak or show some interest in her. Then she draws aside, leaving him alone in front of the river.

(a) Dance, balcony, river, moonlight, couple: all these elements create a romantic, intimate, sentimental atmosphere. The scene, however, mercilessly destroys this atmosphere (whose physical signifieds could be already read as more fantastic than romantic) to introduce the dimension of the Sacred.

(b) The transfer from one dimension to the other is effected by Lincoln's enchantment with the river: the commonplace accessory of the "romantic scene" is shifted to an other scene and is at the same time the agent of this shift. An other scene (from which Mary Todd, having no place, withdraws) in which a process of displacement-condensation takes place so that the river simultaneously evokes the first woman Lincoln loved (Ann Rutledge)—an evocation here emptied of any nostalgic or sentimental character—and (see 11) the relationship Nature-Woman-Law. The river is here the ratification of Lincoln's contract with Law. Lincoln, faced with his fate accepts it; the classic moment of any mythological story, where the hero sees his future written and accepts its revelation (the balcony, also a typical accessory of romantic love scenes, is here promoted, by Lincoln's gesture and the camera angle, to the anticipated role of the presidential balcony). Correlatively Lincoln's renunciation of pleasure is written here: from now on Ann Rutledge's death must be read as the real origin both of his castration and of his identification with the Law; and the "inversion" of the dance scene as well as its relation to the lynching scene take on their true meaning: Lincoln does not have the phallus, he is the phallus (see Lacan "La signification du phallus").[8]

This section "makes the reading itself participate in the film's process of becoming a text" and it "authorizes such a reading only by what authorizes it in each successive moment of the film," while at the same time "breaking down the closures of the individual scenes by setting them in action with each other and *in* each other." The scene and the reading—the film's process of becoming a text and the essay's process of rewriting the text—are one. The reading is constitutive of the text: "We do not hesitate to force the text, even to rewrite it, insofar as the film only constitutes itself as a text by integration of the reader's knowledge.

In this scene-section, the operation of writing-reading is transformative: it alters the meaning of what has gone before and of what is to follow. Previous scenes-readings are changed retrospectively, subsequent scenes-readings are changed prospectively. These operations are described precisely by the phrases "is written here," "take on their true meaning," and (especially) "from now on . . . must be read as the origin of." The breakdown of closure may be tested by tracing the effects of this scene in other scenes and of others in it. The meaning of these earlier scenes-readings is here altered: those with Ann Rutledge and her gravestone, the early and later meetings with Mrs. Clay. From this point, the scenes-readings concerning Ann Rutledge are not returned to. Their meaning, which is the basis for the film/reading's subsequent development, is settled. The remainder of the film/reading develops the logic of Lincoln's castration, secured here. This logic reaches full realization in the trial scene, which is in turn the passageway to Lincoln's destiny and the nominal fulfillment of the film's ideological project.

The film's discourses and the inscription which presents-absents-conjoins them are studied not in themselves but in relation to the ideological project which they inscribe. The reading shows in great detail the many kinds and grades of relationship between the film's writing, its "relatively autonomous aesthetic process (characters, cinematic *signifiers*, narrative mode)" and its ideological project. Thus the film's digressive narrative mode permits and covers the film's first repression of politics by morality. The cinematic code for time-passing permits another ideological suppression, that of Lincoln's time of reflection concerning what to do, which reinforces its theme of predestination. The Hollywood code of the vigil before an ordeal permits suppression of a scene required by logic but forbidden by the film's hagiographic project. The film's writing also exposes and/or criticizes

its ideological project in a number of ways: the excessiveness of Lincoln's violence throughout, Lincoln's own castration, the film's cruel humor (Lincoln's hitting his opponents at their weakest points), Lincoln's lack of control over his destiny, his being the instrument of truth, etc.

"Young Mr. Lincoln" may be read as a critique of structuralism and as a realization of the theoretical critique of structuralism in the area of film criticism. So said Part I of this text and it is easy to show that this is true. The critique of interpretation in *Cahiers* 1(b) applies to practices of paradigmatic structuralism which claim "the kind of absolute knowledge of the exegetist blind to the (historical) ideological determination of his practice and his object-pretext." Section 1(c) critiques that mechanistic structuralism which dissects the object conceived of as a closed structure of discrete units. Section 7 criticizes setting up the film as the object of a reading and turning the film into a text which is readable a priori in favor of its own method of reading.

"Young Mr. Lincoln" realizes its theoretical critique of structuralism in its own film-reading practice. Just as defects of structuralism are correlative (see Part I of this text), so are the features of the *Cahiers* reading which overcome them. Proceeding from empiricist epistemology, structuralism constitutes the text as an object and itself as knowing subject vis-à-vis that object. The object-text may then be broken down into discrete units. The *Cahiers* method abolishes the division between the text studied and the discourse which studies. It mixes with the text studied in the ways discussed. As a consequence, it cannot divide the text into closed units for there is no secure position outside the object-text from which to do so. In mixing itself with the text studied, it necessarily breaks down the closure between the sections of the text studied, and between its own sections also.

Ben Brewster's article in the new *Screen* examines Metz's concept of the "singular textual system" in relation to the *Cahiers* study of *Young Mr. Lincoln*. The article sets out to show that the *Cahiers* analysis is a genuine reading and not merely a commentary, because it is a motivated reading rather than an arbitrary one. Brewster argues that the codes studied by Metz, produced by study of a large corpus of films and based on the methods of linquistics, are so general that they say very little about any particular film. The large codes analyzed by Metz have a codifying power that is so low as to be almost negligible. "Hence *in themselves* the cinematic codes implied in the film text are not capable of producing an unambiguous reader who would be able to provide an objective reading of a film text."

What Brewster proposes instead, following the later Metz, is the notion of a conjuncture of codes. "However, when we turn from the codes themselves to the singular textual system, i.e., to the application of the codes in a single film text, the ambiguity inherent in a secondary modelling system can be drastically reduced by the simple procedure of *doubling* (or trebling, quadrupling . . .) that code or system." Separately the codes have a low encoding value. Combined in a particular film, however, they reinforce each other, largely through redundancy, so that a principle of pertinence is established which regulates or guides the viewer's reading of the film. In this way the reading may be made non-arbitrary. "This codic doubling is by no means an unfamiliar phenomenon. It is what is known in linguistics as *motivation.*" Thus the principle of pertinence comes from inside the film, not from outside it. "[T]he motivation of the singular film text marks the pertinent codes, and indeed often first provides these signifying systems with a signified." It is this marking of pertinent codes which defines the implicit reader which Brewster has been seeking.

One problem remains. "The implicit reader is an ideal reader, one who completely conforms to the supposed intentions of the text. Lotman, however, has examined the effects of discrepancy between the text and its (concrete) reader, in particular . . . between the codes employed in the production of a text and those used in its

decipherment." A long quotation from Lotman provides a taxonomy of various relations between codes of production and codes of decipherment of artistic texts. From this passage, Brewster concludes:

> It follows that the critical approach to a text is a *reading* in that it both utilizes the codes it has in common with the producer of the text and produces new codes that may or may not have gone into the production of the text with the proviso that the "reading in" of codes is not arbitrary, because it is governed by the rule of pertinence established by the motivations, i.e., multiple codings, that the reading can establish in the text. The authors of *"Young Mr. Lincoln"* are right to insist that "we do not hesitate to force the text, even to rewrite it, insofar as the film only constitutes itself as a text by integration of the reader's knowledge."[9]

We note first that the problems discussed in Brewster's article are generated by the article itself. They are not problems internal to *"Young Mr. Lincoln."* They arise in the attempt to assimilate that study to a theoretical position other than its own. Brewster defends the *Cahiers* study through a Metzian analysis of its method of reading films. He thereby shows the compatibility of the two approaches and, in effect, appropriates the one to the other. Brewster's text specifies its Metzian position in its first paragraph, what might be called its own principle of pertinence in reading *"Young Mr. Lincoln."* It does not, however, justify its proposed reading by showing that it is implicit in the *Cahiers* text. The principle of pertinence is not organized by the text which is read, it is imposed from outside. Hence, in Brewster's own terms, his reading of *"Young Mr. Lincoln"* is arbitrary—it forces and rewrites the *Cahiers* text.

This rewriting is facilitated by Brewster's neglect of *Cahiers'* own statement of position, a massive omission since the latter is set forth at great length. (The reader can produce his/her own critique of Brewster by actively rereading at this point the long passages from *Cahiers* above.) Because he specifies his own position and skips the *Cahiers* position, Brewster is able to read his position directly into the *Cahiers* study, reduced for this purpose to an unfounded phenomenon in search of a theoretical anchor.

The principal question posed by Brewster asserts his position in the form of a question. Behind it lies a complex of unwritten questions, some asked and answered (the unspoken assumptions on which the question rests), some suppressed (alternative questions that might be asked). Brewster asks: Is the *Cahiers* study a genuine reading, because motivated, or merely a commentary, because unmotivated? The question combines two sets of oppositions. The opposition reading/commentary is taken from the *Cahiers* study. The opposition motivated/unmotivated (arbitrary) is taken from Metz. Brewster conjoins these questions in a way which equates them. This equation imposes a Metzian rewriting on *Cahiers,* for even if the latter's study is arbitrary, i.e., nonmotivated by the film itself, it is still not a commentary in the *Cahiers* sense. It does not distill an ideally constituted sense presented as the object's ultimate meaning; above all, it does not miss the reality of the inscription and does not substitute for it a discourse delineating the apparent main statement(s) of the film at a given time. Several passages of *"Young Mr. Lincoln"* make overt admissions of arbitrariness, but this is not the basis on which *Cahiers* distinguishes reading from commentary. Brewster's principal question is entirely systematic, that is, generated by his position. Rather than acknowledge this, however, he presents it as a problem within *"Young Mr. Lincoln"* itself. "[I]t is not so clear what distinguishes a reading which forces the text from the commentary which restates its meaning in an arbitrarily determined manner."

The *Cahiers* distinction between reading and commentary rests on its concepts of an active reading and of making the reading participate in the film's becoming-a-text. In considering the former, Brewster operates a disjuncture that is crucial for the entirety of his argument. "The intention of this 'active reading' is to make the film say what it has to say within what it leaves unsaid, to reveal its 'structuring absences.' This last theme I shall return to later in this paper: for the moment I want to discuss the problems of the notion of reading in general and of an 'active' reading in particular." Brewster puts

aside the question of structuring absences in order to consider the notions of reading and active reading. But in so doing he violates the *Cahiers* concept, indeed he obliterates it, for you cannot disjoin the *Cahiers* active reading from the structuring absences to which it relates what is present in the text, without utterly rewriting the concept. In separating these terms, Brewster opens up a space for the infusion of Metz—essentially he wants to redefine the concept of active reading in Metzian terms.

So far we have examined the problematic of Brewster's article and its strategy, how his posing of terms sets up the transformation of *"Young Mr. Lincoln"* under the cover of defending it. The balance of our analysis concerns the model of reading which Brewster develops and how this differs from the model proposed in the *Cahiers* study. The complex of differences between the two models may be grouped under the heading, empiricism vs. anti-empiricism, for the principal direction of Brewster's article is that of a regression from the ambitious, if imperfect, post-empiricism of the *Cahiers* analysis. The latter is no more reducible to an empiricist semiology than to an empiricist structuralism. Not surprisingly, we will find many of our criticisms of the latter (see Part I) recurring in new form in relation to Brewster's semiological model.

Brewster's article moves toward identification of the film's discourses and their interrelations. Thus, on page 38, Brewster arrives at a formula for *Young Mr. Lincoln:* the generic code of the early life of a great man is inversely motivated by the Fordian sub-code and the detective story plot (sub-code), which are themselves in parallel motivation. As noted above, the *Cahiers* study does a second and very important operation. It analyzes progressively how the film's discourses appear, disappear, join and disjoin, scene by scene. Brewster merely turns the film into a synchrony, identifies the film-wide codes, and expresses their interrelationships as monoliths. He "turns the film into a text which is readable a priori" and, of course, misses the reality of the inscription. But, as *Cahiers* argues, the truth of the film does not consist in the discourses which it speaks, but in the ways in which it presents, absents, hides, delays, transforms, and combines the discourses which speak it. Of course this operation is ideologically determined and is only revealed by an ideological analysis.

We note further that Brewster's method of reading turns the practice of the analyst into mere reproduction and representation, as opposed to the active, constitutive rewriting activity of the *Cahiers* model. Brewster's model of reading finally resembles, despite his disavowals, a semiotics of communication, concerned above all with the transmission of meaning. Hence his equation of reading with "decoding" and his paramount concern with non-arbitrary decoding, that is, with justifying one's reading entirely by the work itself. It is true that, using Lotman, he seems to come round to a more active, constitutive concept of reading. Indeed, he is required to do so by the *Cahiers'* "integration of the reader's knowledge," toward the naturalization of which within his own system, Brewster's article moves. But his bridging this gap is ambiguous at best and fishy at worst: because, in the last instance as well as the first, the text controls the reading. Even if the reading involves the production of new codes which have not entered into the production of the text, this production itself is required by and controlled by the text. Thus "the 'reading in' of codes is not arbitrary, because it is governed by a rule of pertinence established by the motivations, i.e., multiple codings, that the reading can establish in the text." Brewster moves from this sentence to affirmation of the *Cahiers* "forcing the text" and "even rewriting it," but he fails to bridge this gap as well. It is evident from the passages quoted above that *Cahiers* does not subject these concepts nor that of active reading to the pertinence principle established by the text. The *Cahiers* reading goes beyond the text, relating what is present to what is absent, thereby defining its own principles of pertinence. Brewster is concerned with the empirical reading imposed by the text, the reading to which the spectator is subjected: *Cahiers'* interest is not limited to this level.

Concerning this point, it is worth taking seri-

ously *Cahiers'* invocation of Derrida, particularly his concept of inscription. (Though it would be hasty to suppose that the *Cahiers* study has reconciled its diverse theoretical sources—Althusser, Derrida, Lacan, etc.) When the writer or film-maker is conceived as inscriber, that is, as mark-maker, rather than as encoder of a message, then the problem of an arbitrary versus a non-arbitrary reading recedes. This opposition and the model of encoding-transmission-decoding rest upon that essentialism of the sign which Derrida critiques. No longer does the sign contain or present a meaning or stand in for a meaning which is absent. If a text consists only of marks differed in space and deferred in time, then there can be no reading (and indeed no text) without integration of the reader's knowledge.

As noted before, the *Cahiers* study is based (in part) upon the Althusserian concept of a symptomatic reading, centering on the *absence* of problems and concepts within a problematic as much as their presence and seeking to relate the two. Such a reading leads, through the hole in the structure, to the non-asked questions, to the point where the inscription links the visible structure to the larger structure that encompasses it and determines it. There is a strong tendency in Brewster's article, and in empiricist analyses and models generally, to reduce all absences to presences, and thereby to eliminate all holes and gaps. Of course this is part of the empiricist tendency to reify the text as a static object and then to limit itself to analysis to this object. This is what Brewster does in reducing *Young Mr. Lincoln* to the formula mentioned above. First, all aspects of the film are expressed as positivities; second, the relations among these, and therefore the whole of the film, are expressed as a relation among simple positivities. Thus Brewster's "inverse" and "parallel" motivations, which function as simple plus and minus signs in relating film-wide codes. Aside from other defects, this is an alarming reduction and simplification of complex texts such as films. It also tends to undermine the concept of "singular textual system" as Brewster presents it, for its coding value hardly avoids that generality of extra-filmic codes which the article set out to correct, a result Brewster exploits (see below).

Most alarming of all is Brewster's tendency to reduce ideology itself to a simple positivity, which can be identified and related to other positivities within the film object. Brewster does this, among other ways, by identifying the ideology of *Young Mr. Lincoln* as that of the Hayes-Tilden compromise of 1876. (Peter Wollen also empiricizes ideology in his "Afterword" to the *Young Mr. Lincoln* piece.) Besides committing all the errors of empiricism mentioned above, this removes the sting from ideology by turning it into a simple knowledge that the film merely reproduces and conveniently puts on view for all to see. This turns the film itself into a simple positivity, whose parts may be analyzed and understood perfectly. Like every empirical analysis, however, this leaves the most important questions unanswered. Why was the film itself produced? Why did it include these discourses and leave out others? Why did it combine and inscribe the discourses chosen in the way that it did? If it is ever possible or useful to identify ideology as a simple positivity or text, such as the Hayes-Tilden ideology, then it remains necessary to analyze that *ideological operation* which produces this presence in a particular film, presents it in particular ways, and relates it to other presences. Its specific ideological texts are in truth merely phenomena that are manipulated by the film's ideological operation for its own ends. There can be no adequate analysis based upon such phenomena alone; the ideology which such positivities speak must be uncovered. Thus (need one say it?), the Hayes-Tilden compromise has no permanent or essential meaning. Everything depends upon why, how, and in what context it is spoken. Ideology in the controlling sense is thus the tutor code of the particular ideological texts which speak it. What must be studied is ideology at work in the text, as well as outside it. This is what *"Young Mr. Lincoln"* attempts to do. Thus the film's repression of politics by morality is not a simple fact or datum or positivity. Nor is it a text. It is "a repression

which cannot be indicated once and for all and left at that but rather has to be written into the constantly renewed process of its repression."

Brewster's reduction of ideology to a datum has another important consequence, which is culminated in the article's last paragraph. Identification of the film's ideology as that of the Hayes-Tilden compromise reveals at the same time that many films (including Griffith's) share this ideology. The comparison with Griffith reveals also that *Young Mr. Lincoln's* future anterior structure is not as important as the *Cahiers* analysis supposed, as Griffith's *Abraham Lincoln* carries its hero through political events, yet its ideology is similar to that of *Young Mr. Lincoln.* Brewster concludes:

"It follows from these two points that the generic code (the youth of the hero) and its specific ideological motivation in this film text (the ideology of the Hayes-Tilden compromise) are much less specific to the text and probably to the political conjuncture of its production than the *Cahiers* analysis suggests. Inversely, the 'cracks'—the inverse motivations—are due to the interaction of these very broad sub-codes with the Fordian sub-code—the textual system constituted by Ford's films—and hence this system/code is of more importance than the *Cahiers* analysis implies. *'Young Mr. Lincoln'* thus seems to confirm the intuition, if not the theory and method, of author criticism. The authorial system/code remains a crucial element in the analysis of the American cinema."[10]

Brewster's conclusion is a shock. One is astonished that this is what Brewster's analysis has led to, the return of the author. Nothing has prepared one for this. One immediately goes back to determine the steps that led up to this. This conclusion, in relation to which everything before must be reconsidered, requires an entirely different reading of the article. In retrospect it seems that Brewster's analysis has weakened *both* the Metzian position and that of *"Young Mr. Lincoln"* and that the surprise beneficiary of this double collapse is—the author. While apparently pursuing a Metzian inquiry, Brewster has considerably diluted the effective importance of the Metzian system by showing it of little use in dealing with particular films. Thus he does not undermine the premises of Metzism nor otherwise attack it directly. He affirms his loyalty at the same time as he hollows out its real importance, turns it into a shell. We have seen how Brewster's analysis results in a flattened, denatured *"Young Mr. Lincoln."* The process whereby the latter was systematically reduced to three codes may now be understood as a careful pre-adapting. The nominal project of integrating Metzism reduced to a shell with a denatured *"Young Mr. Lincoln"* sets up the mutual collapse which Brewster's text has engineered. It remains only, through some historical logical manipulation, to explode two of the three remaining codes to a useless generality, to complete the coup. A carefully built house of cards collapses abruptly; what remains is the author.

Brewster's article must be considered as theoretical and ideological preparation for its eventuation, rearrival of the author, revival of auteur criticism. In this light, Brewster's text plays agent provocateur or just plain saboteur. It is the double agent who has entered the capital where two powerful factions contend and, professing loyalty, undermines both groups in order to prepare the way for that personage whom no one expected, the man on the white horse, the man of destiny, the author. Depleted, weakened from battle, both sides capitulate to the strong man who stands ready to relieve them of their duties: a surprising and decidedly premature reappearance of the author.

Sam Rohdie's editorial takes up the chant.

That process makes the generic codes and their motivations appear less specific to *Young Mr. Lincoln* than the Fordian sub-code. As Ben Brewster points out, this is an affirmation in part of the procedures of author criticism.

Brewster's conclusion gives added relevance to Ed Buscombe's account of author theory and Stephen Heath's comments, particularly Heath's call for a theory of the subject. Ben Brewster indicated the Fordian sub-code as one among a number which intersect within the text and structure the activity of the text. If author criticism is confirmed thereby it is confirmation of an authorial system/code as an element, often crucial, in the work of the text. It is not a confirmation of the ideological construct of the author as punctual source,

creator. The concept of text developed by Brewster and Heath in this number is pivotal for a theory of the subject which will displace rather than re-anchor traditional notions.[11]

Fortunately Stephen Heath has not lost his head amidst rumors of palace revolution. His "call for a theory of the subject" has nothing to do with the *return* of the subject. It is instead the distinctly different operation of specifying the lowest order of discursive regularity. Discourse produces a subject to speak itself and this production is regulated by ideology. But this has nothing whatever to do with author criticism.

Brewster's "confirmation of the intuition of author criticism" and Rohdie's "affirmation in part of the procedures of author criticism" are misrecognitions based upon and produced by a misreading of the *Cahiers* text. This much the present text has established. But larger issues are involved in these claims, which will require further discussion.

NOTES

1. "John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln,* a collective text by the Editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma,*" translated by Helene Lackner and Diana Matias, *Screen,* v. 13 n. 3, Autumn 1972, page 5; "Notes on the Text 'John Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln*' by the Editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*" by Ben Brewster, *Screen,* v. 14 n. 3, Autumn 1973, page 29.
2. "John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln,*" pp. 5–6.
3. Ibid., p. 8.
4. Ibid., pp. 13–14.
5. Ibid., pp. 20–21.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 14.
8. Ibid., pp. 30–31.
9. Brewster, op. cit., pp. 36–37.
10. Ibid., p. 41.
11. *Screen,* v. 14 n. 3, Autumn 1973, p. 3.

Reviews

PAYDAY

Director: Daryl Duke. Producers: Martin Fink and Ralph J. Gleason. Script: Don Carpenter. Cinerama Releasing Corp.

We are in the backseat of Maury Dann's limousine, in what is ostensibly a road film shot entirely on location in the Deep South, namely Alabama. It is on that backseat within the space of twenty-four hours, more or less, that Maury, the on-the-road country-western singer, gets laid twice, drinks Dr. Peppers and booze, pops pills, smokes grass, and—within five feet of it—dies. Whenever he climbs out of that backseat, it is usually only to go into a club to do a gig, into a restaurant to eat, into a radio station to plug his records on the air, or into motel rooms to get laid, drink Dr. Peppers and booze, pop pills, and smoke grass some more. Once he also gets out to go quail-hunting. Another time he does get out of the backseat long enough to almost-write a song; twice he gets out to visit the neat bungalow of his estranged wife—the latter actions framing the former and preventing the completion of it.

For the most part, then, the film is not a road film at all, but a backseat film; we are nearly always looking back through the glass partition, as it were, at Maury, or covertly watching him in the rearview mirror along with his driver and "chief cook and bottle-washer" Chicago. (Indeed, it is one of the few American film cars which we ride inside rather than on the hood.) Whenever Maury wants to reach out of his luxurious glass, steel, and leather box, he need only dial the mobile phone or press a button to let down the windows. Then he can fire his reckless pistol shots at the passing, indifferent landscape. Otherwise it is just around him, this landscape he is speeding through at 90 mph, the landscape of the South, his home, on our mind as viewers as it is not on Maury's because we are watching the film and he's not. Even when we finally see him plowing through that same landscape, he still does not see it because he is dead of a stroke at the wheel. The car, its momentum lost, comes to a halt, and the upstart from Biloxi opens Maury's door, at last allowing him to drop out in the only way he can.

So the center of gravity of the film is not really the Deep South but the backseat of Maury Dann's Caddie, and the world — cops and groupies and hangers-on and country-western aspirants—is drawn to it. Everyone wants to ride on that plush backseat: the girl from the hicktown dime-store; the state cop who wants his banjo-playing brother-in-law to make it, apparently so that the two of them might exchange their patrol cars for a Caddie just like Maury's; the upstart from Biloxi who joyously graduates from behind the wheel of his customized Chevy to behind the wheel of Maury's Caddie finally to the backseat of Maury's Caddie (only to wind up getting his head battered and ribs cracked for his troubles). Even the quail-hunting excursion is not an escape; they ride to and from the hunt in the Caddie, and while they hunt Chicago waits back at the car, the radio, Dr. Pepper, and motor all still running.

If someone happens to get himself kicked out of the backseat of the car, he still does not start walking through any Southern landscapes; rather, he starts thumbing for another ride. When Maury's discarded chick, asked where she is going by the guy who picks her up in his own shiny new car, says, "I don't give a fuck," we know just where she is going—another motel, another bed, another one-night stand with the car, its engine hardly cooled, always ready and waiting right outside the door. In terms of the mentality exemplified by Maury's backseat, we're all traveling salesmen now, the hustlers and the hustled. The landscape is simply a place to drive through, and whenever, back in the backseat, you get bored with it or bullshit at it like Maury, you can always pop another pill into your mouth, or another cartridge into the cassette-player, or your libido into someone else's circuitry. It is a film in which all action is measured in terms of the distance by which it may remove Maury from his coveted backseat, so much so that Chicago willingly takes the rap for Maury's knifing a man in a scuffle outside a restaurant.

We as viewers, then, are the only ones aware of that Southern landscape (the Weatherwaxes, a numerous and more homey country-western group, travel through it in a bus), and we have this awareness because we are made to want the fiction that this is a particular film about a particular type (moneyed rednecks) indigenous to a particular region (the moral and social backwater that is the American South)—only that and nothing more. What makes us want such a fiction is a subject for sociologists and social historians. So far as the film *Payday* is concerned, however, what we eventually should be struck by as we watch that landscape slip past (even if we have been told by the reviewers that it is indeed Alabama, home of George Wallace and another Sheriff Connors, the late "Bull" Connors), is the tremendous sameness of it all —not the sameness of the land, but the sameness of the road wherever in America we ourselves happen to come from.

The American road is not open any longer; it has all been parcelled out and franchised off by Holiday Inns and MacDonalds, Howard Johnsons and Colonel Sanders, national oil companies and state highway departments. (And yet we wonder why Antonioni, an outsider looking for his own America, found it necessary imaginatively to dress up the landscape of Los Angeles for *Zabriskie Point.*) If people prefer riding in Maury's Caddie, it is because the road itself is so damn boring. We do not get out and walk because from the highway there is nothing to see that we have not seen before, or—because of films shot on location—could not imagine if we had to. Even if, like Maury, you get off the pavement onto the dirt, all you find is the old homestead with a new coat of sickly green paint, probably from the Sears Great American Homes Selection, and not even the wolf in grandma's bed but grandma herself, and, as it turns out, she isn't even grandma but your very own 51-year-old ma, and she's popping them too. (Maury dispenses the multi-colored capsules to her like Jack giving his mom the magic beans; who today needs a beanstalk to get high and rich?)

Some, we might argue, are saved from *Payday's* backseat world. You can, after all, be like Bill who buys an underfed dog from Maury and winds up being fired (exiled from the backseat) for his kindness. But how effective is such altruism in the world which we see throughout the film? For one thing, you cannot walk that dog, at least not with all the cars on the highway nowadays. While we do not see what becomes of Bill and the dog, yet we would have to assume that he too finally had to thumb a ride back to town. And if he should try to walk that dog on a nice, dirt country road one fine day, he might very likely run into some other fool like Maury Dann fishtailing down it in his hurry to get from nowhere to nowhere.

When, at the end of the film, Maury ends that wild ride, his Caddie leaving the road to smash across a field, everyone—we as viewers and the kid from Biloxi who is being bounced around in the backseat now—is justified in anxiously wondering when and how the car is going to stop—everyone except Maury, that is, who sits dead at the wheel and does not have to care anymore. And when the kid, his head bloodied and bruised, goes running across the field in that last lingering long-shot, we might think that he is hightailing it back to his own homespun past; but we ought to know that the minute he hits the highway his thumb is going to go up like the flag on an off-duty cab. We should not forget, however, that somewhere in the wreck of that over-sized car, its engine steaming like a spent beast pushed too fast and too hard, is Chicago's "non-sticky frypan," the kind like grandma used to use before the wolf got her. Nor should we forget that the film *Payday,* so "real" with its location-shooting and the real names of real people—Johnny Cash, Buck Owens—dropping all over these actual places—Birmingham, Nashville—feeds us all our sticky fictions to make us taste their ingredients.

If *Payday* is saying and doing all this (and let me be careful to say, avoiding the intentional fallacy, that I frankly am well aware that such may not be what its producers wanted it to say and do), then we are also justified in asking whether the film does not simply substitute one

fiction for another, replacing the on-the-spot myth of the degenerate South with a more subtly developed myth of a degenerate America. Maury talks of an earlier tour through Southern California, and their plans are to go up through the northeast after Nashville. Implicitly the film forces us to ask ourselves whether or not things would be or look any different, whatever the locale. Perhaps, though, since an entire region or nation (despite the generalizations peddled by the mass media) seldom makes myths collectively, and since the land itself—rocks, trees, earth—never makes a myth, *Payday* only carries to their inevitable conclusion the self-degenerative myths of one Maury Dann—which leaves us nowhere we haven't been before or couldn't find again if we had to. In the backyard of our forebrain, Maury Dann's Caddie waits just around the corner for most of us, the bar well stocked, the cooler loaded, the pep pills hidden in the guitar case, the motor revving (Jay Gatsby's return), and if old Walt Whitman himself didn't arrange the easy-auto-payment-plan, he at least put the salesman on to us.

Maury Dann *is* a redneck on the make: it *is* the country-western scene: the camera *does* show us Alabama. Finally, though, none of that makes any difference, and a film which purports to be using the fiction of the where-it's-at (a fiction only the film can employ so mightily) is ultimately dealing with the fiction of the what-it's-about. And what *Payday* is about is not the failings of styles of life in Alabama, nor in the South, nor in America, but in an individual caught in the destructive patterns of behavior fostered by his own myopic vision. And the film, I feel, uses our own myopia as viewers to make us see, playing upon our preconditioned responses to a film shot on location and on a topical matter. There is just one time in the film when those two fictions rub against and cancel each other out; but the result is a "location" far less pleasant and perhaps more real than anywhere else in *Payday's* world. Maury makes a credit-card call from his motel-modern suite—the machine lets him down: for some reason (it is not made clear) the call does not connect. For a moment, before he gives the TV and radio a try, Maury is alone without his gadgets and his booze and his pills and his broads, without the comforts so easily supplied on that plush backseat: nor is he within the motel's close brick walls, any more than he will be within the soothing lie of the hunt's return-to-nature the next morning. The point is, we as viewers ought to be alone with him, for our own moment without the comforts which our buying the fictions provides: that this is, after all, just a movie, just a story, and, insofar as it might be "real," is about the South and southerners anyhow.

At that moment in the film, a shadowy medium close-up of Rip Torn, who plays Maury, made me think, "If I were him [Rip Torn, Maury Dann, what's the difference?] watching this, I'd be thinking I was getting very old and very tired." Such is more than just great film acting which makes all fictions so strong by giving them such immediately close and huge visibility—it is giving us, content with our own illusions, the wholly personal nightmare, whatever its source, beneath the enlargement of the fictive myth, whatever its locale and time. To conclude on what is finally only another fiction, the film ought to return to haunt us. Like *Bonnie and Clyde, Payday* tells us how we can turn into nightmares dreams we only dreamt anyhow. But that was in another country, and it is not the American South no matter what the camera and reviewers tell us. —RUSSELL E. MURPHY

BANG THE DRUM SLOWLY

Director: John Hancock. Script: Mark Harris, from his novel Photography: Richard Shore. Music: Stephan Lawrenz. Paramount.

Certain mediocre movies are more interesting for the large-scale response they inspire than for anything in the movies themselves. To my considerable surprise, the soft, mousy *Bang the Drum Slowly*, with its calculated naiveté and sentiment and its small, tentative humor, has received the most ostentatiously warm-hearted reviews of any movie to open in New York this year, and audiences seem to be responding in kind. To be sure, critics occasionally like to re-

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lax and reconcile themselves with those readers who complain of nastiness, coldness, and over-intellectual judgements, and everyone likes to cry a bit. But why *this* movie? And why such extravagant praise? Is there something in the response that hasn't been made as explicit as it should be?

Bang the Drum Slowly is still another of those chaste but emotionally charged male love stories in which a strong, resilient man nurses a weaker partner, slowing his inevitable slide toward disaster. Similar in theme to *Midnight Cowboy* and *Scarecrow*, this movie carries an even heavier load of automatic sentiment, for the loser-victim is not an obscure down-and-outer but a young baseball player dying of Hodgkin's disease in the middle of his first decent season. Could anyone imagine a situation better rigged for easy, unearned pathos?

Mark Harris's screenplay, adapted from his 1956 novel, makes little sense as narrative and even less as would-be moral instruction. First we must accept on faith an invincible friendship between two entirely dissimilar men: Henry Wiggen (Michael Moriarty), star of "The New York Mammoths," a glamorous, intelligent young pitcher of the Bouton/Seaver variety who sells insurance, writes books, and will always have it made; and his catcher and roommate, Bruce Pearson (Robert De Niro), an affectionate but alarmingly dumb, tobacco-chewing hick from Georgia, a man helpless in life, erratic on the field, and now mysteriously dying as well. The entire movie turns on Wiggen's concern for Pearson's welfare, but we never know why he's drawn to this man in the first place. Perhaps audiences are moved, in part, because the film touches buried levels of wonder and sentiment: the relationship between the men evokes the awesome mysteries of school or summer camp friendships in which an older, popular boy would inexplicably make a young outsider, a loser, his personal favorite, protecting him against bullies. As kids we never questioned such attachments. As adults, looking at other adults, we might wonder about the motives of the stronger man. Vanity? Love of power? Repressed homosexuality? These are some of the nasty but hardly unusual realities of the moral life that an artist of normal curiosity might consider, even if he intended to dismiss them or mix them with predominantly "good" motives. But for Harris, as far as we can make out, Wiggen's concern is entirely selfless; Pearson simply *needs* him.

Even if we accept Wiggen as an angel of mercy, the story doesn't hang together. He goes to fantastic lengths to prevent the Mammoth's irascible manager from learning of his friend's disease, and to stop his teammates from ragging a man they don't realize is dying. His obsessions consume scene after scene, but they're red herrings since (a) the manager continues to play Pearson anyway after he hears of the illness, and (b) ragging in sports is as much a sign of affection as of malice, and nothing could be more patronizing or isolating than protecting someone from it. Wiggen even arranges Pearson's sex life, heading off an ambitious prostitute who wants to get her hands on the dying man's money. We recognize the familiar fantasy structure of the buddy-buddy movie: women, usually poisonous or whorey or both, must not be allowed to intrude on the male relationships. But does Harris realize he's asking us to admire a *sanctimonious* angel of mercy?

In a piece for *The New York Times*, Jim Bouton, an intelligent man, has written that "Basically, *Bang the Drum Slowly* . . . is a story about a marginal catcher named Bruce Pearson, the butt of everyone's jokes, who suddenly becomes one of the boys when his teammates discover that he might die at any moment from a rare disease." But this is *not* what the film is about, and in misstatements like this, one sees the basis of the film's appeal. Wiggen, not Pearson, is the center of the movie and its true subject. The dying man, merely the passive object of Wiggen's goodness, has only a few scenes and remains an utter stranger to the audience to the end. With tobacco spittle hanging from his lips, his hair slicked up in a foul pompadour, Robert De Niro is physically impressive as a graceless, out-of-it, back-country athlete (De Niro studied for the part by traveling with a minor league team and at times he appears to be playing a man too dumb to catch in the

majors), but unfortunately he ducks his head away from the camera and never fully opens those dark, mean little eyes, so we can't see what's going on inside the character or even begin to identify. The performance is almost perversely unattractive and selfless. By contrast, Michael Moriarty's wide-open, mock-innocent, blandly ironic blue eyes and conventional good looks hold the camera interminably through scene after scene. Our intended response can only be admiration for Wiggen's intelligence, his guile, his coolly insolent humor, and so forth. It's a relaxed, subtly dominating performance. I think it's precisely this shift in attention from the proletarian slob-loser to the successful athlete-intellectual that accounts for the extravagant emotional response of critics and East Side audiences. Wiggen is their man for all seasons, a perfect fantasy of how they would act in the same situation; through him they can admire their own compassion and generosity—qualities made even more exquisite and self-satisfying in this case because they are directed towards a failing creature who isn't very appealing.

Indeed, I had the same uneasy feeling at *Bang the Drum Slowly* as I did at *Love Story* when people began weeping on cue over the death of Ali McGraw's supercilious bitch. Could they really have cared for her? I doubted it. Why the crying, then? I suppose because we flatter ourselves with tears; no one wants to appear emotionally dead, least of all to himself. But let's make this basic distinction: an honest tear-jerker like *Captains Courageous* or *How Green Was My Valley* moves us by glorifying a good man who dies or a tragic way of life; our emotions, however sloppy, as least flow outwards towards some worthy object; dishonest tear-jerkers induce us to cry for ourselves, they induce self-admiration and self-pity.

American sports movies used to be strenuous and exhortatory, even patriotic; success in sports was seen as paradigmatic of America's success as a country—at war, in business, anywhere. In line with the anti-mythic, anti-heroic mood of recent years, *Bang the Drum Slowly* lets the hot air out of the "National Pastime." It's a modern

Michael Moriarty and Robert De Niro in BANG THE DRUM SLOWLY.

film—the aging, unshaven relief pitcher yawns and scratches himself during the singing of the National Anthem. Yet the anti-heroism doesn't take the form one might expect—an exposé of the grittiness of baseball life (as in Bouton's book, *Ball Four*). Instead the game is simply reduced in physical and emotional scale. Harris and director John Hancock have successfully captured the special melancholia of baseball—the tedium of the long season; the sad empty ballparks and rained-out days; the infantilism of men without women. But the mood of resignation and gentleness goes too far, becoming sickly, morbid about personal slights, wanly "sensitive."

It's as if there were something inherently wrong with the competitive swagger and heroic spirit of sports. The actors are mostly too small and cuddly looking (I realize it's a low-budget movie, but since when did large actors cost more?), and Hancock shoots much of the on-field action in slow motion, which, as Andrew Sarris has pointed out, aestheticizes the game in a way that violates its nature, draining it of violence and danger. Baseball, after all, is not as tediously "beautiful" as the Olympic Games (thank God). As I worked on this review the Reds and Mets were struggling through the pennant play-offs, a series which included pitchers throwing at batters' heads, a fistfight, a general melée involving both teams, and a near-riot by New York fans. Baseball has a long and honorable tradition of rowdyism; anyone who has

spent time in a major-league dressing room, even as observer or journalist, knows that ballplayers aren't sweet fellows, that their solidarity and affection for one another is likely to take the form of lunatic pranks. Asking them to stop "ragging" because a man is ill or because we are all mortal and therefore should be nice to one another is not the life-enhancing impulse that Harris implies it is; if anything, it's the opposite.

Perhaps Harris and Hancock calculated that the post-Vietnam art-house audience *needed* this diminution of American heroism and physical force. In his updating of the book, Harris includes several references to Vietnam, as if to say *"That's* what happens to American boys when they get overly competitive and violent." Yet his baseball is so feeble that it's hardly a moral equivalent to war, and anyway, without its violence and anger sports would cease to interest most of us for very long. One wonders how this inappropriately soft view of baseball will go over with the mass audience.

Can this really be a movie with a *sports* setting? Apart from the baseball ballet on field *Bang the Drum Slowly* has virtually no movement or flow, narrative or pictorial energy. The actors sit stock still and talk slowly, imprisoned in flat, unresonant, super-tight close-ups; most of the film is as banal in style as an afternoon soap opera.

Because of the phlegmatic TV-drama ambience we may be puzzled by the quasi-absurdist turns in the script. In the first scene with Vincent Gardenia (as the exasperated manager) the over-tight close-ups don't allow the comic declamation to claim any space, and comedy needs space, it doesn't play in tight. At first we may think that the character is putting us on, a deception that the close-ups are designed to penetrate, but in fact the director has simply miscalculated the scene. Gardenia has an accurate and funny manager's walk — hands in back pockets, gut thrust out—and his blazing hawk's eye and general irascibility evoke Edward G. Robinson and occasionally Zero Mostel. But he's badly used. The tirades Harris has written for him fluctuate between Casey Stengel surrealism and ordinary Jewish monologue humor, Catskills division, and we never do get a handle on the character. There are repeated gags, like Gardenia's tossing a burning cigaret into a toilet (we hear the sizzle) that are too cheap to use more than once, and some aimless caricaturing at sub-TV level (e.g., the blonde-bitch club owner and her sycophantic assistant) that should have been thrown out altogether. I suspect the comedy is inconsistent and scattered because it's not intended to make any satirical point, but only to distract us from the dismal pathos of the story.

Hancock is mainly a New York theater man (his only previous feature: *Let's Scare Jessica to Death*), and he may improve with experience. To be fair, there are some very simple images that will stay in memory: the credits sequence of the two men loping around the outfield green, which establishes an appropriate mood of pastoral friendship; a slow pan across the players' faces—bored, sleepy, forgetful—as they sing the National Anthem on opening day; and best of all, a single, long-lasting shot of Wiggen, Pearson and other players performing an asinine pop song on television that becomes increasingly hilarious and sad as Pearson—forever the tool —tries to dance but can't stay in rhythm. This intimation of what might have been—a comic elegy for a man who could do no right—makes us regret all the more the smug tearjerker we have before us now. —DAVID DENBY

THE WHITE-HAIRED GIRL
A MODERN REVOLUTIONARY BALLET

Staged by "The White-Haired Girl" Ballet Troupe of the Shanghai Dancing School.

During the period of the War of Resistance against Japan, in a North China village, poor peasant Yang Pai-lao and his daughter, Hsi-erh are preparing for the New Year. The grasping landlord Huang Shih-jen, a traitor and despot, comes to demand the payment of debts. But when Yang resists, he is finally beaten to death, and Hsi-erh is seized by the landlord. Filled with class hatred, her sweetheart Wang Ta-chun, a young neighbor of a poor peasant family, leaves the village to join the Eighth Route Army led by the Chinese Communist Party. Hsi-erh is ill used in the home of the

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Huangs, and flees into the mountains. Although she suffers from constant hunger and numerous hardships and her hair turns white, she harbors an increasing passion for revenge. Later, the Eighth Route Army unit to which Ta-chun belongs arrives at the village and begins arousing the masses to expose and punish traitors and local despots. Huang, the rotten landlord, who has been guilty of enormous crimes, is sentenced to death and Ta-chun finds Hsi-erh who returns to the village and joins the Eighth Route Army. She takes up arms, determined to liberate other oppressed people and carry the revolution through to the end, under the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Communist Party.

The political development in China, from the first stages of nationalism (1912) through the first Communist Party Congress incorporating the Yennan way or agrarian land reform (1921) and through later protracted guerrilla warfare, to final victory in 1949, is the most astounding political event of modern times. The odds against which all this actually occurred make a technologically overdeveloped people like ourselves awestruck. These achievements, plus the fact that hundreds of millions have been fed, clothed, and made well for 20 years, at the least justify serious study: they make Maoist theory and practice appear the best-tested tools for creating social change tried in the world to date. The films we have seen from China, however, promote an inflated idealist image in no way reflecting Chinese revolutionary praxis.

The White-Haired Girl, a revolutionary ballet filmed from a stage production, is the third Communist Chinese feature film the U.S. has seen. *The East Is Red,* a sort of political light opera film, reached us in 1970, followed by *Red Detachment of Women,* a ballet film first shown at the San Francisco Festival in 1972. Thus we have now had some glimpse of what the Chinese call revolutionary ballet, and of the impact of Chiang Ching (Madame Mao) on the Cultural Revolution. As far as is known, since 1967 no dramatic feature films have been produced in China.

Prior to the Cultural Revolution the old-style Peking Opera existed side by side with the 20-year-old Ballet Theatre which was based on Soviet-style ballet. These have now been modified, revised, and integrated. The composite result is ballet in which they have done away with the soft Russian wrists and replaced them with fists; conventional balletic grace is gone, in favor of attitudes of heroic resistance.

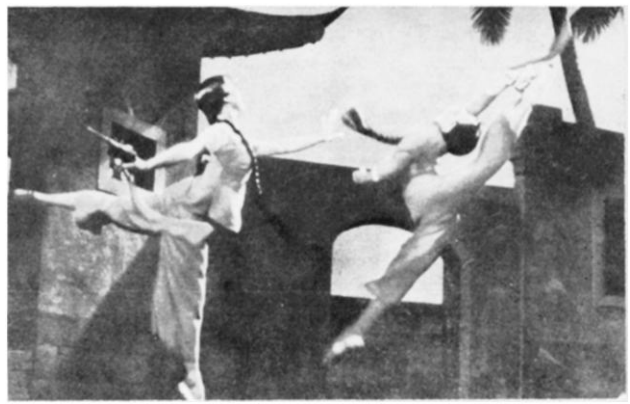
This is not merely a technical or stylistic (*or* political) evolution. It poses complex problems.

First we cannot help but notice that, compared say to the Kirov Ballet company (from which Nureyev defected) the Shanghai Dance Group is limited in its balletic vocabulary. Heroic defiant poses with fists, extended arabesques with strong arms ready to fight, are treated very simply. There are none of the broken lines of movement for torso, leg, or arm which modern dance (and even ballet) has used to express complex thoughts and feelings.

But this does *not* mean that such thoughts and feelings are avoided. When the story requires description of the feelings of the characters, it is the sound track that is relied on to indicate what's going on. Thus, at almost every dramatic point of perception (when the peasant becomes aware of the struggle, when the soldier recognizes his task, when the peasants and workers unite) another variation of the familiar slogan-song "The East Is Red" is played—perhaps 15 such variations in the course of the film (all with western Viennese-style orchestration, incidentally). At other moments heroic dances are accompanied by heroic off-stage singers.

This is curiously regressive. Chinese opera, whatever its class biases, combined the voice and the body into one performer who sang, acted, and moved (acrobatically too). In this new ballet the dancer is a mute emoter, sometimes almost a puppet to the sound track.

Chinese ballet: THE RED DETACHMENT OF WOMEN.



Nor is there progress in filmic treatment. In *Red Detachment of Women,* though the clash of naturalistic and stylized forms tended to knock the viewer out of the film, there was some attempt at a smooth juxtaposition of long shots, close-ups, mid shots. In *White-Haired Girl* no such pains are taken. Mid shots cut off the heads of the dancers. Cutting from shot to shot is often abrupt and awkward. Super-close-ups of the made-up heroes' faces, with wide smiling red lips and almost hysterical expressions of revolutionary zeal, excite laughter rather than involvement. The simplification of the ballet and the clumsiness of the camera combine to produce neither a ballet story nor a filmic story, but rather a programmatic series of images.

It seems likely that, as Jay Leyda intimates in *Dianying,* it is panic fright on the part of the film-makers that has led to this awkward and unimaginative use of the camera as a timid recorder of stage performances. At any rate these films show no trace of the indigenous cinematic talent Leyda noted in Chinese film-making of the early sixties.

Mao said: "Learn from the old and incorporate in the new."

But on closer inspection, this does not seem to be what has been happening.

The legend of *The White-Haired Girl* originated in the liberated area of northwest Hopei, circa 1938. The legend persisted after the area had been liberated by the Eighth Route Army and in 1944 was turned into a dramatic opera by the Lu Hsun Art Academy in Yenan. In 1950 it was made into a scripted movie using naturalistic action. Jay Leyda said privately to me, although I cannot verify it, that a Japanese ballet company performed a version of *The White-Haired Girl* in China and the Chinese recognized the advantages in doing their own version of the story in ballet. The original story included parental suicide, rape by a landlord, pregnancy and birth in the mountains. The 1950 film showed the young servant raped, later pregnant, and the child dead at birth. The current ballet-movie has no rape, no child. Of course it is easy to tell the "true legend" in a verbalized tale but it would be a little difficult when working the storyline for stage presentation to have a pregnant ballerina.

When Chiang Ching invaded the cultural field in 1964, two years prior to the Cultural Revolution, she criticized the feudal stories concerned with imperial personages which were the subject of the old-style Chinese Opera. One curious contradiction of this period is that Liu Shao-ch'i, now considered a "capitalist roader," followed the Russian bureaucratic line of party and industrial organization yet rejected ballet—perhaps because ballet had more roots in the court of the Czars than in the factories of Petrograd. On the other hand Chiang Ching sided with Lin Piao in the first stages of the Cultural Revolution which eventually created democratic revolutionary committees opposing the bureaucratic party structure—yet supported ballet, a dance form created specifically for the court of Louis XIV. She insisted that a revised ballet *could* be revolutionary.

What do we make of origins? Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao, Fidel, Che, and other revolutionaries have come from the upper or middle classes: they transformed themselves by "betraying" their class. (Conversely, if all persons of working-class origins were revolutionaries, the world would look much different than it does.)

But this principle does *not* apply to forms, which are essentially class phenomena. The use of ballet in China thus cannot "betray" its origins. Ballet, as it exists in these films, belies the existence of a socialist nation composed 80% of farm workers who hardly ever stand on point and rarely pirouette in the rice fields. There might someday be reflection of work movements in ballet; but the form as it historically arose was designed precisely to deny the labor of movement.

A puzzling contradiction: ballet slippers and peasants.

One sideline idea: bound feet were outlawed in China when the Revolution came, in 1949. Bound feet had been fetishized (sexually, not materially) and the slippered feet of the ballerina at work thus may have an important cultural echo and attraction.

Another idea, more central: all over China, on every large building or plaza, you see enormous pictures of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin (plus a white statue of Mao) and this is a reminder of something basic: the Chinese have adopted the Stalinist period of Soviet Communism as a model, even though their own revolution was based upon the peasantry and not the industrial working class. Besides hatred of later Soviet "revisionism," this has meant the enshrining of socialist realism in art—to the horror of western-educated Marxist-Leninists—and a kind of fixation on the cultural Soviet past, which is seen as all that can be trusted from non-Chinese sources.

But the Chinese are not intent upon the hectic developments in Soviet artistic circles that immediately followed the Revolution: Mayakovsky, Meyerhold in theater, El Lizitsky in architecture, Kuleshov, Dziga-Vertov, Eisenstein, Pudovkin in film. (Not to mention their counterparts in the West: among them Piscator, Brecht.) Nor do they draw upon their own great writer Lu Hsun, a critic of bourgeois society active prior to the Cultural Revolution. Instead, what the Chinese seem to be re-living is the capping and taming of these developments that followed Stalin's rise to power: the setting up of Stanislavsky's naturalistic Moscow Art Theatre as the model for the stage, the condemnation of "formalist" experiments in favor of traditional narrative and dramatic forms but with "socialist" moral endings. Officially, the Chinese define socialist realism as a combination of revolutionary Chinese idealism and Soviet realism. Yet the works produced, like *The White-Haired Girl* and *Red Detachment of Women*, seem neither revolutionary nor realistic; they are, in fact, reminiscent of the worst John-Wayne gung-ho Hollywood fare on the one hand, and the worst Soviet new-man mythology on the other.

George Lukacs, in his early criticism of socialist realism:

"On the one hand, the immense strides made by Socialist economy, the rapid extension of proletarian democracy, the emergence of great numbers of dynamic personalities from the masses and the growth of proletarian humanism in the praxis of workers and their leaders are having an important and revolutionary influence on the consciousness of the most outstanding intellectuals of the capitalist world. Conversely, we are witness to the fact that our Soviet literature has not yet gone beyond the lingering traditions of the decadent bourgeoisie that stand in the way of its development."

How come the Chinese, who are so brilliant in political work, are so limited in cultural development? Why have they abandoned the potential for revolutionary consciousness that seems to inhere in film, and concentrated only on recordings of stage works? Why have they left even their stage dance techniques in such a rudimentary state? (It is noteworthy that Chinese attention to peasant folk dance, which might provide foundations for new types of non-bourgeois dance, is mainly to homogenize it into bland YMCA-type dance.)

We may speculate that cinema in China is the victim of the fact that it is impossible to maintain even progress on all revolutionary fronts. Some surge ahead; others, where more difficult problems of technique (or politics) are involved, must be held in stasis until there is energy and time and money to deal with them. It may thus be precisely because of film's ideological power that film production in China has been limited to safe ballet record-films on the one hand, and simple newsfilm-type documentaries on the other.

But the Cultural Revolution is not over. I was told in China that the two lines of Mao and Liu Shao-ch'i will continue to exist for a long time, in struggle. Sooner or later that struggle will have to deal with artistic forms. And sooner or later the Chinese will look around the world and see that ballet even in Russia has evolved, in the work of the Bolshoi and Kirov companies, far beyond what they knew of it—not to mention the work of Ballanchine, Martha Graham, Jose Limon, Hanya Holm and many other dancers. Perhaps then, freed from Soviet models, they will learn not only to proletarianize the content by focusing on workers, peasants, and soldiers, but will also learn to proletarianize the forms,

using and re-inventing popular forms that the people in China have used for generations to express their common criticism and wisdom.

—R. G. DAVIS

GRIERSON

Produced by the National Film Board of Canada.

"He was a radical, not a revolutionary," concludes the narration of this affectionate monument to John Grierson; he worked within existing channels of power to change the way people saw their world. He was also a nationalist: the film properly marks the span of his life between the great Glasgow strikes Grierson participated in at age 17 and his return to Scotland in his last years.

Neither American nor British writers have yet begun the work of serious reassessment demanded by the documentary film movement Grierson founded and led in the thirties. The films themselves now often seem mild or sentimental; and, like American documentary of the period, they can also seem a bit jingoistic. Yet the achievements of such poetic and innocent films as *Drifters* have hardly gotten their due attention from today's supposedly more advanced and sophisticated young film people; and it must be testily remarked that even 30 years after Grierson and his gang—for the literal first time, as they proudly said—put actual working people on the screen, hardly any of our supposedly radical film-makers have been up to following their lead. In his last years Grierson lectured at McGill University (or perhaps preached) to students whom he found on the whole dilettantish, self-concerned, and ineffective. He told them they had no cause, no unity, no dedication to a task outside vanity and self-aggrandizement. His eyes by then had lost the piercing quality of earlier years, and his intense Scots craving for goodness in man must have seemed a little strange to the students. Interviewed in the film, they recall his lectures and laugh affectionately. They respected the man; they even acknowledge that he was right; but they haven't done anything about it.

Grierson's orientation was primarily educational and in a sense religious. After university he almost went into politics, and then almost into the ministry. He could have done either in the same way he did film, for what drew him to film was the idea that it could be the locus of a new socialist morality. His focus was always on telling and showing people things they didn't know, and ought to. Like Humphrey Jennings, he was moved by the unacknowledged beauties of the commonwealth; he knew that society, for all its injustice, was an organic entity that needed the fullest attention of its citizens. He wanted people to care about the industrial world they really lived in (whether they knew it or not) and set it right. And in Canada he organized the National Film Board so that Canadians could show other Canadians what their nation was and what it meant. (The Board's 25th-anniversary cocktail party figures in the film with some chilling footage of Grierson lumbering about a little bleary, like a time traveler from another generation.)

In short, Grierson was a believer in British democracy. Despite his labor agitator beginnings, and the fact that he fell under a cloud in Canada and the US in the McCarthy days, I know of no evidence that he was a radical in the sense of desiring any fundamental economic revolutionizing of society. Perhaps this was because, as a skillful bureaucrat and wheedler of bureaucrats, he knew that all social systems yet put into practice amount to much the same thing, and all have political problems which *are,* in large degree, "educational." Certainly his desire to improve the populace did not exclude a certain condescension. After returning to Scotland he became a sort of television star, but he spoke scathingly of the viewers' desire not to be upset. Television, he said, was a domestic appurtenance. If it tried to disturb viewers' cozy homes they turned it off, literally or mentally.

Taking advantage of the fact that virtually all Grierson's major collaborators (except Flaherty) are still alive, the film consists mainly of interview snippets, interspersed with stills and

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Stuart Legg with Grierson in the early days of the NFB.

an occasional excerpt: *Drifters, Night Mail,* or *Housing Problems* (the famous scene about killing the rat — *cinéma-vérité* 30 years before its time). The film is an *hommage,* and a graceful and courteous one. It attempts no sharp evaluation of the man or his work; it shows us how he was seen by the people who worked with him—as an intimidatingly forceful, brilliant, surprising, demanding father-figure. His "boys," who joined him as recent university graduates in their early twenties, are now grey and dignified. They remember him with cautious respect. (Perhaps it is only the irresponsible great—like Flaherty —who are liked?) Even Sir Stephen Tallents, the first man of power to be receptive to Grierson's schemes, is here; and so are Paul Rotha, Basil Wright, Harry Watt, Forsyth Hardy, and the other luminaries of the documentary movement. (Cavalcanti is a notable and unfortunate omission.) The photographers have made it a bit of a fashion show: each man is studiedly and stylishly attired, and shot against Druid ruins or British country "cottages." The old man would have laughed at this; he himself appears against the grubby early NFB offices or against bland TV-decor or out-of-focus backgrounds. For him it was always the work and the ideas that counted. (He would doubtless have demanded a lot of reshooting if *he* had produced this picture!)

The film should fascinate anybody who cares about the nonfiction film, in England or Canada or anywhere. Without Grierson, the British documentary movement would have been what the American one was: feeble, scattered, lacking doctrine and drive, the isolated work of atomized individuals, with virtually no distribution and no social impact. The work Grierson so indefatigably promoted and backed and engineered may have been (like virtually everything that happens in our society, of course) lamentably middle-class, lacking organic relation to the citizenry it set out to educate: it spoke not *to* power but *from* power, even if the sources of that power were the marginal reaches of the British and Canadian governments. Yet it opened up possibilities that still tantalize. It was Grierson who first saw clearly that film, so powerful and lovely a medium, might be used in behalf of the interests of the many, rather than to promote the deadening worldview of their rulers; that in sensitive and alert hands it can make contact with life as it is really lived, not life as the powerful want us to imagine it is; that it can *matter.*

The old man is dead, but his vision will be with us for a long time yet.

—ERNEST CALLENBACH

Short Notices

[From our next issue on, we intend to devote this section mainly to films that are not in ordinary distribution and thus do not get covered in the film-review sections of national magazines: nontheatrical films of various kinds, short films, experimental films, and so on.]

Distant Thunder. Gangacharan (Soumitra Chatterji), as ignorant as he is egotistical and handsome, is the only Brahmin in a Bengali mud-hut village, and he loses

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no time in setting himself up as not only the village's priest and doctor, but also its only teacher. Looked up to by his captive pupils and the peasants whose only authority he is, waited on by his pretty wife, and provided with free food by Biswas, the town's merchant, Ganga is clearly a young man on the way up. The rumbles of a far-off war—the film takes place around 1942—disturb him not at all, and affect his wife Ananga (Babita) and her girl-friends only by causing them to look up at the sky now and then to watch the pretty planes go by. But the war cuts off the country's rice supplies, and the price of rice skyrockets. For a time Biswas continues to supply Ganga, but then, he claims, his supply too has run out. Ganga objects to his wife's going to work at the rice-hulling mill, where she will be paid one measure of rice for every nine she hulls, but as the shortage becomes more acute, his pride and snobbery begin to break down. We watch Ganga become more and more human, until finally he offers to dispose of the body of Moti, an untouchable woman, who has starved to death virtually at his doorstep while Ananga was getting food for her. At the film's end we feel that Ganga will truly deserve the child that Ananga tells him she is carrying. If this, Satyajit Ray's most explicitly socially conscious film, lacks some of the subtlety of, say, *Charulata,* or *Days and Nights in the Forest,* it is perhaps because hunger and violence, subjects it cannot help dealing with, are not subtle subjects; nonetheless their effect on the leading characters is presented with the sensitivity we expect from Ray. Violence shows itself early in the film in the person of Jadu, a hideously disfigured man, who, as we later find out, guards a secret storehouse of rice. Violence and hunger are linked: while Ananda and her friends are out in the jungle digging for wild potatoes, a stranger attempts to rape her, and is killed by one of the other women. Later, Ananda's friend Chhutki gives herself to Jadu in return for an apron full of rice. But the bizarre intrusion of inflation and want in this tradition-bound village makes these incidents go unspoken-of—they are simply part of the shock of newness, and nothing can be done about them. And they are all the more shocking in contrast to Ray's exquisite images—butterflies, a huge tree against the sunset, girls bathing in the river. As Ganga and Ananda stand in their doorway and she tells him of the coming birth of their child, Ray commits one of his rare *faux-pas:* an old man comes down the road with his family to beg for food, but in the style of the socially conscious movies of the thirties, the family is transformed before our eyes into a horde of people outlined against the sky. One has the queasy expectation of swelling orchestral music, and can't help wishing that Ray had found a less melodramatic manner of ending this fine film.

—HARRIET R. POLT

Dry Wood and **Hot Pepper.** (Two films by Les Blank. Flower Films.) Les Blank is most easily described as a documentary film-maker but that's hardly saying enough. He has developed a new approach to his art, an approach that is more subjective, more intimate and, because of its emotional dimensions, closer and truer to his topics than the usual narrative documentary style would allow. As a result, he ranks among the most exciting contemporary independent filmmakers. Blank's films divide into two overlapping categories: portraits of ethnic musicians and portraits of ethnic communities. The modes differ only in what material he chooses to bring into the foreground. His previous movies include *The Blues According to Lightning Hopkins; A Well-Spent Life,* a sketch of Texas singer Mance Lipscomb; and *Spend It All,* which focuses on Louisiana Cajuns. This summer he released *Dry Wood* and *Hot Pepper,* which deal respectively with Louisiana Creoles and their leading musician, blues accordionist Clifton Chenier. The pair are Blank's finest films to date and that means they are towering achievements. Blank's strengths lie in his technical mastery of cinema, in his ability to find images that speak for themselves, in the completeness with which he approaches his efforts, and in his sense of wholeness of life. His aesthetics ignore artificial divisions between events and stress the interrelatedness of all existence. And he characteristically documents daily occurrences in terms of their fullest cycles. For the Creoles and Clifton Chenier, interrelatedness and full cycles mean that if musicians are shown performing, other footage will show their instruments being made along with cuts to farm fields where rhythms were perhaps picked up in the process of planting and harvesting. If Blank

Clifton Chenier in HOT PEPPER.

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Clifton Chenier in HOT PEPPER.

photographs a well-attended meal, he also focuses on the food being gathered and prepared, even, in *Dry Wood*, following a pig from slaughter to sausage. In the same film he defines another sense of wholeness by photographing a shack wall covered with snapshots of a woman's relatives and friends and that wall says more about her feelings of family and community than any narration ever could. All Blank's films blossom with images drawn from richly visual subcultures and folklore personalities. He does not, however, gloss over his subjects. To ignore, say, their physical poverty would be to undermine their spiritual wealth. Blank's full, living portraits reveal suffering and dignity, isolation and community, pain and laughter. —HAL AIGNER

The Hireling is less flashy and more gripping than the last adaptation of an L. P. Hartley novel—the Pinter-Losey *Go-Between*—and I suspect that most of the credit should go to the director, Alan Bridges. The story is slight: the owner-driver of a one-car limousine service (Robert Shaw) falls helplessly in love with one of his clients, a delicate aristocratic widow (Sarah Miles), and there is a messy showdown when she plans to marry a gentleman politican who loves her money and connections. Writer Wolf Mankowitz, an expert in aggressive sentimentality *(Expresso Bongo, A Kid for two Farthings)*, itches to display Social Consciousness, and keeps trying to turn the film into a fearless attack on the English class system in the twenties. On the whole, Bridges manages to cool him down, losing out only in the 100% caddishness of the straw-figure politician and in the crude ending, when Shaw deliberately smashes up his Rolls while singing patriotic songs. If *The Hireling* did have to be viewed in political terms it would certainly misfire. The villain would then be the lower-class driver, a military-minded ex-sergeant-major and budding capitalist who treats his one employee like a slave. Fortunately, Bridges allows us to see both Shaw and Miles as human beings, spurred along their different paths by loneliness and regret. Sarah Miles, in fact, though her role would seem to allow only a narrow range of expression, gives by far the finest performance of her career. Bridge's own career has apparently centered in television; the only other film of his I've seen is a mediocre exercise in science fiction made more than ten years ago. But with *The Hireling* his skill (or tremendous luck) hits nearly all the jackpots. He is good with the actors; he shows a fine sense of pace, with no compulsive desire to keep the audience galvanized with shock cuts and flurries of action; and above all he makes astonishingly fresh and imaginative use of the automobile as a setting. Unlike most movie cars, sleek and cramped machines which zoom single-mindedly from one place to another, Shaw's Rolls meanders along country lanes like a spacious drawing room on wheels. Outside, framed and distanced by the car windows, mysterious manifestations of normal life are glimpsed: a black-clad woman in a field, a boy running out a graveyard, people staring. Inside, two lonely people talk to each other, at cross purposes but contented for the moment in their isolation. Image and meaning fuse brilliantly in these memorable scenes.

—WILLIAM JOHNSON

The Harder They Come brings to the jaded metropolitan taste a new exoticism: the black Caribbean, which has previously only figured as a passive backdrop in James Bond pictures—providing pot plantation, black gangster villains, or man-eating crabs upon demand by Salzman and Broccoli. Now it begins to come alive on the screen as it is coming alive in the headlines: the reality of a poverty-stricken black half-nation (dozens of islands, each in effect a country to itself, strung out over a distance of some 2,000 miles) whose main "products" are sun and sea, and whose main crop, now that the monoculture of cane sugar is dying under the price competition of French and German and American sugar-beets, is another monoculture: tourism, which brings in its train the identical social dislocations of the old plantation system. Jamaica, being a large island, and more directly in touch with American black culture, is showing the effects most dramatically: an unformed mixture of Pan-Africanism, governmental and capitalist larceny, and resentment of the rich Americans who will soon find themselves intolerably unwelcome except as high-paying guests in patrolled hotel enclaves. *The Harder They Come*, as a myth set in such surroundings, shows us—with ambiguous intentions that are nowhere made clear—that a young talented Jamaican can get nowhere through lawful striving, on a petty-bourgeois basis: his musical talent is ripped off by the local record-industry boss. He turns to the ganja (marijuana) trade and makes some money for a while, but soon gets into trouble with the boss and the cops. "You can make it if you really try," the refrain of one of his songs, proves to be only an insinuating Caribbean version of pie-in-the-sky. Our hero ends up facing down the Kingston harbor police in a shoot-out intercut with a Jamaican audience watching a western: American secondhand culture is everywhere, even in a Jamaican defeat fantasy. "The harder they come, the harder they fall, one and all," says the title song: and the ambiguity is like that of the film as a whole—we do not know whether it refers to the hero's failed attempts, or is a dire predic-

photographs a well-attended meal, he also focuses on the food being gathered and prepared, even, in *Dry Wood*, following a pig from slaughter to sausage. In the same film he defines another sense of wholeness by photographing a shack wall covered with snapshots of a woman's relatives and friends and that wall says more about her feelings of family and community than any narration ever could. All Blank's films blossom with images drawn from richly visual subcultures and folklore personalities. He does not, however, gloss over his subjects. To ignore, say, their physical poverty would be to undermine their spiritual wealth. Blank's full, living portraits reveal suffering and dignity, isolation and community, pain and laughter. —HAL AIGNER

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tion about the various other hard strivers portrayed in the film. Because its style is ordinary opaque naturalism (which theorists like to call "transparent") the film can hide behind its surface realness: the shanty towns, the lovely West Indian dialect, the shoot-'em-up action sequences, the great personal attractiveness of the hero as played by Jimmy Cliff. But it thus conceals the deeper realities of Jamaican life: economic control by foreign white corporations and managers, a classically neo-colonial pattern of extractive industries. Perhaps as a consequence, it speaks dramatically in terms that are fatalistic, romantic, and defeatist. Whether the mythic hero dies to be reborn, as we might hope in a society going through very early prerevolutionary purgatory, we must wait for further films to see. But the West Indies are not going to lie quietly in the sun much longer. —E. C.

Heavy Traffic, "brought to you by the makers of *Fritz the Cat*," is, like its predecessor, an "adult," or X-rated cartoon. But in the new film, "adult" refers less to erotic content than to violence and gore, which *Traffic* is rich in. In the tradition of cartoons such as the Tom and Jerry or Roadrunner series, characters get bopped, slammed, blasted, and crunched; but unlike those relics of a more innocent past, the characters of *Traffic* do not get up, reconstitute themselves, and go on to further adventures: rather, like characters in such "realistic" recent films as *The Godfather* or *The French Connection,* they get their brains or guts visually blown out, and that's the end of them. Michael, the central character in *Traffic,* bears some resemblance to Fritz: both are young, naive (though from the "big city"), and both long to go West. But while Fritz is a "college boy," Michael is a struggling cartoonist (the hero, in the *Portrait of the Artist* tradition, always the image of his creator?), the son of a stereotyped Jewish mamma and an equally stereotyped Mafioso father, and he's a virgin. But, whereas Fritz entered into his various unsavory adventures in a spirit of innocence, Michael's descent into pimpdom and murder is deliberate. His purity and sweetness at the beginning of the film make this transformation all the less plausible. *Heavy Traffic* is about New York, about violence, perhaps most of all about ugliness. Shorty, a frog-faced legless man, the Godfather slurping spaghetti through enormous lips, the skinny Jewish mamma, the fat prostitutes—all are ugly and either stupid or evil, or both. Even the two good-looking characters, Michael and his sexy black girlfriend Carol, finally turn violent, perhaps corrupted by all the ugliness around them. Ralph Bakshi, the film's writer and director, depicts women with particular loathing, even more than he did in *Fritz.* Those breasts that keep popping out of blouses are not sexy but disgusting, in much the same way that Kenneth Anger's Marilyn Monroe and the other women in *Hollywood Babylon,* that classic of softcore misogyny, are disgusting.

The visual devices of *Traffic* have been rightly praised. The combination of live and animated action, the color effects produced through negative printing and other laboratory techniques, the bird's-eye shots (also used in *Fritz*), and so on make *Traffic* frequently a pleasure to look at. Yet the live-action frame story, with a live Michael and Carol who finally get together, as well as the live pin-ball machine that Michael plays and that sets off the supposed fantasies making up the central part of the film—these devices are more confusing than constructive, muddying the already obscure point of the film. It can be said to Ralph Bakshi's credit that he has achieved the difficult task of creating people-animation rather than animal-animation. But when the characters created are themselves stereotypes, and the action

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I. F. Stone's Weekly is a 62-minute documentary, made on a shoestring over a three-year period by Jerry Bruck, celebrating the relentlessly honest journalism of I. F. Stone. Stone was denounced during the McCarthy period as a com-symp or worse, later by Agnew as "a strident voice of illiberalism," always by countless politicians and bureaucrats he's caught in political *flagrante delicto*—and yet Izzy has never deviated from his purpose (to find and tell the truth), or lost his sense of idealism and humor about it all. After decades of his lonely quest in the far reaches of investigative reporting —he founded the *Weekly* in 1953 and ran it as a one-person enterprise until 1971, when he folded it to join the *N.Y. Review of Books*—finally I. F. Stone has been re-included in the modern journalistic world, and now he receives honorary doctorates, awards from news societies, and a tribute in the form of a film like this. The film is beautifully assembled and edited. For example: it opens cleverly as a band plays "Hail to the Chief," leading us to believe the President is about to appear—but the next shot is that of Izzy expressing his credo ("Every government is run by liars and nothing they say should be believed"), and finally a shot of Lyndon Johnson telling outrageous lies about Vietnam. In those few, brilliant moments, we learn what makes I. F. Stone a great journalist: he's not easily fooled, he's courageous and, more often than not, his analyses are on the mark at the time of the event. The film reveals much about what is wrong with traditional Washington reporting (there is an eloquent sequence of ABC's Tom Jerriel playing tennis with Ron Ziegler, and several devastating put-downs of CBS's Walter Cronkite), and what's wrong with American society in general—but the film's main emphasis is on Stone himself, his indomitable will, his acute perceptions, his unflagging curiosity and energy, his faith in the democratic ideal. *I. F. Stone's Weekly* thus is about as optimistic a film as one could possibly see, giving one hope that injustices and corruption might actually be ferreted out and corrected. And through it all is this aging, half-deaf, bespectacled journalist, Isidor Feinstein Stone, bubbling merrily along exposing the duplicity and stupidity of the nation's leaders ("I really have so much fun," he tells a student group, "I ought to be arrested"), and finding room for optimism even amid the carnage of Vietnam (the survival of the Vietnamese people through years of saturation bombing and US terror has "re-established the primacy of man in an age of technology," Stone tells a group). When Stone began his four-page *Weekly*, he told his wife that first he would be regarded as a pariah, then as a character, and finally as an institution. That he has become an institution there can be no doubt; he has provided inspiration for countless journalists, among whom, we learn from the film, is Carl Bernstein, half of the Woodward-Bernstein team that broke Watergate wide open. But one of Izzy's more admirable traits is that he is completely free of rhetoric and the usual left-wing bullshit. He describes himself half-jokingly as a man who went from "communist anarchism" in his youth to become a "counter-revolutionary" today. We see him lecturing a group of students harshly, telling them their belief that revolution can be made by hollering in the streets is nonsense, and that if their slogan "power to the people" were ever to come true, "you and I would be the first ones put in jail." The film, narrated by Tom Wicker of the *N.Y. Times*, is available in 35 or 16mm by writing: I. F. Stone Project, P.O. Box 315, Franklin Lakes, N.J. 07417. —BERNARD WEINER

Books

THROUGH NAVAJO EYES

An Exploration in Film Communication and Anthropology

By Sol Worth and John Adair. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973. $12.50)

In principle, you can only perceive a communication code from outside of it—that is, from the standpoint of another code; almost by definition a code is "invisible" to its users, because the code structures the way those users think. Yet evidently this rule is not absolute, or linguists would not be able to describe in words the codes by which their own grammar and syntax operate. In the case of film syntax, of course, we have been accustomed to describing it in words (which has often been lamented—wrongly, if we accept the above principle). Worth and Adair have conceived the notion of attempting to see what film codes might be employed by persons from a non-Western culture who were given film equipment and technical instruction but not instructed in our kind of film syntax. Their findings are both exciting and frustrating.

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simply an extension of the violence already exploited *ad nauseam* in live films, one is forced to ask: why bother? —HARRIET R. POLT

I. F. Stone's Weekly is a 62-minute documentary, made on a shoestring over a three-year period by Jerry Bruck, celebrating the relentlessly honest journalism of I. F. Stone. Stone was denounced during the McCarthy period as a com-symp or worse, later by Agnew as "a strident voice of illiberalism," always by countless politicians and bureaucrats he's caught in political *flagrante delicto*—and yet Izzy has never deviated from his purpose (to find and tell the truth), or lost his sense of idealism and humor about it all. After decades of his lonely quest in the far reaches of investigative reporting —he founded the *Weekly* in 1953 and ran it as a one-person enterprise until 1971, when he folded it to join the *N.Y. Review of Books*—finally I. F. Stone has been re-included in the modern journalistic world, and now he receives honorary doctorates, awards from news societies, and a tribute in the form of a film like this. The film is beautifully assembled and edited. For example: it opens cleverly as a band plays "Hail to the Chief," leading us to believe the President is about to appear—but the next shot is that of Izzy expressing his credo ("Every government is run by liars and nothing they say should be believed"), and finally a shot of Lyndon Johnson telling outrageous lies about Vietnam. In those few, brilliant moments, we learn what makes I. F. Stone a great journalist: he's not easily fooled, he's courageous and, more often than not, his analyses are on the mark at the time of the event. The film reveals much about what is wrong with traditional Washington reporting (there is an eloquent sequence of ABC's Tom Jerriel playing tennis with Ron Ziegler, and several devastating put-downs of CBS's Walter Cronkite), and what's wrong with American society in general—but the film's main emphasis is on Stone himself, his indomitable will, his acute perceptions, his unflagging curiosity and energy, his faith in the democratic ideal. *I. F. Stone's Weekly* thus is about as optimistic a film as one could possibly see, giving one hope that injustices and corruption might actually be ferreted out and corrected. And through it all is this aging, half-deaf, bespectacled journalist, Isidor Feinstein Stone, bubbling merrily along exposing the duplicity and stupidity of the nation's leaders ("I really have so much fun," he tells a student group, "I ought to be arrested"), and finding room for optimism even amid the carnage of Vietnam (the survival of the Vietnamese people through years of saturation bombing and US terror has "re-established the primacy of man in an age of technology," Stone tells a group). When Stone began his four-page *Weekly*, he told his wife that first he would be regarded as a pariah, then as a character, and finally as an institution. That he has become an institution there can be no doubt; he has provided inspiration for countless journalists, among whom, we learn from the film, is Carl Bernstein, half of the Woodward-Bernstein team that broke Watergate wide open. But one of Izzy's more admirable traits is that he is completely free of rhetoric and the usual left-wing bullshit. He describes himself half-jokingly as a man who went from "communist anarchism" in his youth to become a "counter-revolutionary" today. We see him lecturing a group of students harshly, telling them their belief that revolution can be made by hollering in the streets is nonsense, and that if their slogan "power to the people" were ever to come true, "you and I would be the first ones put in jail." The film, narrated by Tom Wicker of the *N.Y. Times*, is available in 35 or 16mm by writing: I. F. Stone Project, P.O. Box 315, Franklin Lakes, N.J. 07417. —BERNARD WEINER

Books

THROUGH NAVAJO EYES

An Exploration in Film Communication and Anthropology

By Sol Worth and John Adair. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973. $12.50)

In principle, you can only perceive a communication code from outside of it—that is, from the standpoint of another code; almost by definition a code is "invisible" to its users, because the code structures the way those users think. Yet evidently this rule is not absolute, or linguists would not be able to describe in words the codes by which their own grammar and syntax operate. In the case of film syntax, of course, we have been accustomed to describing it in words (which has often been lamented—wrongly, if we accept the above principle). Worth and Adair have conceived the notion of attempting to see what film codes might be employed by persons from a non-Western culture who were given film equipment and technical instruction but not instructed in our kind of film syntax. Their findings are both exciting and frustrating.

They worked with six Navajos, three men and three

women—all young, but displaying various degrees of general acculturation. (In addition, one older Navajo woman also made a film.) Though the Navajos have been a non-technological people, they surprised the observers by the deftness with which they handled cameras and editing equipment, compared to middleclass white American students. (The Navajos also do smoother handheld camerawork and have a better sense of pan speed.) This is both interesting in itself and a tribute to the nonintimidating teaching skills of Worth; it jibes with similar reports of the great skill that Eskimos show in manipulating what seem to us complex mechanical devices, and might lead us to reconsider our usual assumption that we physically master the world in a more intricate and skillful way than "primitive" peoples.

Without seeing the films, and comparing them in detail with films made under controlled similar conditions by white or black Americans or Europeans, we cannot judge whether the authors' general conclusions are justified; their work lacks a sound experimental design, and it seems likely that they have somewhat exaggerated their case. It is after all not surprising that Navajos given springwound cameras capable of shooting about 15 feet of film at one time would have to develop some kind of syntax not too different from ours; given the Navajo propensity for filming a lot of walking, this must immediately have posed the problem of how to start and stop shots, and how to link them. Nor does the Navajo avoidance of facial close-ups seem so mysterious as the authors think; after all, filming (or viewing) such close-ups would be a flat violation of the Navajo taboo against direct looking in the face—which is an impardonable rudeness that all Navajo avoid with consistency every day of their lives, and could hardly be expected to indulge in just because they are looking through a viewfinder.

What is most suggestive about the author's findings, moreover, turns out not to be precisely on the level of codes. To simplify, it appears that the Navajo conception of what is worth filming is not at all like ours. They do not share our feelings about "action," and we lack many of their feelings above "movement." Thus a woman who was herself a weaver made a film which was mainly devoted to the walking involved in the preparations for weaving; the actual weaving itself was shown briefly and partially. Almost all the films, indeed, contained extensive walking scenes—some of which, moreover, were not "documentary" but invented (looking for silver in a mine, though the Navajos do not mine silver and never have). And this despite the fact that, as a newly motorized people, the Navajos nowadays use their pickups to go a hundred yards, and hardly walk at all. The authors speculate that this kind of emphasis on walking is embedded in Navajo myth-structures and reflects or embodies a general Navajo conception of the universe and man's relation to it. Again to simplify: the Navajo films seem to show man moving through and relating to the physical world; whereas our films tend to show man acting in opposition to, and separated from, the physical world. When we film walking, it is an act of struggle.

On the other hand, the Navajo did not share our usual abhorrence of the jump cut (which tends to make us feel as if the universe has broken its own rules). But despite the attention the authors lavish on one particular cut in a walking scene, it seems quite possible that Navajos with greater experience and access to electric-motor cameras would evolve toward an editing style using largely invisible cutting—which indeed might seem especially adapted to their worldview. On this as on many points, the smallness and special nature of the authors' sample makes any conclusions premature. Their chapter on "Motion or Eventing" attempts to deal with such issues through tantalizing citations from a Navajo linguist named Hoijer. But the discussion is vitiated both by ethnocentrism ("this inordinate need to portray motion precisely," etc.) and a tendency to compare Navajo beginners' work with "our" work, where "we" are white American professionals.

Given such drawbacks in the basic thesis, the most striking section of the book is the chapter comparing the Navajo work with work by black teen-agers and white college students. The differences are startling (if we can accept that a reasonable sampling is involved) and seem to indicate that the worldviews of black and white people differ at least as much from each other as they do from the Navajo worldview. But these differences too are not treated in terms of codes, but rather in the conventional terms of sites, topics and activities, and ways of "structuring the image," by which is meant emphasis on performance (blacks) or on camera and editing manipulation (whites).

In sum, then, Worth and Adair have tried to make more theoretically of their slender material than it can really warrant. But their book is intriguing on other levels: as a record of an unusual experience for filmmaker and anthropologist as well as their Navajo friends, as an introduction to film work in non-Western settings, and as an opening toward the use of film for more than the usual ethnographic purposes. Indeed, there seems no reason why the members of any culture anywhere cannot now "roll their own."

—ERNEST CALLENBACH

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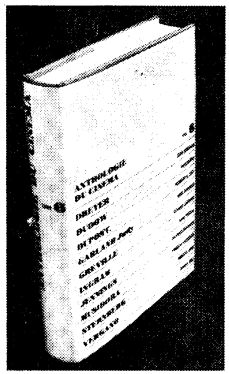

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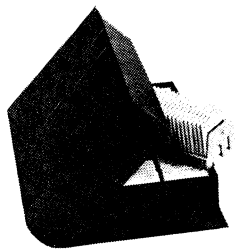

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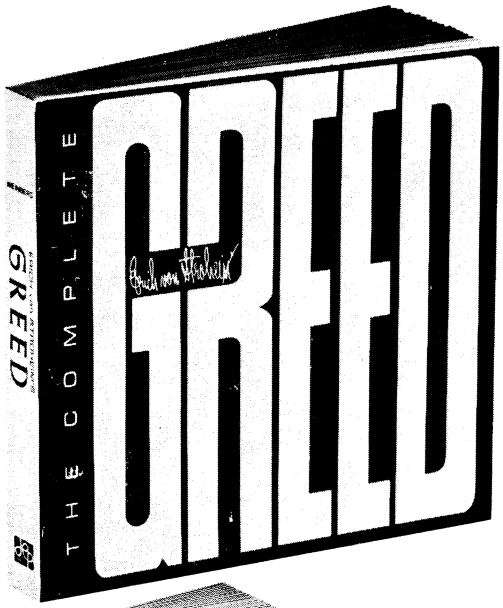

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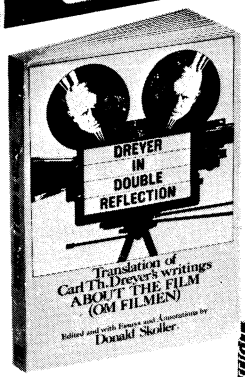

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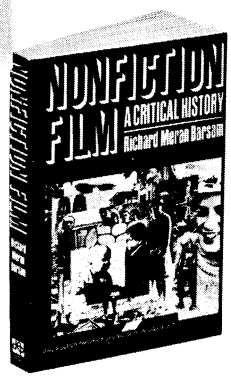

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