

# FILM QUARTERLY

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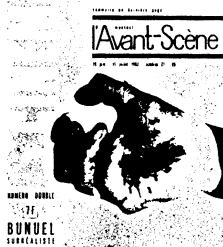
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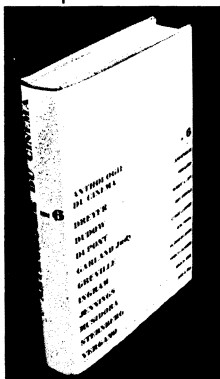
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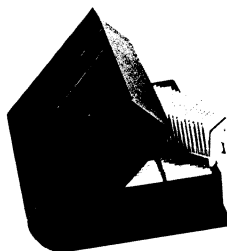


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## SHORT NOTICES

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[Ed. Notebook cont'd. page 28]

na, and Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder) greater freedom and security; and that, as a result, their films can be seen as “writers’ films”—but not only that. Paramount was equally a directors’ studio. MGM was basically the domain of the producer: Guess Who.

Recent run-ins with several veteran screenwriters had just about convinced me that the breed consisted mainly of embittered, defeated men still stewing in the bile of remembered impotence. From his letter, Mr. Marx seems different: a defender of the very system that destroyed these men (while, to be sure, it sustained and rewarded others). What’s not clear is whether Mr. Marx sees the Thalberg Era as a golden age for that peerless assemblage of writers he mentions, or as a darker period during which our best writers were fed into a machine, and came out something less. My own feelings are clear. To match these writers with their MGM credits is to see the hope of American letters turned into the despair of Hollywood hacks.

Yours sincerely,  
RICHARD CORLISS

## CONTRIBUTORS

ROBERT CHAPPETTA lives in New York and is a frequent *FQ* contributor. MITCHELL S. COHEN studies cinema at NYU and has written for *Take One*. RICHARD CORLISS is editor of *Film Comment* and editor of *The Hollywood Screenwriters* (AVON). MARK FALONGA has taught English at the University of Wisconsin and written for *Film Heritage*. CHARLES GREGORY teaches film at Sacramento State University. THOMAS H. GUBACK is the author of *The International Film Industry* (Indiana). FOSTER HIRSCH is a New Yorker and frequent contributor. GILLIAN KLEIN is British and now lives in New Brunswick, New Jersey. SAMUEL MARX was Irving Thalberg’s story editor at MGM. LYLE PEARSON is an American who has spent the past several years studying African films and cultures. LAWRENCE SHAFFER is a writer and editor who lives in New York. NORMAN SILVERSTEIN is co-author of *The Film Experience* and teaches English at CUNY; he is author of a forthcoming book, *A Film Guide to Wild Strawberries* (Indiana). JULIAN SMITH has taught film and literature classes in Ithaca College (NY) and has written for *The Journal of Popular Film, Literature/Film Quarterly*, the *New York Times*, and other publications. BERNARD WEINER, film critic for *Overseas Weekly*, also contributes to *Sight & Sound*, *Take One*, *Village Voice*, and *The Nation*.

## Books

(In our next issue we plan to present extensive discussions of several recent books of outstanding importance: Jay Leyda’s *Dianying, Godard on Godard*, and others. Meantime, the following briefer notes will keep the reader somewhat abreast of the continuing flood of film publishing.)

### ALL THE BRIGHT YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN A Personal History of the Czech Cinema

By Josef Skvorecky. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 17 Inkerman St., 1972. \$8.95.

Skvorecky now teaches at York University in Toronto (a good many Czechs have ended up in Canada, which may today seem a better political refuge than the US). He is the author of six screenplays, including *The End of a Priest*, a bit actor, and a well known Czech novelist. (His

book *The Coward* is available in English.) He and his novelist wife were part of the enviably close, active cultural world of Prague during the late fifties and sixties; his book is a highly readable, personal, anecdotal, nostalgic record of the men and women he knew, worked with, fought against, admired, disdained, or (in the case of pretty women) hankered for. The light tone of the writing is at first disconcerting—some of this may be due to the translation—with its often flip remarks and running political cracks. After a while, however, you realize that this is a truly Czech document, full of the blessed contrariness of human nature which the Czech film-makers so adeptly caught on film. Skvorecky’s humor, his wry self-criticism, his scattershot satire of artistic and political venality, his flashes of warmth even for those he disapproves of (like Jan Prochazka, a “political brigand” whose talent Skvorecky will not deny) bring you into that

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[Ed. Notebook cont'd. page 28]



## Two R. D. Laing Movies: *Wednesday's Child* and *Asylum*

Laing is a maverick in psychiatry. Until very recently, it was common doctrine (based upon research now known to be statistically unsound) that schizophrenia was largely genetic. Laing has been challenging this view in 1972-1973 TV appearances and in lectures throughout America to the psychiatric profession. The risky attitude he has assumed about craziness, comparable to Ingmar Bergman's in such films as *Persona*, *Hour of the Wolf*, and *Cries and Whispers*, is probably one source of Laing's reverberation in the counter-culture, with its interest in drugs, transcendental meditation, and "strange states" generally. In his challenges to the Establishment, he is a kind of Nader-raider, going so far as to urge consumers to avoid man-made synthetic cloth and to prefer cotton and wool for their garments.

Laingian ideas in film are evidently troubling to film censors. Under its original title *Family Life*, the Paris première of *Wednesday's Child* was postponed for one week and could be shown only with the following notice posted outside the movie house: "It is specified that this movie is devoted to the movement of a young woman toward a very serious mental illness and, for this reason, may be disturbing to some moviegoers."

By way of introduction to Laing, I shall present a brief biography and a brief review of his major ideas as preparation for a discussion of two films made in 1972 according to Laing's principles.

Who is Laing?

He was born into a poor Scottish family in 1927. In 1951, he took a medical degree at Glasgow University. Until 1956, he worked as psychiatrist for both the British army and Glas-

gow mental hospitals. While psychiatrist at the Tavistock Clinic in London, Laing published *The Divided Self* in 1957, his most influential book and, in part, the source of a TV play by David Mercer that became the script of *Wednesday's Child*. *The Divided Self* had two important consequences. In it, Laing stressed the idea that mental patients are persons whose loss of a sense of self, which he termed "ontological insecurity," could be charted by intelligent listeners and analyzed like multiple-layered metaphysical poems; he thought of schizophrenia as an "existential voyage" and the decisions of so-called schizophrenics as attempts to avoid existential death. A second consequence of the publication of *The Divided Self* was the establishment, in 1965, of a therapeutic center along more humane lines than provided either in a mental hospital or in a patient's home.

Inevitably Laing pursued the implications of his discoveries about schizophrenic patients into studies of the families that produced them. And just as unbearable family relationships can distort the mental development of a child, so can a schizogenic state block the autonomy of the citizen. Furthermore, Laing, always a student of existentialism, became interested in Eastern religions and in meditation. In 1967, *The Politics of Experience* summarized his sociological, political and transcendental pronouncements. Under the title *Knots*, a collection of poems, Laing reported his own experience with cosmic forces; as a set of contradictions, the poems also show that normal men and women share with schizoid patients dilemmas about the nature and maintenance of personality, particularly on the relation of the self and others.



WEDNESDAY'S CHILD: *the child of woe.*

In his discussion of the family as it is now, Laing differs from Wilhelm Reich, for example, who, as James Roy MacBean has indicated (*FQ*, Spring 1972) argued that the roots of fascism lie in the normal family—through parental suppression of naturally developing sexuality of the child—and who urged body-oriented therapy to restore freedom. While agreeing with Reich in general terms, Laing recognizes the needs of specific patients to be rooted in society *as it is* and has been teaching the psychiatric profession to treat each patient, however withdrawn, as a person. He has gone so far as to quote from the *Oxford English Dictionary* eight definitions of *person*, especially those of “mask” and “actual self,” that a psychiatrist must keep in mind. Applying these meanings, Laing has sat for

hours with a catatonic who gives no visible sign of knowing another person is nearby, hoping, perhaps to learn through sympathy about a patient's experience. At Kingsley Hall (no longer used as a therapeutic center) and at Archway communities, he created an atmosphere where, ideally, no one is “treating” anyone.

### TWO KINDS OF FAMILIES

In order to understand schizophrenic patients, Laing has distinguished between two kinds of families: first, in which family members function in *series*, each going his own way and coming together for occasions, such as to celebrate a wedding or to avoid a scandal; secondly, in which they function in *nexus*, each member participating in the projects of every other member,

so sharing one another's lives as to require close obedience in order to satisfy the demands of the larger unit. Obviously normal families share both serial and nexal features, but the nexal schizogenic family disallows the development of some one member of a low threshold of ontological security; this victim suffers *engulfment, implosion, petrification, and depersonalization*. These terms are characteristic of normal selves as well as of schizoid types. To some extent, everyone can feel the presence of another engulfing him, taking possession somewhere inside him. This other self, alien to the personality, may gain such power over the normal self as to explode within one and, internalized, to become the voice through which one is forced to speak. In schizoid personalities, the self is broken into two types of segments—large independent units called “molar” and fragmentary smaller parts that are disunitedly “molecular.” Thus, from a molar segment of a multiple personality, a patient begins a coherent speech, perhaps the words of an internalized parent, but as other internalized molecular segments intervene, the patient's discourse becomes the gibberish we associate with schizophrenia. Facial expressions undergo similar shifts from clarity to confusion. Like normal personalities, schizoids fear the destruction of their own personality, particularly by being treated as things rather than as persons. For Laing, schizophrenia is only an extreme state of a voyage all go through, extreme for the so-called mad, but one that a patient, on a journey into inner space, can be brought back from before an existential death.

For Laing, therefore, schizophrenia is not genetic. It is, in part, a solution for a victim of a family, or a society, who has been denied ontological security, his roots of being and of separateness taken away. In order to reintegrate his broken personality, a patient needs to be other than an *it* and to maintain contact with other patients and sympathetic doctors before returning to the family and to society. In order to establish his existence, a patient must come to a recognition of the *other*—a term Laing leaves open deliberately.

Laing's asylums are intended to provide those contacts with others that depersonalized patients require. In 1965, Kingsley Hall was established as a place “where people could be mad among people.” In this community, there was no “staff,” even though therapists sometimes lived there. While the asylum principle is an attempt to get away from the idea of “treatment,” the communal atmosphere it generates tends to resemble a sympathetic family, more normal than the homes left behind or than the mental hospitals that are their alternatives.

The psychological theory Laing inveighs against holds that after electroshock-induced amnesia a schizophrenic character can be reformed. Laing also argues that clinical psychologists deal too much with formal analysis of a patient's behavior rather than with signs that indicate how the patient is experiencing himself. At Laing's asylums, staff, when present, avoid such “petrifying” words as *complex, syndrome*, and the like. Given the depersonalization that begins in the family and continues in behavioristically oriented mental hospitals, where doctors treat patients as *mentally ill*, an asylum treats schizophrenic experience as goal-oriented toward the reorientation of a broken personality—itsself a positive, not a negative process. During a panel discussion following a showing of *Wednesday's Child*, Laing told a 1972 New York Film Festival audience that he would like to create a medical college where psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts would unlearn the harsh treatment of mental patients that is now taught them. Making a strong plea against electroshock theory and speaking generally against chemo-therapy, Laing argued against all therapy that deadens the patient, disabling him from working for himself. (He told the story of the discovery of electroshock therapy. In 1933, an Italian physician learned that electricity was used in slaughtering pigs and devised an experiment in which lowered voltage stunned a mute patient to utter a single phrase—“not a second deadly.” The cryptic phrase can best be left to speak for itself—and for its utterer, who thereupon relapsed into mutism.)

The atmosphere of a Laingian asylum is therefore that of a family made up of sympathetic strangers. It is serial, rather than nexal, although crises within the commune may require all community members to participate in decision-making. The asylum is designed to allow a patient to complete his "schizophrenic cyclical voyage." It would seem, therefore, that an asylum is a halfway house between home and hospital, but residents prefer to think of the community as an attempted alternative to both.

### WEDNESDAY'S CHILD (FAMILY LIFE)

The psychological or psychiatric tale is a standard film genre, dating back to Lang's *Mabuse* films of the twenties, to *Blind Alley* (based on a play) in the thirties, and subsumed in many Hitchcock thrillers, such as *Rebecca*, but specifically schizoid film of double-faced heroes and heroines, part good, part bad, like Jekyll and Hyde, tended to follow behaviorist prin-

ciples—as in Anatole Litvak's *The Snake Pit* (1948) or Nunnally Johnson's *Three Faces of Eve* (1964). In *Lilith* (1963), directed by Robert Rossen, the schizophrenic portrayed by Jean Seberg was somewhat sympathetic, and the attendant portrayed by Warren Beatty was drawn to her; the film now seems a pioneering attempt to depict "mental illness" as human though bizarre.

The first important film made from Laing's "anti-psychiatric" theories was Karel Reisz's *Morgan!* (called *A Suitable Case for Treatment* in Britain). Originally a play for TV by David Mercer, who also wrote the screenplay, *Morgan!* was a comedy in which a mad Marxist finally prefers a private world in a mental hospital to an apolitical, conformist, hypocritical life in urban London. Reisz's light-hearted treatment of schizophrenia, with intercuts from *King Kong* and *Tarzan* (they pictorialize the protagonist's heroes), preceded the vogue for Laing and was

*The nexal family:* WEDNESDAY'S CHILD.



received without its proper intellectual context being widely understood. *Family Life* was also a teleplay by David Mercer; and Ken Loach, the director, used it to dramatize Laing's ideas in opposition to electroshock therapy, tranquilizers, and impediments to the completion of the existential voyage.

*Wednesday's Child*—to adopt the American title—is a fictional narrative film, the story of Julie, a hebephrenic or regressive schizoid, who passes from “good to bad to mad” into existential death. In Laing's original, entitled “The Ghost in the Weed Garden: a Study of a Chronic Schizophrenic”—the final thirty pages of *The Divided Self*—Julie began life as a “good” baby, that is, undemanding of her mother's time. As an adolescent, when she was losing her selfhood in a nexal family, she became “bad” and briefly internalized the personality of her mother as a molar segment of her own personality. Her utterances became incoherent to those around her. She began to assume silent periods and symptoms of catatonia. She would refer to herself in the third person. Laing met her in a mental hospital, where she was classified as “mad.” In the mental hospital Laing did not “treat” her, but recorded her story as an example of existential death, symbolized in one of Julie's “packed” utterances—“She's the ghost of the weed garden,” which Laing interprets as meaning that Julie recognizes herself as already dead in life. Julie talked also of “the pearl at the bottom of the sea,” which Laing interprets as meaning that Julie felt “there was something of great worth deeply buried inside her, as yet undiscovered.” The pearl, Laing implies, is Julie's self—lost among internalized forces from family and society within her.

In 1972, Ken Loach and David Mercer show how Janice—the name is changed—undergoes a similar existential death. Janice is brilliantly acted by Sandy Ratcliff, who conveys in facial and body gestures the inner turmoil of an uncertain person, grasping for “self” in spite of fits of catatonia. She tries to resist the tranquilizers and electroshock therapy that will perpetuate her loss of power to fight her mental battle. Tim,

her sporadic, hippie-like artist lover, offers help that is too little and too late as she sinks into being a chronic mental patient exhibited before medical students. She has become, at the end, as desperate as Tyrone Power's geek in *Nightmare Alley*.

In the first part of *Wednesday's Child*, a Laing surrogate portrayed by Michael Ridall offers Janice the Laingian treatment, asking Janice why she obeys her mother (“It's easier to do what she wants”) and interviewing her parents—the mother who conceals her own “madness” beneath a conventional veneer, the father whose frustrations break out in murderous rages against his sexy daughter. Both parents illustrate the political nature of the nexal family melodramatically; their lines might be attacked as caricatural if they did not so closely resemble things that are actually said and captured on tape. Father tells Janice, “Sex is nothing to be ashamed of.” Mother adds, “That's your trouble. You're not ashamed.” This conflicting judgment is a classic example of the “double bind” that Laing finds to be destructive to persons of low ontological security. Janice's “respectable” parents justify their criticisms of Janice by saying that they are doing “the right thing.” Barbara, Janice's sister, is too preoccupied with her own family to help her. Hospital staffs are portrayed as insensitive and intransigent. Even though Janice moans, “I don't want to sleep,” she is given a tranquilizer injection and then electroshock. Loach makes this scene frightening. After Janice loses her weak struggle with the staff, he pans to other tables where other mental patients lie unconscious after similar treatment.

Janice's family, from whom her troubles basically stem, are the chief villains. But they are abetted by the hospital board which fires the Laingian therapist whose experimental ward could, perhaps, have allowed Janice to complete her existential voyage. The family physician in turn abets the family in having the police capture Janice back from her lover and turn her over to the hypocritical shock-treatment doctor. As Laing might say: such a case is *not* hypothetical.

It is important to keep in mind that *The Snake Pit* assumed the validity of electroshock therapy in the treatment of an hysterical housewife: Anatole Litvak's 1949 film showed Olivia de Havilland after electric shock happily reunited with husband and children. Anti-psychiatry is a current mode of thought, as behavioralism was a fashion of the forties. Laing's thought may well be outmoded in its turn. But *Wednesday's Child* is worthy of our praise. Loach's handling of nonprofessional actors is admirable. One characteristically undramatic yet telling scene, for instance, shows Janice in the mental hospital where, contrary to Laing's principles, fraternization is discouraged. She meets a fellow inmate who is working on the garden (the same therapy Morgan is given in the other David Mercer film). This fellow inmate, acted exquisitely in a bit part by Johnny Gee, at first resists Janice's attempts to get him to go for a walk. "You're a promiscuous girl," he says. Janice's reaction to this jibe is to giggle. The scene recalls the comic scene in Godard's *My Life to Live* (1962) in which a pimp is advised to call Nana stupid in order to learn her character: if she laughs, she's a lady; if she gets insulted, she's a whore. Nana laughs, as does Janice. When she denies being promiscuous, the garden man says, "You've had more pricks than a second-hand dart board." He is being flirtatious, and Janice knows it. Later, after a few innocent walks, a nurse "speaks to" her. The rules of the hospital forbid close contacts among patients; they are "upsetting." The rules must be obeyed. After this talk, Janice becomes briefly violent. She is restrained, though guiltless, and ends sadly as an exhibit before medical students. *Wednesday's child* is the child of woe.

*Wednesday's Child* was chosen by many English and French critics as among the best films of 1972. In *Cahiers du Cinéma* (number 244) it was criticized, as expected, for not showing a solution, and for being too dependent upon the action of the individual rather than of the group; it shows, its critics argue, a mere individual case, avoiding the significance of the general malaise

on display. It does not stress the class character of the symptoms nor confer on the symptoms a "class" rather than a "universal" value. Furthermore, it puts the moviegoer into the position of being the psychoanalyst. This Marxist or Maoist approach has some truth, but it ignores the work of the director (*auteurs* no longer existing in *Cahiers* criticism). Yet Loach's aesthetics are admirable, as critics in *Sight and Sound*, *Positif*, and *Cinéma 73* have pointed out. His use of non-actors and of location settings convey vivid impressions of real people in real places doing and suffering, in spite of alleged good will. Taken together with Peter Robinson's *Asylum*, *Wednesday's Child* provides a valuable introduction to the anti-psychiatry of R. D. Laing.

### ASYLUM

Kenneth Loach works with a fictional script and a varied cast to achieve what one goal of the fictional film has always been—a sense of actuality. Peter Robinson, the director of *Asylum*, works with actuality to achieve the cinema-truth longed for by documentarians from the era of early newsreels. In 1971, after Kingsley Hall had closed, Robinson received permission from Laing to film at No. 43 Duncombe Road, a flat in an area of North London undergoing urban reconstruction and rehabilitation. For six weeks Robinson and Richard Adams, his cameraman and film editor, lived among patients, housekeepers, and therapists. They followed inmates from house to car when patients were taken home and allowed parents of inmates to complain to Michael Yokum, the therapist-in-training, before their cameras. When a patient left the asylum for the mental hospital or for home, they showed him leaving from high-angled camera set-ups or from dark doorways. If an inmate went into the city, they followed him into suburbs and looked into the store windows that attracted him. The result of their prying camera is that No. 43, the asylum, is a composed place, whose kitchen, parlor, foyer, staircase, consulting room are lived in by the moviegoer. The editing reveals a lived drama. Patients interact sympathetically with one another, with house-

keepers and errand boys, and with Michael Yokum—not wooden here as is Michael Riddell, the therapist in *Wednesday's Child*, but a man at work. After the editing, the participants of the film were shown themselves in the film and gave their permissions for the film's distribution. It is easy to understand why. The filmmaker's point of view that emerges from these intense scenes is one that is sympathetic to persons, to their capacity for pleasure as well as to their struggle toward society and away from the madhouse.

R. D. Laing, who was on a year-long sabbatical, meditating in Ceylon and India during most of the shooting, appears twice talking in *Asylum*, and once in a pan shot during which he is not distinguished from therapists or patients. Eloquent in showing the interpersonal relationships desirable between patients and staff, this shot is also an unpolemical argument for Laing's asylums. In one appearance in the film, Laing defines *asylum*, not as the madhouse the word connotes in the public mind, but as "a place of refuge, a retreat, a shelter." In fact, Laing's therapeutic center is a halfway house between the mental hospital and the home. It does not provide the only treatment available to the mental patient but it allows a midway therapy for the alienated who say "see me, feel me, touch me, heal me." The asylum does not guarantee success. One patient, David, who becomes violent returned after the shooting of the film to the mental hospital. Shown early in the film as a literate reader advised by another resident to read Norman O. Brown's *Love's Body*, he appears at the end of the film as a pudgy, semi-articulate, seemingly tranquilized conformist dressed in a dark suit. A girl, Julia, who regresses to tears before any problem, is unable to remain at home. A son of domineering parents, Jamie, leaves prematurely and does not return. Robinson has shown the fragility of psychological adjustments which are easily subverted outside the asylum as defined by Laing.

Given the changing patterns of distribution of film and the heavy use of films in college

curricula, it is possible to see *Asylum* in an ideal way with congenial groups willing to discuss the implications of what has been seen and heard in the film itself. Such sessions should, I think, be part of the schedule of film showings. *Asylum* is not another audiovisual aid for explanation of another theory of psychology; rather it disturbs normal film rhetoric. It does not impose a theory but allows one to be evoked. The filmmakers have tried to be anonymous, yet, aware that they are filming, have considered the possible causative relation between their subjects and the film-makers' presence. In discussion, the Laingian theory emerges, even without psychological terminology, and the question of the reaction of a film subject to a direct camera needs continually to be clarified. *Asylum* entertains in that it enlarges a moviegoer's experience of the world and provokes him to think about the ordered sets in the filmed lives of other men and women. He sees his own self better and becomes more thoughtful about the situations of others.

In *Asylum*, a genre of film-making based on the TV interview and the TV feature story with the man-in-the-street flowers into art. In *Troublemakers*, a 1967 film study of a group of neighbors trying to get the city of Newark to install a red light at an intersection where a child had been run over, seemingly endless arguments between street demonstrators and city officials or motorists showed how ineffective group actions can be: the red light is not installed. The film alerted the moviegoer to the frustration possible among the poor, even when they act with a single mind, showing the failure of democratic grass-root maneuvers to audiences accustomed to victories. And Frederick Wiseman has been perfecting a technique for demonstrating the operation of institutions, whether *High School*, *Hospital*, or institutional police officers at work in *Law and Order* and soldiers undergoing *Basic Training*. He eschews facile solutions by seeing men and women at work, adjusting and suffering on the job. These films also require audience participation. Like them, *Asy-*

lum does not fix blame; it isolates and explores a tragic dilemma that discussion and action can, perhaps, abate.

It would seem, at first glance, that Allan King's *Warrendale* is closer in spirit than *Troublemakers* to *Asylum* because Allan King's film displays successful therapy that involves keeping mentally ill children in a state of awareness of society, monitors holding them and struggling with them when they attempt to withdraw either by sleeping too much or by becoming socially intransigent. Laing saw *Warrendale* and approved of its approach. But *Warrendale* is reportage of a successful operation. *Troublemakers* is a film whose importance I did not at first understand. The desperate cameramen trying to be on the spot to record a truth provide to their objectivity a poetic intensity, in part through repetitions, in jagged-edged confrontations, between citizens and authorities. Its objectivity is not geared toward solution as is *Warrendale's*. The same objectivity and intensity mark *Asylum*, the moviegoer feeling the desires and emotions of the director and editor, whose quest does not simplify through optimism the experiences they are recording.

*Asylum* has not been made for philanthropic purposes, as *Wednesday's Child* is being used. But it is a document of such importance as to justify all the men with cameras who, like ants, crawl over the landscape in vain attempts to record the truth.

Taken together, *Wednesday's Child* and *Asylum* not only illustrate Laing's concepts by translating them into percepts but also present coherently desperate lives with which the moviegoer can identify. Laing's conceptual prose, even that of *The Divided Self*, is more persuasive than Roach's melodramatic illustration of the source material of Laing's generalizations. Hence the literate moviegoer feels cheated of intellect in his reading of the film version of the story of Julie. Missing are the general laws governing the mind and the vivid analysis of data that identifies sub-persons of the schizoid personality. While new concepts are shown without

comment, *Wednesday's Child* is, finally another example of naturalism, implying that environment functions like fate in our lives.

*Asylum*, unlike *Warrendale* or Wiseman's *Titicut Follies*, is a record of kindness on all sides, showing horrors that transpire in spite of good will. The ways the director and his cameraman-editor pursue their subjects—patients, parents, doctors, delivery boys—with cameras that search out existential truth, makes it unlike anything seen on the screen before, a film so doggedly following characters over a period of time that the principals change, without notice, before your eyes. The film-makers of *Asylum* grasp something beyond the reach of art.

## HELP!

By stringent economies, FQ has managed to survive the budget austerities imposed on us two years ago. Circulation continues to rise, and in the year ahead we hope to spend more time and money in making the journal visually attractive. The best way to be sure of receiving it regularly is, of course, to subscribe (subscribers also get the yearly index). But we need help to make it easier for new readers to find FQ in bookstores. If there is a store (or newsstand) near you that seems a potential new outlet—or runs out of copies because it doesn't order enough—please let us know and we will carry on from there. Just send a note or postcard to Film Quarterly, University of California Press, Berkeley 94720. And while you're at it, let us know what you have liked or hated in recent issues; we are planning to expand and enliven our Controversy & Correspondence section.



## Between Vermont and Violence: Film Portraits of Vietnam Veterans

“When Johnny Comes Marching Home” is not only the title of a popular Civil War song; it is a symbol and a situation. It is a symbol with curiously ambivalent meanings. It signifies the return of heroes, of wars ended, of happy reunions after hard won but glorious victories, and of peace after battle. It is also a sign of dissension, of nervous uncertainty lest, in truth, we have not prepared a “land fit for heroes.”

—Franklin Fearing, “Warriors Return: Normal or Neurotic?” *Hollywood Quarterly*, 1945.

In the controversial play *Sticks and Bones*, a blind veteran of Vietnam is turned over to his family by a sergeant who travels about the country delivering the sightless, the helpless, and the mindless in exchange for receipts. David, our hero, eventually proves so embarrassing and inconvenient to his all-American family (Ozzie and Harriet, his mom and dad, and Rick, his kid brother) that they talk him into killing himself in the living room. CBS has backed away from airing Joseph Papp’s television version of the play—nor does *Sticks and Bones* seem Hollywood’s meat. Indeed, the two dozen or so veterans I have noticed on the screen seem more inclined to kill than to be killed.

Surveying the film treatment of veterans at the end of World War II in the very first issue of this journal, Fearing, a professor of psychology, concluded that “the meanings with which we clothe the bare facts of demobilization will reveal our basic conceptions of the war itself and the reasons for which it was fought.” That thesis seems valid today, for the majority of films about veterans of Vietnam present them as violent drifters, brutalized and threatening figures reflecting (if not created by) unconscious attitudes

toward the war and the men who fought it.

To put it another way: Vietnam has produced a large body of young men who practiced or witnessed at first hand the sanctioned and pragmatic use of violence—not surprisingly, film and television writers and producers have assumed the mass audience will accept the portrayal of veterans as constantly violent, given to hand-grenade fraggings in hotel elevators and (does life ever imitate art) sniping from rooftops.

Recently, Murray Polner prefaced *No Victory Parades: The Return of the Vietnam Veteran* with the observation that “Unlike the returning servicemen of earlier wars, they have not been celebrated in film or song; there are no more victory parades.” Polner is only partly correct—there *have* been close to twenty films about veterans, but in no sense has the homecoming been an occasion for celluloid celebration. If anything, Johnny’s return has been unsung and unnoted at best and at worst a catalyst for violence.

For any viewer old enough to remember the sensitive films about the homecomings following World War II, the shabbiness of the current crop is particularly striking. Our involvement in Vietnam has been three or four times longer than that in World War II, yet Vietnam has not

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This article grows out of research for a longer and broader study of the Vietnam war’s impact on the American film. Having surveyed reviews in the *New York Times*, *Film Facts*, *Variety*, and the extensive clipping files at Lincoln Center, I believe that I have located almost every significant film about Vietnam veterans. I would, however, appreciate hearing from readers who know of other films that should have been included. Julian Smith, Woodman Barn, Packers Falls Road, Durham, N.H. 03824.

The war  
brought  
home:  
veterans  
as  
"honorary  
Vietcong":  
WELCOME  
HOME,  
SOLDIER  
BOYS



produced a single film with a chance of aspiring to the heights of *The Best Years of Our Lives*, which won seven Academy Awards in 1946—nor has even one of the score of Vietnam films come close to the kind of commercial and popular appeal represented by the Oscar, that much maligned but indicative measure of what the film industry proclaims to respect. Significantly, the only film about a veteran to be similarly honored during the decade—more of Vietnam, *The Subject Was Roses*, is about the homecoming of a soldier in the mid-forties.

World War II, to say the least, was a great popular success—a conflict that had, as Andrew Sarris observed recently, something for everyone: “Hitler and Fascism for the Bolshies, slant-eyed Japs for the racists, a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor for the patriots, gas chambers for the humanitarians, and gifted phrase-makers at the helm in London and Washington.” The universal appeal is still there, if one simply looks at *Variety’s* 1973 list of “all-time box office hits,” films with more than four million dollars in rentals. In the last decade alone, a decade that would seem to have soured us on war, the best war of our lives was represented by *Catch-22*, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *Summer of ’42*, *The Dirty*

*Dozen*, *The Longest Day*, *Tora Tora Tora*, *Von Ryan’s Express*, *Where Eagles Dare*, *The Great Escape*, *Kelly’s Heroes*, *In Harm’s Way*, *The Battle of the Bulge*, and, of course, *Patton*.

Unlike Vietnam, World War II brought us together, largely silencing the kind of internal conflicts that tended to surface during Vietnam. As the popular arts of the forties supported our soldiers, the tensions of war and return were not as disruptive as they might have been. After World War II, films about veterans gave occasion for reflecting upon the healing values of our domestic and civic institutions. Thus, the major films about veterans in those years tended to present extreme handicaps—an amputee (*The Best Years of Our Lives*), a paraplegic (*The Men*), and blindness (*The Pride of the Marines*). With the exception of the just-released *The POW* (about a paralyzed veteran held prisoner to his wheelchair), Vietnam has not yet inspired films about physically disabled men, perhaps because the psychic wounds have been deep enough (and because the returned soldiers have needed all their strength for striking back at a society that is depicted as having betrayed them).

Today’s celluloid veteran finds that the folks

at home—when he has a home—don't understand him, and that civic authorities, merchants, and employers are indifferent, corrupt, or both. In short, today's films about veterans reflect the moral isolation of the soldier—an isolation created in part by Hollywood's reluctance to provide the kind of patriotic and emotional support given to earlier wars.

Though United States involvement had been growing since the early sixties, the first cinematic veterans did not return until 1968, when "Johnny" Taylor, a would-be actor, came back from Vietnam armed with a film script given him by a grateful Hollywood writer just before he died. Trying to parlay the script into an acting role for himself, Johnny gets involved in various absurd adventures, including the rescue of a fair maiden from a Nazi-suited motorcycle gang. So much for a film that promised in its title, *The Angry Breed*, to delineate a whole generation of the disillusioned.

That same year another hero came back in *Angels from Hell*, an American International release, to start up his own motorcycle gang. Using his combat experience to outmaneuver rivals, contemptuous of the "Establishment" that sent him to war, defiant of all authority, this youth died in the shootout that ends an ominous number of the later veteran films.

Then came *The Big Bounce* in 1969, the first and one of the few returned soldier films to be released by a major studio (Warners). In his first feature film, Ryan O'Neal played a drifting survivor of Vietnam who gets involved in pointlessly sordid scrapes rather than going home to the conventional mom-and-apple-pie rewards of past wars, past films. Still a migratory worker at the end, heading nowhere from nowhere, he receives the disgusted tribute of a upraised middle finger from the girl who might have given his life a direction, albeit a criminal one.

1970 saw the veteran-as-motorcyclist gimmick escalated into *The Losers*, in which two vets return to Indochina as part of an ultra-violent five man team who ride their Hondas into the ultimate rumble: against the Vietcong. They all die

in gory slow motion in order to rescue a civilian presidential advisor who, in a grotesque parody of all high-handed "Establishment" ingratitude, denounces them as trash.

*The Losers* was a low-budget exploitation film seemingly meant for a particularly specialized audience of the disenchanting—not just veterans, but all those who have gotten the short end of the stick and take bitter solace in extreme representations of their plight. But 1970 also supplied an exploitation film for the more privileged disenchanting. *Getting Straight* tried to give them a hero in Harry, the graduate student played by Elliot Gould. I hesitate, however, to give more than passing reference to this film, for having been to Vietnam was just part of Harry's contemporary credentials.

Indeed, it is often hard to say whether some of these films are about veterans as veterans, or whether their status is simply part of a larger problem. In the recent *Journey Through Rosebud*, for example, a white draft resister is played off against an Indian veteran of Vietnam. Frustrated and made cynical by his contacts with white America, Frank, the Indian, did not stop his fellow soldiers from committing atrocities—it was not, after all, his country's honor at stake. As with black veterans in other films, Frank's racial and social isolation has been made more ironic and intense by his experience in the Nam, so the film exploits his identity as a veteran.

In addition to *Journey Through Rosebud*, 1971/1972 produced no less than a dozen films about veterans, only two of which (God be thanked) were motorcycle gang sagas. The first of these, *The Hard Ride*, is so maudlin I won't bother summarizing the plot except to say the coffins of two former Vietnam buddies, one white and one black, are guarded at the end by their common ally, an Indian biker named Big Red. More interesting in its possibilities is *Chrome and Hot Leather*, about four Green Berets who set out to revenge a girl killed in an auto accident caused by a motorcycle gang. Disguised as bikers, they track down and trap the gang in a canyon, then capture them with mortars and tear gas.



CHROME AND HOT LEATHER

Could it be that *Chrome and Hot Leather* was meant to be a socially useful film, suggesting as it does an acceptable outlet for lethal skills learned in war? Yet another employable Green Beret was *Slaughter's* titular hero, played by Jim Brown. Returning home to find his parents murdered, Captain Slaughter goes to work for an unspecified federal agency that allows him to use his military expertise to destroy the enemies of his parents and country. (Black homecomings seem particularly unlucky—the hero of *The Bus is Coming* returns to investigate the murder of his brother.)

Where Green Beret Slaughter continued the war on a personal level, the half-Indian hero of *Billy Jack* uses his Green Beret experience and training to work for peace. Here, for once, is a film that finds part of the solution right in the problem, a film that harnesses violence in support of peace and brotherhood. Part of its great box-office success and growing status as a cult film is based on Billy Jack's appealing mixture of Christ-like attributes and readiness for physical combat.

A less successful attempt to turn the man who has suffered through Vietnam into a traditional sacrificial figure is about a youth named Jud Carney (J. C. incarnate?). Set at Christmas time, *Jud* employs such lines as "Jud, if you don't want to be crucified, don't stay around crosses." Tortured by the memory of having killed a child

in Vietnam, Jud drifts aimlessly, unable or unwilling to help others, putting his few remaining emotional reserves into savage fights and denunciations of the society he defended.

As I point out in a long article in the Winter 1973 issue of *The Journal of Popular Film*, Hollywood has looked away from Vietnam. Perhaps the most obvious reasons for the scarcity of films actually set in Vietnam or dealing directly with our involvement there are that the war has been unpopular and its issues politically, morally, and emotionally unclear, and that television has satisfied the home audience's curiosity about what the war looks like.

Apart from Joseph Mankiewicz's *The Quiet American* (1957), made years before our active open involvement began, the only major American fiction film set in Vietnam is John Wayne's *The Green Berets*. Most of the films about veterans I have listed so far were directed, produced, and acted by relative newcomers outside the major studios. But as the war wound down, and as the veterans and their problems have accumulated, more established figures in the American film industry have begun to look at the war in terms of its effect on the men who fought it and, through them, on the home front.

In short, the veteran supplies a safe peg on which to hang a relevant story, and spares the

BILLY JACK



film-maker the necessity of going on location in Vietnam or trying to recreate it on a back lot. Increasingly, major directors, actors, writers, and studios have gotten involved in films about the war through the simple expedient of bringing the war home. Let us take a close look at four of these films.

First, there is *The Old Man's Place* (also known as *Glory Boy*), written by Stanford Whitmore, who scripted one of the best antiwar films to come out of the Korean conflict. Conceived, ironically, on the eve of our first escalation in Vietnam, *War Hunt* (1962) is about a psychopathic soldier who can't stop killing when the fighting stops. Thus, it foreshadows the current crop of films about men who can't turn off their lethal skills once they return stateside. When told to come back from a demilitarized zone because "the war is over," the psychopathic hero cries out prophetically, "Which war?"

So with *The Old Man's Place*, in which a much-decorated sergeant, between tours of duty in Vietnam, inappropriately extends the kind of activity for which he was honored into the civilian realm. Top billing in the film goes to Arthur Kennedy as the father of a gentle veteran. Having sent his son off to Vietnam believing war is a John Wayne movie come to life, the "old man" represents the generation that remembers World War II with fondness. The film begins to get heavy in its allegory when the old man calls on one of his cronies, the local sheriff. While the latter blasts away at clay pigeons, keeping his marksmanship in shape for appropriate civilian use, the old man makes allowances for recent violence out at his place by reminding the sheriff of their own problems in adjusting to peace following *their* war. After assorted beatings and rape, the film ends with veterans young and old blasting each other to death, thus rather easily resolving the issues raised by the notion that Vietnam is the love child of America's affair with World War II.

The old-soldier gambit of *The Old Man's Place* surfaces in Elia Kazan's *The Visitors* as well. Harry, a middle-aged writer whose fondest memories seem to be of killing Japanese in



SLAUGHTER

the Pacific, is immediately attracted to two young Vietnam veterans who come to visit his despised son-in-law, a former buddy who turned them in for raping and murdering a Vietnamese girl. As did the makers of *The Old Man's Place*, Kazan very quickly and almost too easily links fondness for World War II with acceptance of current atrocities (one remembers Audie Murphy's "I-might-have-done-the-same-thing-myself" defense of Lt. Calley was immediately picked up by the press).

Andrew Sarris was enraged by both these films: "The writers in question all need Vietnam as an excuse to make audiences look at malignant mediocrities they would never tolerate in a peacetime aesthetic. Suddenly we are deluged with the World War Two-veteran-father-fetchit figures as if every generation since time immemorial had not been afflicted with old, old soldiers who refused to fade away."

True, both films share a rape and revenge conclusion, but I would like to do a bit of special pleading for a more careful consideration of Kazan's film. Several things about it strike me as unique. For one, it is the only film about Vietnam by a major director. Secondly, because

Kazan is established and has his choice of projects, he did not need to risk his reputation with a topic almost immediately doomed to critical and financial disaster, yet he did. Thirdly, and most important, Kazan's film is almost casual in its delineation of Vietnam's effect: though the visitors were sent to Leavenworth for raping and killing a girl, they are now out of prison, released without any plot justification. They are not even particularly frightening figures—they watch football on television with Harry, shoot a neighbor's dog as a favor to him, beat up his son-in-law (who starts the fight), rape his daughter, and go their way. In today's perspective it is all very casual, everyday, and realistic, unlike the majority of the returned veteran stories that build to violent and generally *fatal* climaxes. No one gets seriously hurt in *The Visitors*, for it is not a film that takes refuge in the kind of extreme catharsis or violent resolution audiences have been trained to expect.

More than any other film-maker who has ap-

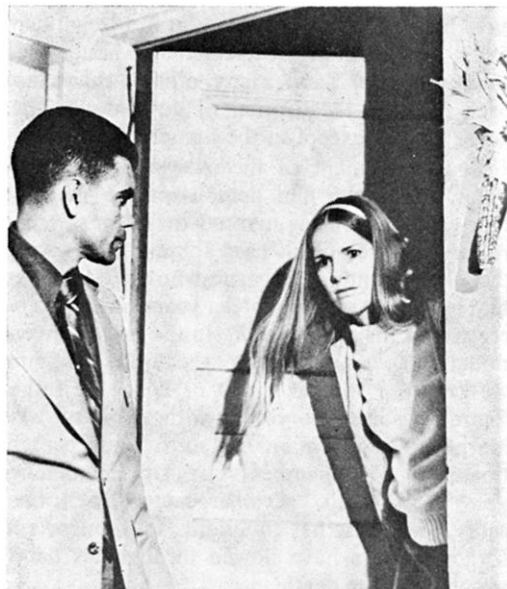
proached Vietnam, Kazan has brought the war *home*, made it a family affair. His son wrote the script, Kazan financed it with his own money, and shot it at his own country home in Connecticut. The very fact that *The Visitors* is set in Connecticut brings it home in another sense, for almost all of the veteran films are set in the Southwest, with about a dozen in California.

Which brings us to *Welcome Home, Soldier Boys*, perhaps the most extreme of the homecomings. Structured (à la *The Grapes of Wrath*) as a journey from an Army separation center in Arkansas toward the promised land of California, this film follows the pilgrimage of four buddies, all members of a Green Beret fire-team, toward a dream ranch that doesn't exist. The soldier boys of the title are the diversified combat team encountered in so many conventional war movies: the Sergeant, an old-timer; his silent, hawklike Sidekick; the Fat Guy who supplies comic relief; and the Kid, the youngest, smallest, and most expressive.

But what is a conventional combat team doing travelling across the Southwest in a funeral director's Cadillac loaded to the fins with grenades, rifles, rocket launchers, machine guns, and ammunition? The answer comes when, after being misunderstood, rejected, cheated, and persecuted, a little psychological accident leads them to wipe out the population of Hope, New Mexico (a real town, grateful to the film-makers for buying up and burning abandoned and run down property). At the end, Hopeless, they put on their uniforms to face the National Guard troops who come in to destroy them, but not before they have a chance to shoot down an Army helicopter, something our boys haven't gotten to do in the Nam. In other words, they have become honorary Vietcong.

Though *Welcome Home, Soldier Boys*, a reverse *Easy Rider*, resembles the many low-budget motorcycle pictures that characterized the early stages of the returned soldier genre, it is the product of a major studio, Twentieth Century-Fox. Released in mid or late 1972, it marks the growing willingness on the part of the "re-

Elia Kazan's THE VISITORS



sponsible" portion of the industry to exploit and examine the violent repercussions of the war.

Finally, there is another ironic homecoming in a film that seems to have been made for television, *Welcome Home, Johnny Bristol*. With the most impressive cast of any of the films devoted to Vietnam veterans (Martin Landau, Jane Alexander, Brock Peters, Forrest Tucker, Martin Sheen, and Pat O'Brien) *Johnny Bristol* more closely resembles the kind of affirmative "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" story that followed World War II than does any other film I have discussed here. The reason for this is simple: by concerning itself with an escaped POW, *Welcome Home Johnny Bristol* has found an emotional strategy that by-passes the diverse issues raised by the war.

As I suspect the return of our POW's may unleash a small flood of nonviolent films, both good and bad, intelligent and melodramatic, I think we might note how *Johnny Bristol* anticipates this one topic which can bring us together.\* There has been no clear military victory in Vietnam and great divisions remain concerning the morality of the war—but the return of the prisoners is an occasion for something approaching national agreement and relief.

The film opens with Captain Johnny Bristol (Martin Landau) in a bamboo cage, a prisoner of the Vietcong. Only one thing sustains him: his memory of a happy childhood in a picture-book New England village. Prompted by another prisoner, a man without pleasant memories of home, Johnny repeats his stories, thus justifying nostalgic flashbacks to the town minister delivering a speech on peace and tolerance at the Fourth of July celebration in the town square.

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\**The POW* (1973), mentioned earlier, is about a metaphorical prisoner, a man trapped by the crippling wound he received in Vietnam. Another "POW" is the character played by Peter Fonda in *Two People* (1973): an Army deserter returning from foreign exile to face imprisonment at home.

Rescued by a helicopter raid, Johnny Bristol returns "home" by slow stages. First he must recover from wounds and malnutrition in an Army hospital full of men who have not yet made it home—including a World War II veteran (Forrest Tucker) who has been there for a quarter of a century. When he is finally released in the company of a nurse, Bristol heads for his home town. As he nears his destination, he says to the nurse "Everything good that ever happened to me happened here, in Charles, Vermont." But Charles, Vermont (the combination of words will be repeated no less frequently than "Rosebud" in *Citizen Kane*) is not where he remembered it. Moreover, there is no record of any town with that name.

From that point, the film becomes Bristol's reluctant search for the truth about his own past. Eventually he learns that his memories of a Grandma Moses America are fantasies, that his true home is a run-down Philadelphia neighborhood at the intersection of Charles and Vermont Streets, and that the brutal murder of his parents when he was a child had left him emotionally homeless. Charles, Vermont, is the creation of a man whose real memories would have been of no comfort to him in foreign captivity. In other words, Vietnam has forced Johnny Bristol (and many other Americans) back into the idealization of an America that never existed except in the imagination.

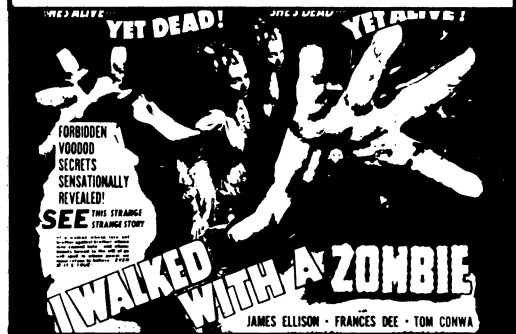
In its treatment of the character played by Pat O'Brien, the film demolishes the patriotic type-casting that has marked the actor's screen roles. In search of his past, Johnny tracks down the old recruiting sergeant who had inducted him into the Army seventeen years earlier. "You remember me, don't you?" In the more conventional film, we would expect the kindly old figure we know so well as priest or coach or father figure to solve everything with a bit of wise blarney. But Vietnam has soured our perceptions: "Do I remember you? Do I remember you? No, I don't," says Sergeant O'Brien, then sadly confesses that thousands of faceless and forgotten boys have flowed through his hands toward war and death.

As in most of the other returned veteran sagas or melodramas, the war in Vietnam is never an issue in *Welcome Home, Johnny Bistol*. We see morally neutral action scenes set there, we see the name on a map, we hear the word "Vietnam" once or twice on the sound track—but Vietnam's effect is pervasive. Johnny comes home to find the water and air poisoned, to find assassins walking the land—no wonder he begins to suspect that the Army or the government is hiding the truth about what they have done with his home. Vietnam, then, is a kind of hallucinatory drug that makes him invent an ideal America; but it is also a truth serum which forces him to see through the false ideal.

Were my purpose didactic, I would proclaim that although it has a happy ending (Johnny accepts reality and goes off to marry his nurse) and other traits of the garden-variety melodrama, *Welcome Home, Johnny Bristol* is a step toward the kind of film that welcomes veterans back into our society rather than presenting them as threatening figures to be feared and rejected.

While I was writing this article and despairing of finding a stopping point, Mark Robson's newest film came to town. Directed by the man who gave us *The Home of the Brave* and *The Valley of the Dolls*, this story of three women whose husbands are either missing or imprisoned in Vietnam seems an almost anachronistic return to the standard World War II homefront soap opera. Yet, its title alone sums up the condition of the Vietnam veteran as seen in our films to date: *Limbo*. Neither in the Hell of Indochina or the Paradise that home was once said to be, the Vietnam veteran is somewhere in between.

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## Four Years of North African Film

*The Arab Problem is not the Black Problem.*  
—EL MOUDJAHID (Algerian daily paper),  
1972

There are three countries in the Maghrib, or “the sunset,” the fertile promontory that juts further north into the Mediterranean than any other part of Africa—Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia—and they all make movies, although with widely varying frequency and under widely varying financial situations. And although they are all influenced by the Arabic culture that has spread itself over North and most of Central Africa since the year 647, they all have something more in common—failure. Why? They are not all bad films, even from a classical point of view.

A second wave of Arabs roared across North Africa, escaping a probably economically caused *coup d'état* in Damascus in 750; they ended up in Spain until another, Spanish economic revolution, better known as the Inquisition, forced them and their compatriots the Berbers from North Africa back to North Africa. The last Arab city-state in Spain fell in 1492—the year that Columbus, or his associates, started to spread Catholicism all over the Americas. 1492 was one of the worst of all possible years for the Third World.

And while it may be small compensation, it is perhaps also thus that there is a strong influence of Luis Buñuel in Moroccan film. Sadism mixed with beautiful images, animals dead and alive and sometimes with symbolic meaning—both are in Hamid Benani's 1970 *Wechma* (*Markings*), one of the two Moroccan films we will spend some time with. The title is supposedly a reference to the tattoos that Berber and Arab women place on their foreheads,

hands, and ankles but ironically is a reference to the marks left by ill treatment on the hero as he grows up. He is an orphan, he burns a young owl, he plays with his stepfather's gun, his stepfather brands his hand with a hot iron bar forever. Near the end of the film another lad is tied up and beaten with a dead snake. Benani assures me that several incidents in his film are inspired by Berber superstitions, as opposed to Islamic religious beliefs—but if so they are quite different from Berber superstitions in Algeria. In truth, Benani saw and was impressed with Buñuel's *Los Olvidados* while he was studying at IDHEC in Paris. If you think that Benani has stolen something from Buñuel, I would rather suggest that he has found a common bond in Buñuel—a common fund of emotion and fear somewhere in the subsoil near the Straits of Gibraltar. Morocco is almost Spain and the Flamenco may or may not be older than North African Andalusian music. Nobody knows.

The influence of Buñuel is developed to an even higher degree in Ben Barka Souhel's 1972 *Alf Yid wa Yid* (*A Thousand and One Hands*). Now in color, chameleons change, snakes are stoned to death, people ride donkeys in the desert and monkeys find themselves on chains. People are overworked, they fall down stairs, break their backs and kill one another—all in images of almost unsurpassed beauty. Women card wool, men dye it and carry it into the sun and Mimsy Farmer, cocktail glass in hand, fills us in on the cultural background of the rich and expensive Berber rugs which come from this never-ending process. *Alf Wid wa Yid* is *mi-chemin* between Jorge Sanjines's *Blood of the Condor*—a young worker, unable to obtain medical aid for his father, who was injured while working, kills the wife of his boss—and a docu-

mentary on rug-making. Actually, beyond the Buñuel influence, Barka seems to have invented a new style of film—the false documentary. There is no dialogue for a rather unbearable length of time (and what there is is badly dubbed into French, the final print having been made in Italy). Each shot in the beginning of the film could be from a nicely photographed documentary—but for this silence and the fact that each shot lasts a little too long. A green door opens, a donkey enters with bags of wool on its back, tattooed women in bright Berber dresses card the wool, a man takes the wool onto the roof of the building where they are working. Then the actions are repeated.

I wish to switch back to *Wechma* here to clarify the reason for this repetition. In *Wechma* the hero, when he grows up (we do not see his adolescence), goes to work in a carnival riding a motorcycle around the inside of a large barrel. The central image of the film occurs at this point: the hero rides the motorcycle around and around inside the barrel, stabilizing himself by centrifugal force, and the camera stares down into the barrel for what is again an almost unbearable length of time. This is in a way the problem of Morocco—how can a disinherited people find peace by centrifugal force? Belong-

This article is the second in a series by Lyle Pearson, who has spent much of his time in North Africa and Paris in recent years. The first article, "Four Years of African Film," appeared in *FQ*, Spring 1973, and dealt with sub-Saharan films. The third will deal with films from Egypt and adjacent areas.

ing neither to the East nor the West, Morocco remains a much more heavily Arabized country than Algeria or Tunisia and yet the roots of much of its richness—Spain—have been cut off.

Thus the repeated action in *Alf Yid wa Yid* begins to take on not only a daily but a circular pattern; but Barka is as much against European-

ization as he is against exploitation by his own kind. One of the great moments in his film comes when Miss Farmer drops an ice cube into a whiskey glass accompanied by the Eurovision station-break music. You can hear jet planes on the sound track and when you hear jets in Morocco they usually belong to an American air base. I asked Barka if his film was anti-American and he answered "Not particularly." I said Mimsy Farmer seems to be only a symbol when she is killed; she is not the patron but only his wife. I asked, not wanting to mention specifically the King of Morocco upon whose life an assassination attempt is made about once a year, "Where is the patron?" "Everywhere," said Barka, "everywhere."

Both *Wechma* and *Alf Yid wa Yid* are excellent films but they don't present any answers—no more than does Buñuel; the Spanish revolution, after all, was a failure and there is no reason to assume that one in Morocco would be more successful. These films aren't getting any answers either, in spite of having been shown in several film festivals and having won several awards. *Wechma* for example has shown in at least five festivals, has won a major French award, and second prize at Carthage in 1970, and has never been distributed in France (it failed in Morocco). It is perhaps too early to know what will happen to *Alf Yid wa Yid*; it is dubbed badly, but it did win the Ouagadougou festival this year. All it needs is for somebody to buy it.

These are not the only two Moroccan films that exist but they are Morocco's only two independent productions and its only feature films since a series of government-sponsored films ended in 1969. The government-sponsored films often suffered from bad material and low budgets; *Wechma* and *Alf Yid wa Yid* suffer only from a lack of interest outside the country.

Spain and 1492—that's why there aren't any Moroccans in South America and why there is no interest in Arabs in either of the Americas.

The problem of film in Algeria, where the ex-

Spanish Arabs never returned, is quite different. Here we have an emancipated country\* in full use of its oil reserves, a country reaching toward socialism, where land is being redistributed to small farmers—and where the movies are terrible. Hannes Kamphausen in “Cinema in Africa: A Survey” (*Cineaste*, Summer 1972) says that after Algeria nationalized its theaters it lived off its film reserves until European distributors finally “gave in” but that’s not exactly true. French bombs are still *refilé* on Algeria as quickly as they fail in France and in spite of Frederick Gronich’s trip here awhile back for “business” only one American film has opened in almost a year (four more are scheduled to open soon). In Morocco, where the cinemas are not nationalized, Cannes festival winners open, at least in the big cities, soon after they do anywhere else. The same is true in Tunisia, which has several specialized *art et essai* cinemas.

More important, there are fewer Oriental films in Algeria than in Tunisia and certainly fewer than in Morocco, particularly Egyptian films. William Walling in “To Give Them New Faces” (*Africa Report*, June 1971) says this is because Egyptian Arabic is difficult for Algerians to understand. Granted that classical Arabic is difficult for them to understand, this statement is still not true; most of the imported programs on Algerian television if they are not from the United States are from Egypt and Lebanon and are presented without subtitles. Oriental films on the contrary are shown in theaters with French subtitles. American TV programs (*Green Acres*, *Perry Mason*, *The Great Adventure*) are dubbed into French. The truth is simply that Algeria doesn’t buy films except when it has to, and then usually the least expensive it can find.

The only thing that saves filmgoing in Algeria

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\*Emancipated from the Spanish, the Turks and the French—but not necessarily from the Arabs. “Algeria is not an Arabic country but a Berber Country Arabized to a greater or lesser degree.” —Ahmed Taleb, Algerian Minister of Culture, *Berber Institute Bulletin*, Paris, September 1972.

is the Cinémathèque, which has access to all of the films that remain in Algeria, runs special programs through embassies, occasionally buys an Arab or African film, preserves others donated to it, and presents five films a day (there is no Cinémathèque in Morocco and there has been one in Tunisia only since October 1972). With the situation of commercial cinema in Algeria being so bad—French duds, Italian westerns, an occasional Russian film—the Algerian Cinémathèque wants to expand as much as it can and although it can never replace the commercial circuit at least four small Cinémathèques now exist outside the capital.

Whatever Algerian film people think of Ouagadougou (according to *El Moudjahid* they don’t like it and would like to take it into their own hands), this doesn’t explain the extensive lack of Algerian films that has been keeping me out of Algerian cinemas since I first came here in 1971. Only one Algerian feature has opened in two years (they used to open at a frequency of two a year), there hasn’t been a new newsreel in six months (Tunisia and Morocco make one a week) and unseen and failed films are stockpiling everywhere. If the Algerian government doesn’t like the way a film turns out—if it doesn’t follow its socialistic-Islamic policies or is very bad technically—it simply doesn’t open. One of my best friends is still sitting over a glass of wine at *Contrescarpe* in Paris waiting for money to make thirty copies of his film so he can come home again. He made a comedy called *Visages de l’Algérie 1972* (*Faces of Algeria 1972*), but its already May 1973. He’ll never come home.

The film that has opened is Mohammed Bouamari’s *El Faham* (*The Charcoal Man*), a sort of blues comedy that received a second prize at Carthage in 1972. But *El Faham* is not the first nor the best Algerian comedy, and it’s badly made; people at Carthage felt sorry for it because the Algerian government was trying to stop it from being shown (and there may be some parts cut), and because it is “the first Algerian film to criticize the present Algerian government.” It shows a charcoal maker eking out a living, whose

Mohammed  
Zinet's  
VISAGES  
de  
l'Algérie



profession no longer is practicable because of advancements made in packaging natural gas, and whose wife secretly goes to work in a woolen mill shaking off the family restrictions (veil, winding sheet) that have kept North African women from being themselves since the last Arab invasion in about 973.<sup>1</sup> Toward the end of the film the charcoal man enters a government office and asks a friend with whom he fought during Algeria's war for independence if he might be able to find him a new job. "I'll see," says the ex-friend, and we last see him talking on a telephone but through a glass partition and we are unable to hear what he is saying. The idea according to Bouamari is that the ex-friend may be asking about a job—or he may be calling his mistress.

This I don't think is very strong criticism of present Algerian government policies and yet to

accept it one has to accept that the Algerian revolution, at least concerning its citizens, has been a failure. Whether or not the Algerian "revolution" (the Algerians call it a revolution; the French call it a war) has been a success or not is not directly what I'm writing about.\* The subject, rather is whether Algerian film has been a success and the answer is No. You're not getting any Cuban films in the US because of the continued blockade against all business with Cuba but there is no such blockade against Algeria. The reason you're not getting any Algerian films, even the old ones, in the US is (1) these movies aren't very good, and/or (2) nobody cares about Algerians.†

There is one Algerian film that I like very much—a comedy called *Hassan Terro* (*Hassan the Terrorist*). I'm sorry to stick with the comedies but they're such a relief after Ahmed

\*For that see any number of volumes by American sociologists, including William B. Quandt's *Revolution and Political Leadership: Algeria, 1954-1968*, MIT Press, 1968, possibly the best of the lot.

†There may be a connection between Algerian culture in general and the quality of these films. When the Prophet Mohammed entered the Kaaba in 629 (our calendar) his first job was to smash all of the images

the generations before him had created. Salah Stetie in "Islam and the Image," Georges Sadoul, ed., *The Cinema in the Arab Countries*, Beyrouth (UNESCO) 1966, p. 22, discusses this point and finally admits cinema as a possible Moslem art because it is only, as tradition allows, a shadow play. Traditional Berber art is no more pictorial than that of the Arabs, consisting mostly of abstract patterns on cloth, leather and wood.

Rachedi's *Pour que vive Algérie* (*That Algeria May Live*) and the FLN's (National Liberation Front's *Les Bonnes Familles* (*The Good Families*)).

*Hassan Terro*, in its story, is unlike any other film I know. I could make one up and call it *Dagwood Bumstead Goes to War*, but *Hassan Terro* is a dialogue comedy. A superficial comparison, however, could be made between *Hassan Terro* and the Cuban comedy *The Adventures of Juan Quin Quin*. *Hassan Terro* is, again, a dialogue comedy and lacks all of the visual tricks of *Juan Quin Quin*. In addition *Hassan Terro* unlike *Juan Quin Quin* is a send-up not of revolution but of revolutionaries. It holds the box-office record in Algiers (with *Soul to Soul* and *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly*) and yet it was not included in the two-week retrospective of Algerian films recently held at the Cinémathèque Française in Paris. It is the second film by Mohamed Lakhdar Hamina, who made *Le Vent des Aurès* (*The Wind from the Aures Mountains*), and yet it is damned by Algerians and Roumis (an Arabic and Berber word for Europeans) alike. Younés Dacqi, in *Dialogues Algérie-Cinéma*,<sup>2</sup> refers to it as "Lakhdar Hamina's second bomb," and Walling writes that it "failed to live up to the expectations aroused by his first full-length feature." Guy Hennebelle has no better words for it, although his are in French.<sup>3</sup>

I figured a movie with notices like these must be pretty good; besides, whenever I mess up while playing football with the kids in the street they all look at me and yell "Hassan Terro!" I finally found that it was making a week-only reappearance (it was produced in 1968) in a little theater below the Casbah in the Bab El Oued (River Gate) district in Algiers—which has since closed. I didn't like it the first time I saw it and so I talked about it with one of my students\* and went back to see it again.

\*A private student. Walling was a Fulbright scholar at the University of Algiers but I have a blind spot against such positions and I think they do against me. When in Algeria I teach English in and around the Casbah for from one to three dollars an hour.

There is nothing like *Hassan Terro*. It has no style; after the failure of Lakhdar Hamina's slick, imported neorealism in *Le Vent des Aurès*, he was wise enough to give this story of a non-revolutionary, or rather of a revolutionary by sheer accident, what it needs—nothing. Except for two short sequences, one of them again neorealism and the other a dream sequence, *Hassan Terro* doesn't fit into the auteur theory of film—as well it shouldn't. It's based on a stage farce by one Rouiched, who stars in the film (and in several other Algerian films). Rouiched is a popular theatrical, movie, and television comedian and this is the only film for which he has written his own material.\* All Lakhdar Hamina did was to give an attentive eye to Rouiched's proceedings, and Rouiched is a very funny man. Totally bourgeois, with a bad painting on felt of the sacred Kaaba on his living room wall and lace curtains at the windows, Hassan is the sort of Algerian with everything to lose who whistles *La Marseillaise* when French soldiers march by. If he steals a bottle of milk, Koranic verses on theft emanating from a radio follow him all the way home. But there is a revolution going on and Hassan is too chicken even to keep his neighborhood revolutionaries from hiding in his basement. When the French police enter his home and ask why he is home at three in the afternoon he says "I'm sick," and when they ask him why is the whole family at home he answers "We're all sick." Later Hassan dreams he is cut down by a French guillotine.

False rendezvous in cafés, leads given to the police that amount to nothing (Hassan is always

\**Rien Ne Va Plus* (No More Bets), a film "adapted and directed" by Mustapha Kateb from material by Rouiched (listed in "Images du Cinema Algérien," *Cinéma 72*, No. 171, December 1972) is still unfinished and does not feature Rouiched. While this might not be the place to smash the auteur theory, it can be quickly noted that not only have most of the old new directors in France dried up, all of their performers short of Bernadette Lafont have directed their first films in the last two years. We may find an *acteur* theory of cinema just around the French translation gap.

incapable of picking out the guilty person in a line-up) and his general sense of fear convince the French that he *must* be up to something, so headlines appear saying that the French have captured an important terrorist and only the voice of his wife, who belongs to the FLN, returning to Hassan after he is given truth serum, keeps him from revealing the whereabouts of the revolutionaries he knows. The end of the film is peculiar; after the French soldiers leave the office where Hassan has been given the truth serum the camera swings from him to a Venetian-blind-covered window through which we can see the skyline of Algiers. The Venetian blind is there because it is a very fakey view of Algiers and the view is there I think to say, if only through acts like these of Hassan and/or his wife, Algiers will be okay.

Hassan Terro is a sort of man in a pinball machine who simply gets banged around by enough flippers that he finally ends up in the winner's hole, which happens to be marked "Revolution"—and as such should be a lesson to us all. That is, Algerians aren't always as aggressive as they are made out to be, and nobody is particularly pushing Algeria these days. Power is difficult to balance in Algeria because of all the tribal conflicts—Arabs versus Berbers, sedentarys versus nomads, merchants versus socialists,<sup>4</sup> and Algeria suffers from a military dictatorship placed in power two and a half years after it gained its independence, which stifles many things and makes every sort of private business an improbability. Casbah Films, for instance, the Algerian arm that was responsible for the sensitive co-production *The Battle of Algiers*, is out of business as anything but an equipment rental firm.

There are four government branches engaged in film activities—*Actualités Algériennes* (news-reels), the Cinémathèque, RTA (radio-television) and the ONCIC which is responsible for buying and making feature and short films—but only the Cinémathèque and RTA are doing anything. However, two highly touted and long-awaited features have been finished recently. They are *Décembre* (*December*) which, while

finished last July, just opened for the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (April 15, 1973), in which Lakhdar Hamina forgets the simplicity he learned in *Hassan Terro*, and Mohammed Slim Riad's *Sa Naoud* (*We Shall Return*) which has not opened because of "technical faults."\* Part of *Sa Naoud* was filmed in occupied Palestine and part of it in the Sahara; the sewing together of the two may be where the faults occur. And almost a dozen documentaries have been made on the "Agricultural Revolution." These include five television films made by RTA and *Actualités Algériennes' La Revolution Agrarienne*. These six films, with Youssef Chahine's Egyptian feature *El Ard* (*The Earth*) and Nelson Dos Santos's *Vidas Secas*, are being shown to the fellahs (farm laborers) in the south through a system of traveling ciné-buses. But the five directors, in a recent newspaper interview, complained about the meager equipment they were forced to use and the fact that RTA had actually held them up from making the films that they wanted to make for many years. In addition, ten years after a war for independence seems a long time before carrying out a land redistribution program.

We need *Hassan Terro*.

I know of no better—indeed no other—article in English on Algerian films than Walling's and my other comments on it are fairly minor. Walling is not sure what happened to Ahmed Rachedi, who has recently been released as the head of ONCIC, between his 1965 documentary *L'Aube des Damnés* (*The Morning of the Damned*) and his 1970 *L'Opium et Le Bâton* (*The Opium and the Rod*). What happened was that Rachedi was assistant producer on

\*It is too early to know what will happen to *Décembre*, but it exemplifies all the problems of Algerian film: military, sentimental, awkward, and pretentious, it speaks only of yesterday and is half French. According to *Algérie-Actualité* (a weekly news-magazine), April 15, 1973, ". . . the poor Algerian peasant remains a bit-player in the national cinema." Refused by the Venice festival, *Décembre* won a second place award at Ouagadougou this year.

Costa Gavras's *Z* and badly learned all the tricks of big-picture-making. Also, Walling does not mention an Algerian feature, *Les-Hors-la-lois* (*The Outlaws*) fathered by Lakhdar Hamina but signed by Tewfig Farès, who wrote the screenplay for *Le Vent des Aurès*. *Les-Hors-la-lois* is an imitation of a western, which is not a bad idea in Algeria with its glowing Sahara—and after all, Arabs in the East did invent the western in classic works of literature like *The Saga of Antar*. But because there are relatively few American westerns in Algeria *Les-Hors-la-lois* turns out to be a good imitation of a bad Italian western, with lapses into low French comedy and a French pop sound track. *Les-Hors-la-lois* isn't a very good film but it is an omission in the period Walling has covered; *El Faham* and *Décembre* are the only Algerian feature films to reach the public since then and *El Faham* failed. I question nothing else in Walling's article except that his list is one of minor films. Whatever caused the flash of Cuban cinema at least until 1970, its crazy concepts and new techniques, Algerian cinema didn't get it.

Algeria, after all, did not choose to be part of the Third World, although it has chosen to keep its rhetoric whirling as fast as it can. And it is its tight, let's-build-on-oil-and-nothing-else economic policy that keeps movies (and life) from moving forward in one of the most rhetoric-ridden countries in the world. Let's sell the oil—to Hell, one might say, with New Faces.

One can see now I think that the Black Problem is not the Arab Problem, at least not as far as film-making goes: you can work in 35mm in North Africa without the feeling that you're selling out, at least not to Europe—even if your color film has to be developed and your subtitles made there. The exception that proves this Maghribi rule is Tunisia.

Tunisia wants to make feature films and as host to the biggest film festival in Africa for the past eight years, it seems as if it should be able to. But Tunisia is a small country ("A little like Switzerland," says Frederick Gronich<sup>5</sup>)

with a population of five million (compared to 13 million in Algeria and 15 million in Morocco), with few natural resources and depending on hand-produced merchandise and tourism and gifts from the United Nations and friendly European neighbors to withstand poverty, the militant Arabism of Libya, and the socialistic Islam of Algeria. Any Tunisian feature film is going to have to be a success outside of Tunisia to pay for itself and so far none has. Tunisian features tend to be color coproductions that appear to have more of a European hand in them than they sometimes do (a larger percentage of Tunisians speak English than Algerians or Moroccans because of a better developed language system in the schools, and many Tunisian film people train in Canada; Algerians tend to train in Eastern socialist countries and Moroccans in France) or black-and-white, small dramas dealing with futility, the displaced peasant in the city, unaccountable death, family disputes and, yes, prostitution. Two of these black-and-white productions I like very much, Hamouda Ben Halima's *Khelifa Lagraa* (*Khelifa the Scurvy*) and Sadok Aicha's *Mokhtar* (*The Chosen One*).

*Khelifa Lagraa* is the story of an adolescent who insults his neighborhood imam (prayer leader), loses his hair because of a scalp disease, gets drunk, and eventually goes to bed with his married aunt. The film unfortunately is marred technically; one of its reels was destroyed in the laboratory and so one of the central events in the film, a joyful conversation between Khelifa and a young girl, is represented only by a series of still photographs. *Khelifa* has never been distributed in Tunisia, never as far as I know has been shown outside of Africa probably because of its technical faults, and Tunisians don't like it: to them it is a film of "eating"—too "quotidian"—and its point is certainly that nothing much but adolescence is happening in Tunisia.

*Mokhtar* was made a year earlier (1968). It is also humorous, if ultimately more depressing, is almost as inexpensively made (*Khelifa* was made in 16mm) and has a style unlike any film

I know. An anti-film, or a film testing the possibility of making a film, open to spontaneous comment as to that possibility, *Mokhtar* ends with the death of its film-maker hero. People sit in cafés and ignore police sirens, drive their cars no matter where and get out and look at the camera; famous Tunisian personalities are interviewed (in apparently what are improvised if not genuine interviews) as to whether or not they will put money into the hero's planned film (they generally give a begrudging Yes). All of this is photographed with a slightly off-center grey-grey dullness that suggests Aicha is more pessimistic than any of his characters about the making of a successful Tunisian film. He seems to be right—he has directed nothing since and *Mokhtar* remains one of the best of Tunisia's fourteen features.

The short film however is really more exciting in Tunisia than the impossible feature; while Tahar Cheriaa and the Carthage festival bang the drums for big African, Arab, and Technicolor features a series of ciné-clubs is growing all over the country and some students are making clandestine shorts—which the government confiscates whenever it can get its hands on them. Thus, after a film on the president of the country (who is usually referred to as a benevolent dictator) and one on Palestine were pulled, a scheduled afternoon of amateur cinema at Carthage did not take place. The government locked up these "free" films (the film-makers paid for none of the equipment nor film stock) and so we didn't see them—but two other banned 16mm short films still received several showings, partly because the jury included them in the lump sum of five short award winners.

Taieb Louhichi's *Mon Village, Un Village Parmi Tant d'Autres . . .* (*My Village, A Village Among So Many Others . . .*) is a sad account of Tunisian agriculture: with poor soil, no chance of international sales, and no government support, Tunisian farms are according to the film being deserted for the cities—as we see also in the feature *Et Demain . . . Mon Village* is a simple documentary narrated by its young director and finished by him at labora-

tories in Paris. It's not going to be shown much in Tunisia, and its chances of success in countries that aren't directly concerned with Tunisia are very small. It's a devastating account for anyone who cares, but it's probably going to find its greatest audience among film societies in Europe.

The other banned short at Carthage was enough to justify any festival, and has some passages that are worthy of comparison to the most ethereal sequences in *Zéro de Conduite*. Ridha Behi's *Les Seuils Interdits* (*Forbidden Portals*) is the story of a young, sexually frustrated postcard salesman who becomes infatuated with a German tourist. He finds, in what is barely a fantasy sequence, a park in which young tourists are making love with a "No Trespassing—for Tourists Only" sign on it. He buys a copy of *Lui* (the French equivalent of *Playboy*, available in Morocco and Tunisia but banned in Algeria), takes it home and has his fun with it. When he meets the German tourist, there is a beautiful fantasy sequence in which he and she join hands and in slow motion glide through the lobby of her expensive, European-style hotel. In her hotel room, in continued slow motion, he sits on her bed and she, totally naked, glides onto the bed next to him. Cut. The next morning, now out of control of his fantasies, the young man follows the girl to the mosque of Kairouan, which is the most sacred mosque in North Africa, climbs the minaret (tower) after her, and rapes her. In a final scene he is condemned to prison by a court judge. I asked two Egyptians about this film and they said Yes, it happens. I said I would have preferred a final scene in which we see the young man walking away into a crowd of humanity and they said No, this is an extreme case—that is, sexual frustration exists in North Africa, although it doesn't often get as out of control as this.

Whether it is Islam or repressive governments—or a traditional sense of personal subjugation to tribal and family customs that existed in North Africa before the Arabs came—that cause such films as all of these, I feel will be easier to explain in the third article of this series, which



will deal with where Islam came from. Islam is still in its mediaeval period, its fourteenth century, and can only thus sit in conflict with an older, Christian world which has changed greatly, for better or worse, and which has learned to exploit whatever it doesn't like since its own fourteenth century. The fact that occidental movies can be seen in Tunisia may be responsible for such a film as *Les Seuils Interdits*. This I think will be easier to explain in dealing directly with the Near East. More on that and on film in the Near East in the next instalment.

Algiers, April 1973

#### NOTES

1. See Gordon, David C., *Women of Algeria: An Essay on Change*, Harvard Middle East Monographs, Cambridge, Mass., 1968. But Gordon's message seems to be to Think French and he writes as if Algeria's war for independence was not inevitable.
2. Copedith, Paris, n.d.
3. "Afrique: Petite Planète du Cinéma," *Cinema '70*, January 1970.
4. See Bourdieu, Pierre, *Sociologie de l'Algérie*, Presses Universitaires, Paris, 1970.
5. Interview in *Contact* [Tunisian cultural magazine], Tunis, n.d.

#### Additional Bibliography

Boudjedra, Rachid. *Naissance du Cinéma Algérien*, Francois Maspero, Paris, 1971. This volume is banned in Algeria, the author having written previously about Algeria's 1965 *coup d'état*. There is nothing in the present volume to anger the present Algerian government, however, beyond a very thorough history of Algerian film before and after independence.

Khilifi, Omar. *Le Cinéma Tunisien*, Editions Nationales Tunisiennes, Tunis, 1970. This volume is not banned anywhere, being a passionate historical account of Tunisian cinema from the other side of the question.

Mourad, Kama Eddine. *Le Maroc à la Recherche d'une Révolution*, Idées Interdites (Sinbad), Paris, 1972. There is no volume available on Moroccan cinema.

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# Controversy & Correspondence

## THALBERG

Your Winter 1972–1973 issue carries a review of *Bad Company* by Richard Corliss in which he states “Thalberg, of course, was the MGM producer who was notorious for having a scenarist’s work rewritten by successive teams of equally powerless hacks.”

I must assume you share this view, although I, as Thalberg’s story editor and in charge of the writing department until his death find it ignorant and irresponsible. Here is a list of the ‘hacks’ writing for Thalberg:

Donald Ogden Stewart, P. G. Wodehouse, Charles MacArthur, Jim Tully, Gene Fowler, John Meehan, Willard Mack, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Fredric Lonsdale, William Faulkner, Charles Lederer, Dorothy Parker, Alan Campbell, Anita Loos, John Emerson, Ernest Vajda, Ben Hecht, John Lee Mahin, Sylvia Thalberg and Frank Butler, Herman Mankiewicz, Sam and Bella Spewack, George Oppenheimer, Moss Hart, Samson Raphaelson, Marc Connelly, S. N. Behrman, George Seaton, Peter Freuchen, John O’Hara, John McClain, George S. Kaufman, Sidney Howard, Morrie Ryskind, Michael Fessier, Robert Carson, Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood and W. H. Auden, John Van Druten, Laura and S. J. Perelman, Samuel Hoffenstein, Frances Marion, William Anthony Maguire, Bayard Veiller, Mildred Cram, James Kevin McGuinness, Edwin Justus Mayer, Vicki Baum, F. Hugh Herbert and Gene Markey. These ‘hacks’ represent the main group of contract writers at MGM during the first decade of talking pictures; a few title writers and continuity writers remained during the earliest days of sound. Additionally (and I can document all of this) offers were made to Thomas Wolfe, Noel Coward, Somerset Maugham, Edna Ferber, Sinclair Lewis, Sean O’Casey and J. B. Priestley.

I would deeply appreciate it if Mr. Corliss

will compile a similar list of the writers of that period who might have been engaged in place of these hacks and hopefully, you will print it.

Yours truly,  
SAMUEL MARX

Gosh, what an impressive list! And what a shame that the names on this list—names that represent the cream of a generation of American and British novelists, playwrights, and journalists—should have labored to produce such a group of generally undistinguished pictures as the MGM Thalbergs!

Samuel Marx’s name-dropping defeats his own argument—at least, if I read him more correctly than he reads me. For the point of my remark, which Mr. Marx chooses not to dispute, was that the Thalberg system of assembly-line screenwriting tended to throw the cold water of censorship and sobriety on those very flashes of brilliance and self-indulgence, those excesses and epiphanies, that won these gifted men and women the reputations for which, presumably, Thalberg hired them in the first place. A hack, as defined by the American Heritage Dictionary, is “one who hires himself out to do routine writing.” And that pretty well defines the movie careers of Fitzgerald, Faulkner, O’Hara, Huxley, Isherwood, Auden, and so many other victims of the Thalberg ta-pocketa-pocketa. At best, their work was peripheral, both to their own careers and to Hollywood in the Thirties; at worst, it was pathetic.

Even those of Mr. Marx’s writers who survived or flourished in Hollywood (and I’d include Hecht, Mankiewicz, Raphaelson, Lederer, Ryskind, Hoffenstein) can hardly be said to have done their best work at MGM. One gets the sense that Paramount, for example, gave its writers (notably Preston Sturges, Norman Kras-

na, and Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder) greater freedom and security; and that, as a result, their films can be seen as “writers’ films”—but not only that. Paramount was equally a directors’ studio. MGM was basically the domain of the producer: Guess Who.

Recent run-ins with several veteran screenwriters had just about convinced me that the breed consisted mainly of embittered, defeated men still stewing in the bile of remembered impotence. From his letter, Mr. Marx seems different: a defender of the very system that destroyed these men (while, to be sure, it sustained and rewarded others). What’s not clear is whether Mr. Marx sees the Thalberg Era as a golden age for that peerless assemblage of writers he mentions, or as a darker period during which our best writers were fed into a machine, and came out something less. My own feelings are clear. To match these writers with their MGM credits is to see the hope of American letters turned into the despair of Hollywood hacks.

Yours sincerely,  
RICHARD CORLISS

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ROBERT CHAPPETTA lives in New York and is a frequent *FQ* contributor. MITCHELL S. COHEN studies cinema at NYU and has written for *Take One*. RICHARD CORLISS is editor of *Film Comment* and editor of *The Hollywood Screenwriters* (AVON). MARK FALONGA has taught English at the University of Wisconsin and written for *Film Heritage*. CHARLES GREGORY teaches film at Sacramento State University. THOMAS H. GUBACK is the author of *The International Film Industry* (Indiana). FOSTER HIRSCH is a New Yorker and frequent contributor. GILLIAN KLEIN is British and now lives in New Brunswick, New Jersey. SAMUEL MARX was Irving Thalberg’s story editor at MGM. LYLE PEARSON is an American who has spent the past several years studying African films and cultures. LAWRENCE SHAFFER is a writer and editor who lives in New York. NORMAN SILVERSTEIN is co-author of *The Film Experience* and teaches English at CUNY; he is author of a forthcoming book, *A Film Guide to Wild Strawberries* (Indiana). JULIAN SMITH has taught film and literature classes in Ithaca College (NY) and has written for *The Journal of Popular Film, Literature/Film Quarterly*, the *New York Times*, and other publications. BERNARD WEINER, film critic for *Overseas Weekly*, also contributes to *Sight & Sound*, *Take One*, *Village Voice*, and *The Nation*.

## Books

(In our next issue we plan to present extensive discussions of several recent books of outstanding importance: Jay Leyda’s *Dianying, Godard on Godard*, and others. Meantime, the following briefer notes will keep the reader somewhat abreast of the continuing flood of film publishing.)

### ALL THE BRIGHT YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN A Personal History of the Czech Cinema

By Josef Skvorecky. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 17 Inkerman St., 1972. \$8.95.

Skvorecky now teaches at York University in Toronto (a good many Czechs have ended up in Canada, which may today seem a better political refuge than the US). He is the author of six screenplays, including *The End of a Priest*, a bit actor, and a well known Czech novelist. (His

book *The Coward* is available in English.) He and his novelist wife were part of the enviably close, active cultural world of Prague during the late fifties and sixties; his book is a highly readable, personal, anecdotal, nostalgic record of the men and women he knew, worked with, fought against, admired, disdained, or (in the case of pretty women) hankered for. The light tone of the writing is at first disconcerting—some of this may be due to the translation—with its often flip remarks and running political cracks. After a while, however, you realize that this is a truly Czech document, full of the blessed contrariness of human nature which the Czech film-makers so adeptly caught on film. Skvorecky’s humor, his wry self-criticism, his scattershot satire of artistic and political venality, his flashes of warmth even for those he disapproves of (like Jan Prochazka, a “political brigand” whose talent Skvorecky will not deny) bring you into that

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heady Prague-spring atmosphere whose nearest predecessor may be that of Weimar Berlin. At any rate it is like nothing we have experienced here, either in fad-peddling New York or flesh-peddling Hollywood. Those Czechs of the New Wave, together with their cultural and political comrades, were *serious*, for all their joking. They were aiming at nothing less than the first culturally free society ever seen under what, in the East bloc, passes by the name of socialism. It was a remarkable time, and Skvorecky's book, which is chiefly a series of portraits of leading film-makers, gives an engrossing impression of what it was like. The story of pre- and post-production difficulties of unorthodox films is sometimes laughable, sometimes sickening, sometimes both at once. As a partisan of that neglected and astonishing work, *Marketa Lazarova*, I was curious to learn that making it almost killed Frantisek Vlácil. The footage (an obsessive, intense, bloody recreation of medieval life, based on a famous novel) grew monstrous; a four-part release was even contemplated. "Vlácil deteriorated, reinforced himself with alcohol, and broke down; he turned into a bearded skeleton. With similar vengeance he began editing, and he cut and cut until he ended up with two parts consisting of the most beautiful and wild spectacle in all of Czech cinema. Its only equivalent might be found in the early superfilms of D. W. Griffith, or Bergman's *Seventh Seal*. . . ." Then, characteristically, Skvorecky adds a bit of Barandov studio gossip: that *Marketa* was so expensive Vlácil had to make another "medieval" film to amortize the sets and costumes!

Skvorecky's assessment of individual films seems to be generally just, on the basis of those we have seen in the West, despite the effervescence of his approach. But the book is dominated by persons, not films: Vera Chytilova, militant and unbending; Jan Nemeč, the "irritable hothead" who enraged president Novotny; Milos Forman who lived with his young bride, the most famous star of the Czech cinema, in an ill-furnished single room next to an office; Evald Schorm the philosophical documentarist whose last feature, *Seventh Day*, *Eighth Night* has been

suppressed but (like his *Courage for Every Day*) may someday yet be seen; the gentle Jiri Menzel who "during shooting lost weight and turned green"; the unlucky if influential Jaromil Jires; dark, striking actresses like Vera Kresadlova (Forman) and Marta Kubisova, who bely the Hana Brechova dumpling stereotype and get into trouble for their politics; Dr. Jan Kliment, critical hatchet-man who liked to tell incriminating Stalinist jokes in hopes you would tell one of your own. It is a large and fascinating cast. There in Prague, in the hectic sixties before the tanks came, was played out a central drama of our time: how after war, debacle, and repression, new talents somehow arise and struggle for expression; how they are harassed by those who feel manaced by their truthfulness; and how sometimes they go down—to rise again. Skvorecky is certain, in a new time partly nourished by the past exploits. If it seemed hard for Westerners to understand how a small country (which during the earlier postwar period was considered monolithically Stalinist) could support a remarkable film renaissance, Skvorecky's account will be enlightening—even if it has, at the present moment when so many talented Czechs are in exile, a grim and pathetic side. But Skvorecky, like other Czechs I have met, is an admirably courageous person; he is capable of restorative laughter where most of us would be capable only of rage, and he has a long-term confidence in "the infiltration of creative intellect into the various levels of cultural bureaucracy." We have a cultural bureaucracy of our own, and we could use more of the Czech spirit.

The book includes a chronological list of Czech (not Slovak) features from the 1898 beginnings through 1970, and is illustrated with many photographs, both film stills and fascinating informal snapshots. —ERNEST CALLENBACH

### THE FRED ASTAIRE AND GINGER ROGERS BOOK

By Arlene Croce. New York: Outerbridge & Lazard, 1972. \$9.95.

Croce has written outstanding pieces both on film and on dance (she edits *Ballet Review*) and this short but extremely intelligent book is a

heady Prague-spring atmosphere whose nearest predecessor may be that of Weimar Berlin. At any rate it is like nothing we have experienced here, either in fad-peddling New York or flesh-peddling Hollywood. Those Czechs of the New Wave, together with their cultural and political comrades, were *serious*, for all their joking. They were aiming at nothing less than the first culturally free society ever seen under what, in the East bloc, passes by the name of socialism. It was a remarkable time, and Skvorecky's book, which is chiefly a series of portraits of leading film-makers, gives an engrossing impression of what it was like. The story of pre- and post-production difficulties of unorthodox films is sometimes laughable, sometimes sickening, sometimes both at once. As a partisan of that neglected and astonishing work, *Marketa Lazarova*, I was curious to learn that making it almost killed Frantisek Vlácil. The footage (an obsessive, intense, bloody recreation of medieval life, based on a famous novel) grew monstrous; a four-part release was even contemplated. "Vlácil deteriorated, reinforced himself with alcohol, and broke down; he turned into a bearded skeleton. With similar vengeance he began editing, and he cut and cut until he ended up with two parts consisting of the most beautiful and wild spectacle in all of Czech cinema. Its only equivalent might be found in the early superfilms of D. W. Griffith, or Bergman's *Seventh Seal*. . . ." Then, characteristically, Skvorecky adds a bit of Barandov studio gossip: that *Marketa* was so expensive Vlácil had to make another "medieval" film to amortize the sets and costumes!

Skvorecky's assessment of individual films seems to be generally just, on the basis of those we have seen in the West, despite the effervescence of his approach. But the book is dominated by persons, not films: Vera Chytilova, militant and unbending; Jan Nemeč, the "irritable hothead" who enraged president Novotny; Milos Forman who lived with his young bride, the most famous star of the Czech cinema, in an ill-furnished single room next to an office; Evald Schorm the philosophical documentarist whose last feature, *Seventh Day*, *Eighth Night* has been

suppressed but (like his *Courage for Every Day*) may someday yet be seen; the gentle Jiri Menzel who "during shooting lost weight and turned green"; the unlucky if influential Jaromil Jires; dark, striking actresses like Vera Kresadlova (Forman) and Marta Kubisova, who bely the Hana Brechova dumpling stereotype and get into trouble for their politics; Dr. Jan Kliment, critical hatchet-man who liked to tell incriminating Stalinist jokes in hopes you would tell one of your own. It is a large and fascinating cast. There in Prague, in the hectic sixties before the tanks came, was played out a central drama of our time: how after war, debacle, and repression, new talents somehow arise and struggle for expression; how they are harassed by those who feel manaced by their truthfulness; and how sometimes they go down—to rise again, Skvorecky is certain, in a new time partly nourished by the past exploits. If it seemed hard for Westerners to understand how a small country (which during the earlier postwar period was considered monolithically Stalinist) could support a remarkable film renaissance, Skvorecky's account will be enlightening—even if it has, at the present moment when so many talented Czechs are in exile, a grim and pathetic side. But Skvorecky, like other Czechs I have met, is an admirably courageous person; he is capable of restorative laughter where most of us would be capable only of rage, and he has a long-term confidence in "the infiltration of creative intellect into the various levels of cultural bureaucracy." We have a cultural bureaucracy of our own, and we could use more of the Czech spirit.

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By Claude Degand. (Paris: Editions Techniques et Economiques, 1972). 20Fr.

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specialists, Degand's work is a way of understanding, from a European point of view, the issues and intricate problems facing not only each national film industry, but an integrated western European film industry. The author makes a strong plea for a European Film Community within the European Economic Community. Degand believes this is the only viable route to take for industries faced by similar problems: lean years beginning in the late fifties, extensive American financing of European production, and a virtual American monopoly of international distribution. As Common Market membership grows, the group's cinematic policy is going to have substantial impact on American interests, considering the great extent to which they have proliferated in Europe. This book exemplifies the kind of thinking which has become increasingly widespread in western European film circles. —THOMAS H. GUBACK

### THOSE GREAT MOVIE ADS

By Joe Morella, Edward Z. Epstein, and Eleanor Clark. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1972. \$14.95.

So atrocious is the level of conception, design, and general intelligence in American movie posters that it is a wonder they didn't drive the audience out of the industry's clutches entirely. Inanity upon vapidness, tumbling out of the New York publicity offices like shell-shocked troops from a retreat, they have plagued our theaters and our streets for decades. Beside them, the cheapest comic-book has the graphic organization of the Mona Lisa; beside their prose, Mickey Spillane sounds like Shakespeare. Their long record of butchery, misrepresentation, and visual chaos is documented (in an atmosphere of self-congratulation) in this depressing volume's thousands of ads and posters which lack even the dimmest charms of camp. Occasionally, of course, somebody snuck something through that had some strength: for *King Kong*, *West Side Story*, or even *La Dolce Vita*. But this volume reprints a mass of clutter and fatuousness probably without parallel in the entire history of advertising. —E. C.

### THE GREAT MOVIE SERIALS

By Jim Harmon and Donald F. Glut. New York: Doubleday, 1972. \$7.95. A nostalgia book. Curiously, one of the best serials—long a camp favorite at Canyon Cinema alfresco showings—is omitted: *The Desert Hawk*, with Gilbert Roland, who played both the good sheik and his vile brother. The focus in the book is on performers and typical plot lines.

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**Graham Greene on Film:** Collected Film Criticism, 1935–1939. Ed. John Russell Taylor. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972. \$12.50. Greene as a then-struggling young novelist went to the movies, fervently and constantly, as a window on the world, and he took his main pleasure from vitality rather than form. His reviews in the London *Spectator* have been a mine of information for film-society program notes; assembled in a book, they become a piece of documentary social history as well, and of course they are quirky, original, strong writing. (One review of a Shirley Temple picture resulted in a lawsuit.) Like Agee, Greene got into script work, of which *The Fallen Idol* and *The Third Man* are lasting products. The book is pleasantly illustrated, but is printed with very long lines of type so closely spaced as to make reading somewhat difficult.

**The Great Dane.** By Bebe Bergsten. Los Angeles: Historical Films, Box 46505, LA, Calif. 90046. \$8.95. A history of some excellent but virtually unknown early film-making by the Danes of the Great Northern Film Company, 1906–1912.

**The Image Maker.** Ed. by Ron Henderson. Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1971. \$3.95. Interviews and essays.

**International Film Guide 1973.** Edited by Peter Cowie. New York: A. S. Barnes, 1972. \$3.95. This lively and immensely useful publication has now grown to a fat 575 pages. Thumbnail sketches of five important directors (including Makavejev); 30 leading film editors; addresses of alternate-cinema organizations worldwide; country-by-country production highlights; film sources; reports on animation; film

schools and archives; film bookshops and magazines.

**Movie Reader.** Ed. by Ian Cameron. New York: Praeger, 1972. \$4.50. A collection of articles from the first 14 issues of *Movie*, reprinted in the attractive large format of the original.

**Nonfiction Film: A Critical History.** By Richard Meran Barsam. New York: Dutton, 1973. \$9.95 and \$4.95. Critically not very inspired, but carefully researched.

**Reel Plastic Magic: A History of Films and Filmmaking in America.** By Laurence Kardish. Boston: Little-Brown, 1972. \$7.50. A brief pick-up history, apparently aimed at high school students.

**The Technique of Special Effects Cinematography** (Revised edition). By Raymond Fielding. New York: Focal Press, 1972. \$18.50. A professional's guide, but much of it may be of use to the low-budget film-maker.

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## Reviews

### TOUT VA BIEN

Director: Jean-Luc Godard. Script: Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin. Photography: Armand Marco.

*Tout Va Bien* is the latest and most successful attempt by Godard and Gorin to "make a film politically, not simply a political film." In the early stages of this new direction, films such as *Weekend* or *One Plus One* seemed unable to move beyond the intense contradictions of the imperialist culture that they depicted. The latter film shows a Mick Jagger recording session, in which he relishes his inversion of good and evil in his "Sympathy for the Devil," intercut with readings from porno-fascist pulp literature. In *Weekend* the subculture of the hippies is presented, in its search for sensation and its parasitism, as a mirror image of the brutal egoism of the bourgeoisie. In both films there is a sense of impasse, as both main and "counter" cultures express the same decadence. The slight figure of Anne Wiazemsky flitting around London with a paint-can and "Maoist" slogans hardly suffices to offer an adequate analysis or alternative.

One of the reasons for this impasse, apart from the obvious political one, might have been Godard's apparent reaction against his audience—evident in the barrage of visual shocks (the car-crash in *Weekend*) and sound assaults (the long tracking shot of the traffic jam in the same sequence accompanied by ear-splitting horns). The implication was that the audience could have no direction, were the "weekenders" depicted on the screen.

The next stage, strongly influenced by the near-revolutionary situation in France that came to a head in the events of May 1968, was a hothouse growth of commitment to anti-revisionist Marxist politics on Godard's part, doubtless stimulated by Gorin's long-standing involvement with leftwing politics. The result was the films of the Dziga-Vertov group (*Pravda*, *Wind from the East*, *Vladimir and Rosa*), which might best



Yves Montand, Jane Fonda: TOUT VA BIEN.

be understood as contributions to the polemic then (and now) raging among the new "groupuscules" that sprang up to fill the vacuum left by the French Communist Party's retreat from revolution. Godard and Gorin said recently that the films were made specifically for a "handful of people," and that subsequently they felt the need to move out of this "gauchist ghetto."

In *Tout Va Bien* they have moved another step, beyond what Mao called critically the "poster and slogan" method. Here they are neither attacking nor ignoring the wider audience. Seen as a process the "political" films show a progression from a detached satirist's attack on the decadence of society, to political commitment, followed by an application of that commitment to the social situation. When asked why he makes a film Godard replied that it was in order to make another—that whereas in Hollywood one film is made over and over again, and is simply retitled, he and Gorin attempt to make a new film each time: their films are part of a process of change, of a dialectic, where the contradictions of one stage are worked out in the next.

In *Tout Va Bien* Godard and Gorin have returned to a much closer rapport with the audience—at the most obvious level, the film is easy to follow and avoids most of the fragmentations

of the previous political films. This follows possibly from the recognition of common ground between the film-makers and the audience, the mutual need to cope with the question: "What part can an intellectual play in the revolutionary movement of the working class?" This question, posed repeatedly in Godard and Gorin's commentary to the accompanying film, *Letter to Jane*, is one of the basic concerns of *Tout Va Bien*.

Such an issue naturally results to a certain extent in the film reflecting upon itself: "What part is this film playing?" It opens with a hand signing checks from the "Transatlantic Bank," (making explicit the film-makers' dependence upon capital and its means of financing and distribution). Shortly after we hear the voice of the director commenting upon the limitations imposed, directly or subtly, on the film-maker's choice of subject: we see police beating up workers (what one doesn't film), and then the "stars" Montand and Fonda (the reason why the hand was signing the checks) in the required romantic love scene. The voices-over we hear are those from the bed-scene in *Le Mépris*: "I love your hair, your arse . . . so you love me completely?"—a mocking reference to Godard's own past, and to the star system as a structure that maintains the status quo in the cinema. This film reference, the director discussing his choice of scenario, the check-signing, are *not* ends in themselves, mere in-group jokes for the initiated, but function in relation to the central issue: in what way can a film (and the intellectual as film-maker), dependent upon the star-system and capital, be revolutionary? How far is it possible to utilize the existent structure for progressive ends? Further, this opening indicates the way we should look at the film, not sucked into the illusion of film as "real life," but judging it, what is chosen to be presented, the actions of the characters, from the standpoint of reality and what we know of the world.

*Tout Va Bien* is an examination of the positions of the three major social forces in French society, and the contradictions between them: the bourgeoisie, the working class, the intellec-

tuals. The action of the film is simple: we are shown a strike and its effect on the lives of the intellectuals. Jane Fonda, working for the American Broadcasting System in Paris, goes to a meat factory to interview the boss, a spokesman for the "modern managerial method," as material for a broadcast. She arrives, with Montand (whom she is living with), in the middle of an occupation of the factory by the rank-and-file workers, who have "sequestered" the boss in his office. The workers lock the two newcomers in with the boss (a not unreasonable response, considering the objective function of such journalism) where they, and we, are treated to a long harangue on the virtues of "modern" capitalism and "enlightened" management by Salumi, the boss. Delivered brilliantly in the Brechtian manner by an Italian actor puffing a big cigar, the falsity of the boss's statements is made quite clear from the outset by the complete contradiction between his words and his concrete situation—locked in his office by the enraged workers who according to his theory must be happy boys and girls. (The scene, moreover, with its contradiction between sound and image, is a little parable on idealism versus materialism). However, as the boss triumphantly points out in response to Montand's protest, the contradictions of Fonda and Montand are also showing, for they too are locked in the office, in other words are objectively identified as being on his side in the class struggle, even though they may subjectively disagree with his theories.

His point about the intellectuals, which is crucial to the film, is also made visually. The camera moves back and the factory becomes a two-storeyed partitioned set. The camera frames the building, and we see the boss and the intellectuals in one room, pacing round in circles, or standing still; in the outer office and throughout the rest of the factory we see the workers, greater in number, singing revolutionary songs and brandishing clenched fists in the boss's direction. The idea of the "two camps" in capitalist society is put in concrete visual terms, with a literal wall between the two sides. However there is a door out of the office—through which, later



that night, Fonda marches decisively to talk with the women workers; the intellectual is attempting to leave the boss's camp, and enter that of the workers.

Thus the structure and not merely the content of the film is ideological. That is, the relationships between shots, spatially between groups of characters, the lay-out of the set, what is shown in a frame, etc., are determined by the actual connections between things revealed by a Marxist analysis of social reality. This use of the camera, not as a passive mirror of "surface realism," but as a tool to expose the connections that lie beneath the surface, is in part what Godard and Gorin mean by "making a film politically, not just a political film."

One of Godard's major concerns, as becomes evident in discussions of the film with him, and in the short *Letter to Jane*, is the need to make "new connections." In the factory the intellectuals try to make a connection with the workers, and listen sympathetically to their account of working conditions. But as one of the workers points out, sympathy is not what is needed, but rather active support in the struggle. Sympathy and pity are the old connections that intellectuals traditionally make with the workers, which lead back to the old politics of "improving the workers' conditions." What the intellectuals must do is to recognize and act upon the real connection between the struggle and their daily lives.

Upon leaving the factory Fonda and Montand return to their jobs—go back, as it were, into the boss's office. But the experience of the strike, which continued the process of their radicalization begun by the events of May '68, forces them to recognize the contradictions in their position. Montand, a film director, confesses his history directly to the camera: he recognizes that he has effectively sold out, and is seen working in his present job, making commercials. The new start he promised himself after May has not occurred. His only solution, the only way he can become personally integrated or reconnected, is to use his talents in the services of the revolution. Similarly Fonda, the ABS corre-

spondent, finds that her trite broadcasts have become repulsive to her, and that, partly as a result of the company's censorship, partly because the structure and style of the bourgeois form of reporting dictates a certain content, she is stymied in her attempts to report truthfully on the strike and the workers' struggle.

The relationship between the two of them begins to crack up, but it is Fonda who cuts through the personal recriminations to show that they are not an island, that the failure is due to their inability to connect with the objective world around them in any way that is satisfactory to their beliefs. That is they should (as the film does, giving no time to their "love-life") look outside, not inside (either at their own psyches or the relationship) to find what is messing them up, both as individuals and as a couple. The death of Gilles Tautin which is shown after this scene (the Marxist-Leninist youth killed by the police outside the Renault plant at Flins in '68), the strike, Montand's commercials, Fonda's broadcasts, are, as the montage suggests, all connected, and the bad faith by which one refuses to recognize the connection may result, as in the film, in personal fragmentation or virtual schizophrenia.

In their attempt in *Tout Va Bien* to come to a closer rapport with the audience, Godard and Gorin did not choose the path of realism—the "Hollywood-Brezhnev" style, as they call it. In the accompanying film, *Letter to Jane*, made as a commentary on *Tout Va Bien*, there is a still of Brecht ("Uncle Bertolt") accompanied by his words, which help to explain the reason for their choice: "The truth is simple: to tell the truth is not so simple." There seem to be for Godard and Gorin two aspects to this question of form: old forms involve old contents—you can't pour new wine into old bottles; the old form fails as rhetoric, fails to "tell the truth"—it cannot have the desired effect on the audience as it is designed to engulf them in illusion, not face them with reality.

One example of this, as Gorin has pointed out, was the way in which the workers are presented in two different scenes. The first scene

illustrates the "new" method, the second the "old" style of realism.

Early in the film, during the occupation of the factory, the militants are shown on the cut-away set, in various rooms and on the stairs, in a state of disorder. Then suddenly one begins a revolutionary song, and the others join in. They are standing still, in a very stylized manner, waving clenched fists. Between each burst of song there is an awkward pause, and they remain motionless, until someone starts singing again. The scene presents us with the state of their struggle—unified, militant, revolutionary—in a poster-like manner. But it also implies, in the awkward pauses, a lack of direction, which the workers themselves recognize—how can they go beyond the occupation, where they are trapped in a defensive position? The stylized form of presentation results from the purpose of the scene, which is to present an analysis of the present stage of the workers' struggle, and not to show how workers act during a particular strike. Rhetorically the Brechtian form puts the

audience at a certain distance: they have to think about what the scene means, are faced with the fact of militancy but are given no easy way to classify or "consume" it, as Godard says. The audience is prevented from making the "old connections" of either hostility or sympathy.

The other scene occurs later, when Fonda and Montand are listening to the workers describe their foul working conditions. Previously we had seen an intense struggle between these workers and the CGT shop steward (the CGT is the large union controlled by the French "Communist" Party) who, true to May '68 form, was trying to crush the militants: their spontaneous class struggle was messing up the larger plans of the Party for peaceful coexistence with the bosses. The workers are telling Montand and Fonda of the conditions, they are rebelling against—the stench, the back-breaking labor, the dead monotony, the quotas—and the film shows what they are describing. The scene is shot in the "old" form—realistic footage of fac-



*"The actual connections between things":*  
TOUT VA BIEN.

tory work. We return to the discussion, and one of the workers cries that this is wrong, this is the way the CGT and the old Party would present it, that the reporters (and by extension, the film-makers) should not just show the misery, but should rather show the struggle. That is, they want not sympathy, not a movement for the improvement of the working man's lot, but a revolution. The previous footage of the factory is re-run, now with this criticism in mind. The point, as Gorin stated during a discussion of the film, is that the "old" style of illusion-realism is itself ideological, that it can only arouse the audience's sympathy: it is the stylistic counterpart of the old "Communist" or revisionist Party's politics, which are reformist not revolutionary. Moreover by involving or engulfing the audience in the illusion it encourages them to be passive spectators of life. The "new" style, which breaks with illusion, places them at a certain distance, where they must judge and criticize what is going on in the world around them.

The theory is close to that of Brecht: "I do not like plays to contain pathetic overtones; they must be convincing like court pleas. The main thing is to teach the spectator to reach a verdict." The practice too is similar, for in fact in both cases there is a constant shift between involvement and detachment. If we feel sympathy for the workers, as when Fonda is listening to the account of the woman's day—housework before going to the factory, housework in the evening, etc.—the film then draws away to ask what this sympathy means: a young working girl criticizes the "softness" of her work-mate's account, crying that the real truth lies in recognition of the struggle, and sings a revolutionary song: "We're tired of waiting and being clobbered, seize the time!"

The formal similarities to Brecht arise from Godard's adoption of Marxist philosophy; in particular from the function of that philosophy not only "to understand the world but to change it." The Marxist artist carries this out by "changing" his audience. Thus Brecht attacked the notion of unity and set up a series of distinct

scenes for the audience to judge. So too the film, divided into distinct sections, avoids the implication of determinism which the "well-made plot" bears. It leaves various options open for the Fonda-Montand relationship, and shows us a couple of possible endings. The outcome will depend on the success of their attempt to "re-think themselves historically," as the voice-over states. That is, the characters are, within historical limits, free to remake their lives, to engage in action, to change the world. So too the audience, not engulfed passively in suspense and the inevitable working-out of a plot, are left free to judge the action, and are encouraged to apply that judgment to their own situation.

*Tout Va Bien*, as we noted, opened with a brief shot of Fonda and Montand that was a critical reference to *Le Mépris*. Apart from the different attitude towards the "stars," and the love story, the films are diametrically opposed in a more crucial way. The circular camera movements, the intercut shots of the Greek gods, the flashbacks, the inevitability of the final destructive movement present us, in *Le Mépris*, with a tragic view of life, ruled by necessity. There are depths of mystery, multiple levels behind the main action taking place before the camera in the deceptively clear Mediterranean sunshine: there are the film-within-the-film, the statues of the Gods, the story of the Odyssey reverberating behind each scene.

In *Tout Va Bien*, as Brecht demanded, everything is out in clear view; there is no symbolism, no reference to cultural patterns or archetypes. The aim of the camera is to demystify, to expose social reality in the clear light of day, even as the outer wall of the factory set is stripped down. There are no layers behind layers, only the action taking place before the camera—we see events, in the factory scene, simultaneously, side by side. The camera tracks from side to side, from one group to the next, or is stationary, focussing upon one actor delivering a monologue, with a blank wall behind him. The space is simple, flat, planimetric.

In the shots where we are given two levels of focus, the connections between them are clear:

Fonda, unable to go on with the false broadcasts ABS requires, is seen sitting mute at the microphone; the camera is in the producer's box, his head is in the foreground. The shot reinforces what Fonda herself states, that it is the censorship of the network, and more subtly, the form of presentation it demands, that render her mute. Or again, Montand criticizing himself for his lack of commitment is shot with building construction going on in the background. The film, in its framing as in other ways, deliberately pares down the "old connections" in its attempt to make us see new ones.

The final long scene of the film is again, in the way Brecht demanded, a "separate" action, having little to do with a suspenseful plot or inevitable conclusion. Here too the reason for this is rhetorical—the arousing of the audience's critical awareness of its own situation. Godard and Gorin however use deep focus for the scene, in order to place, in a clear spatial relationship, the situation of different social forces examined during the preceding action of the film. Not since *Citizen Kane*, perhaps, has depth of focus been used in such an innovative and functional way.

The scene, set in a supermarket, deals with the need for "new leadership, new voices, new directions." This in fact is the crux of the film, although not explicitly stated until the end. The problems that have been left unsolved throughout the film—the lack of direction of the workers' militancy, the petering out of the strike, the contradictions of the intellectuals—converge on this single point, which has been further underlined by the intercutting throughout of some of the May '68 events, which remind us of the failure of the old leadership.

Here we are placed outside the scene with the camera that is situated behind the check-out counters, and which moves inexorably back and forth in one long tracking shot throughout. The sense of impasse presented by this camera movement is both that of the film-makers, and of the audience. We have seen the strike lose momentum from the lack of "new direction," unable to move out of the old defensive groove. The

scene the camera presents gives the reasons for this, and its own back-and-forth movement.

In the foreground we see the customers placidly piling up their groceries, paying for what they have themselves produced in the food factory. Beyond them is Fonda, making notes for a new article, pacing to and fro between the aisles in line with the camera's own movements. Beyond her we see the representative of the French "Communist" Party, peddling his book *Change Course*, like vegetables from a stand. There is no connection between these groups. Then from the distant background a crowd of "leftists" rush in and provoke a confrontation with the *Change Course* seller. The shoppers, in the foreground, are oblivious of this, and go on piling up their purchases. A stylized representation of the May events, the scene presents in clear spatial terms the connections, or lack of them, between these social groups. Clearly the film presents the "Communist" Party functionary as part of the capitalist structure of the supermarket-society, the intellectual (like those behind the tracking camera) moving to and fro without direction, and the leftists, suddenly swooping in out of nowhere and attempting to assert themselves as the "new voice."

However their polemic goes unnoticed, the people go on as before. Then the "leftists" announce that the food is free, and moving up closer to the camera, load up the people's baskets and push and cajole them into walking off without paying. Still the camera moves to and fro, without focussing upon or "identifying" with any of the group. The inadequacy of the "new direction" the leftists are offering at present is made further apparent by their commandist pushing of the rather bewildered people, and finally by their leading them into an attack by the police who block the exit. The intrusive nature of the camera movement, the distanced perspective from outside the scene, the "staginess" of the action, place the audience, again, in a position of judgment and of analysis from which to view the present alternatives offered by society.

The film demands that we, the audience,

should create a way out of this impasse, should, as it were, find a "new direction" for the camera by developing "new voices, new leadership." The Fonda-Montand relationship is left open, with various alternatives, but with the exhortation to "rethink themselves in historical terms" to live "more carefully and with more purpose." The explicit connection between the audience, the actors and the film-makers made by the voice-over, is repeated from the opening scene: "me, you, him, us, we." Godard and Gorin have returned to their audience, not with words of comfort but with the same question that they are facing themselves: "How can an intellectual best serve the revolution?" —GILLIAN KLEIN

### RAGE

Director: George C. Scott. Producer: Fred Weintraub. Script: Philip Friedman and Dan Kleinman. Photography: Fred Koenecamp. Warner Bros.

In the forties an amorphous cluster of both physically and spiritually dark films arose—filled with dark streets and alleyways, urban nighttime desperation, and lost and drifting characters battered by forces they could barely comprehend. Whatever its exact description, though, *film noir* seems to belong to the historical period of the forties and early fifties, and just as a *film noir* made in color is a problematic question so is the notion of it as a continuing genre. *Rage*, for example, is a recent film, in color, with exterior locations and shot in a straightforward, nondescript fashion that shows no trace of the German expressionist elements found in *film noir*. But in terms of the existential hell these films usually evoke, *Rage* is as black as black can be.

Like Wayne's *The Green Berets*, Brando's *One-Eyed Jacks*, Eastwood's *Play Misty For Me* or Welles's *Citizen Kane*, *Rage* is an actor's directorial debut and like these other films it knifes its way to the core of an actor's persona. George C. Scott has established himself as a loner and individualist, tough-minded and driven, yet with a tender streak that resists the lure of cynicism. *Rage* is an expression of the deepest fears of

such an individualist—the threat that "they" (the government, the systems of institutional life in general) will blunder into the heart of his life and wrench it loose, that no effort, no matter how heroic, will ever be able to put the pieces back together and that not only will his life be destroyed but no one will remain who is either able or willing to tell the world what happened. It is a vision of the utmost existential terror where hell is not only other people but the very fabric of social relationships itself—the society or system at large. (It is a vision perhaps too stark for a Hollywood fattened by nostalgic *Love Stories* and *Fiddlers on the Roof*. The studio opted for a multiple release rather than first-run treatment, and the preview screening came only six days after Richard Nixon's landslide victory. Perhaps the Watergate exposures will embolden them into a re-release.)

*Rage* takes up where *Zabriskie Point* leaves off, with Scott *doing* what Daria Halprin only wished she could do. Scott literally explodes the web of conspiracy (though it recomposes itself as swiftly as a stirred-up antheap) that seeks to deny his existence. He pays a terrible personal price—what rage does to a man is never a pretty thing to watch—but it is a price we want him to pay when we see and feel what motivates his fury. *Rage* concentrates on arousing our feelings; it deals in raw emotion and desperate needs through a well-tempered structure that involves us in Scott's dilemma while at the same time challenging the passive-voyeuristic nature of involvement as totally and relentlessly as anything by Hitchcock.

Basically the story is of Wyoming sheep rancher Dan Logan (George C. Scott) who is accidentally sprayed with a deadly nerve gas by an errant Army test plane. His son is also affected (they were camping out on his ranch) and the film's tension is drawn from the attempt to keep the truth from Logan, his slowly mounting suspicions, and his ruthless rampage when he finally discovers what has happened. Early in the film, before we know what has happened, our concern parallels Logan's. He rushes his son to hospital and we're as relieved as he when the

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doctor says it's "nothing serious." But then our knowledge and Dan Logan's part ways: at the Army base a top-secret group of military, medical, and Public Health Service personnel are briefed on what has happened. A young, hip-looking doctor tells them that the accident has afforded a rare opportunity to study the gas's effects on human subjects. It must not be sacrificed to the absolute top priority of keeping the whole incident out of the public eye. (They say the public might panic or "become alarmed"—a perfect example of how the bureaucratic mind is able to split off the "disruptive" influence of those they presumably serve from any consideration of justification.) An officer asks the doctor for his prognosis for the two subjects. With slight impatience, as though dismissing a student's silly question, the doctor replies, "I thought I made myself clear about that. I don't expect either one to live."

Instantly the film cuts to a close-up frontal shot of Logan's son struggling for air inside an oxygen tent. *We* are suddenly doing exactly what the doctor advocated: observing, acting as voyeurs toward events we cannot control. A disquieting sense of morbid, perverse complicity is impossible to dismiss. Why doesn't someone *do* something, we ask the characters. Why have we allowed this sort of thing to become a possibility? (We may recall the actual case of gas leakage and numerous sheep deaths a few years ago.) Up until now we were willing to take the doctor's word that Chris, the son, would be all right. Now we hope against hope that Logan will discover what has happened and send out the warning. A vision of Janet Leigh's car sinking into the swamp behind the Bates Motel comes to mind: will Logan vanish as gratuitously, as anonymously as that?

Virtually everyone around Logan conspires to "disappear" him from the rest of the world. He's allowed no visitors. The one or two others who suspect are found and "taken care of," including his personal physician. Not only his identity as a being among beings but even his consciousness, his awareness of his own being, is taken from him: when Logan insists on seeing

Chris, the doctor's response is to prescribe a sedative followed by an intravenous drip designed to keep him drugged continuously. Not since *Performance* has a character been so thoroughly and systematically stripped of his identity, but here there is no movement toward regeneration or transcendence. Scott is the thoroughly ironic hero, trapped within a field of forces of which he is only dimly aware let alone capable of withstanding. (Interestingly, *Performance* was handled by the same studio, Warner Bros., with even less faith in its potential than they've shown for *Rage*.)

When Logan's rage is finally unleashed it is as systematic and deadly as David Sumner's in *Straw Dogs*. Even more than in Peckinpah's film we identify with the hero and urge him on. "They" deserve everything they get, though even at its highest pitch we know Logan's rage can do little that will cause lasting damage (to the system behind its functionaries). But unlike Peckinpah in *Straw Dogs*, Scott gives no hint that purgation or maturation flows from violence. Its only effect on Dan Logan is to intensify his rage and drive him closer to the final, inevitable breakdown. Yet in method Logan and Sumner's responses to the forces that jeopardize their ways of life are strikingly similar. Both are highly methodical and scientifically calculating in their violence. Despite the enormous undercurrents of emotional impetus, their responses are always guided by a controlling logic which, in its implications, is perhaps even more frightening than the marauding, impromptu attack of the village roughnecks or the emotionless, rote formula-playing of the institutional lackey. After Logan has carried out a well-planned, precisely timed act of revenge the film catches him in an insane, gloating grin. It is the only image of him that undercuts our identification and it effectively calls into question the high praise and obvious limitations of individual retaliation.

But *Rage*, like *Straw Dogs* and, in fact, the bulk of the American cinema, is not an overtly political film. It allows for an analysis of the social contradictions it deals with, but it does not provide it, except by implication. What *Rage*

has to say about individual versus collective action, the bankruptcy of democratic capitalism, etc., is a matter of our response to the triggering stimulus it provides more than any explicit theme. *Rage*, in fact, moves toward the periphery of science fiction at times (where political commentary is almost always safely indirect), especially in the treatment of the military. The Army cordons off Dan Logan's ranch as it might the spot where UFOs had landed. It decontaminates scores of dead sheep with powder sprayed from brilliant yellow canisters by men in cumbersome space-suit costumes. Helicopters hover over the twitching body of Dan Logan as he is surrounded by soldiers, their array of red, blue, and green lights reminiscent of the metallic eyes of the Martian invaders in *The War of the Worlds*.

The very last shot of the film shows the recreation field at the Army base where Dan Logan had died the night before while hundreds of soldiers looked on. Now, however, it is filled with men in the midst of games and sports. The whole thing has been a black and horrifying nightmare remote from everyday reality; only for those of us who have experienced that nightmare, "reality" will never seem quite so innocent again.

—BILL NICHOLS

## IMAGES

Director: Robert Altman. Script: Altman. Producer: Tommy Thompson. Photography: Vilmos Szismond. Columbia.

Robert Altman's films have each dealt with a struggle for freedom; usually, the stress is on the delicious transience of those moments in which freedom is, or seems to be, obtained. The surgeon heroes of *M\*A\*S\*H* may be winners in their "war with the army," but time must eventually defeat them. The absurd precariousness of this gore-spattered utopia is what gives the film its poignance—though Altman, for once, hopefully understates the point. At the center of the bewilderingly rich texture of *Brewster McCloud* is a fairly pure myth of the fall of a hero who aspires to "fly." Yet Brewster, unlike Icarus,

is not allowed even a moment in the sun, except in dreams; the Astrodome setting proclaims he is caged from the start. Although Altman has claimed that in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* "the town really got uglier as it grew," most citizens of the urban nineteen-seventies are unlikely to see it this way. Until monopolistic capitalism inevitably moves in for the kill, Presbyterian Church seems a free, Edenic community (*M\*A\*S\*H* in an earlier incarnation) that most of us would give our eye teeth to live in.

Despite the ambiguous appeal of its outdoor settings, *Images* has no equivalent of *M\*A\*S\*H* to offer outside the heroine's mind. Because of this abandonment of even a hope of community, it may be Altman's most pessimistic film so far. (Even poor, naive Brewster hopes that the predatory Suzanne, who betrays him to the police and causes his death, will come flying with him.) Yet *Images* is continuous in many respects with Altman's previous work, though some may miss, in this chamber film, the raffish "stock company" that is in itself an embodiment of the freedom Altman enshrines. Certainly, however, *Images* is not concerned with a clinical case; nor is its subject the physical shocks and horrors forming, all too transparently, the subject of *Repulsion*. Robert Altman has made his first film dealing openly with the aspirations of the imagination.

Altman's protagonist this time is Cathryn (Susannah York), trapped within a sterile, futile marriage. A Robin Wood-type critic might argue that this marriage theme allows at least the possibility of a basic community to be present in the film. But much of the chilling power of *Images* derives from the way in which we, along with the heroine, discover this potency to be lacking from the start. Credit for this is largely due to the brilliant performance of René Auberjonois as the husband. The protean Auberjonois is easily Altman's favorite actor, with an important role in each of the four major films. He has played a sinister choric figure (the Bird-Lecturer) in *Brewster*, and, in his most important sketch for *Images*, the Judas-figure in *McCabe*. Despite his loving hero-worship for the other (the androgynousness is hinted in the name



has to say about individual versus collective action, the bankruptcy of democratic capitalism, etc., is a matter of our response to the triggering stimulus it provides more than any explicit theme. *Rage*, in fact, moves toward the periphery of science fiction at times (where political commentary is almost always safely indirect), especially in the treatment of the military. The Army cordons off Dan Logan's ranch as it might the spot where UFOs had landed. It decontaminates scores of dead sheep with powder sprayed from brilliant yellow canisters by men in cumbersome space-suit costumes. Helicopters hover over the twitching body of Dan Logan as he is surrounded by soldiers, their array of red, blue, and green lights reminiscent of the metallic eyes of the Martian invaders in *The War of the Worlds*.

The very last shot of the film shows the recreation field at the Army base where Dan Logan had died the night before while hundreds of soldiers looked on. Now, however, it is filled with men in the midst of games and sports. The whole thing has been a black and horrifying nightmare remote from everyday reality; only for those of us who have experienced that nightmare, "reality" will never seem quite so innocent again.

—BILL NICHOLS

## IMAGES

Director: Robert Altman. Script: Altman. Producer: Tommy Thompson. Photography: Vilmos Szismond. Columbia.

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*Husband, wife, lover: IMAGES.*

Sheehan), he compromises with evil and betrays McCabe to the mining company so that life can go on as usual. More than ever in *Images*, Auberon-Jonois personifies that life “as usual,” the leveling common denominator of society. Placed within a marriage, he can only function as intimate enemy. His character is called Hugh—that is, the You, the not-I so hostile to the self.

Though there is of course no literal causation, the multiplying excess of Cathryn’s “seeing” is accelerated by Hugh’s equally extreme blindness. Ultimately, the relationship between these partners does take on an allegorical meaning, but this is firmly grounded in the vivid particulars of performance. Hugh’s primping with his hair recalls some of the Lecturer’s more demented, bird-like mannerisms in *Brewster McCloud*, yet the husband is also a hunter of birds, Brewster’s agents and counterparts. Hugh’s jokes (at least partly improvised by the actor) are typified by a childish obscenity that half conceals and half proclaims his impotence; for example, he greets Cathryn’s lover Marcel (Hugh Millais) as a “crotch.” And it is a piece of irony less facile than it may first appear that Hugh is a photographer, though his grasp of his wife doesn’t even comprehend her surface. Even before Cathryn has directed a surrogate violence against it, the “eye” of her husband’s camera exerts a cold malevolence, reminiscent of the closet-queen computer in *2001*.

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After the terrifying opening sequence of Cathryn’s telephone hallucinations, her plea to her mildly impatient husband, “I want to go to Greencove,” certainly expresses a desire to flee from the imprisonment of her marriage. But Cathryn can no more evade it completely than she can evade the complexity of her self. Greencove is certainly the most pastorally beautiful of Altman’s Eden-like locales, a place—if there be any such—where the impossible might come to pass. Yet the form of the impossible which soon predominates has been hinted ominously at the very start, in Cathryn’s question to the shifting voices in the receiver: “Who’s speaking, please?” The fantasy of self-splintering, of the imagination as microcosm of many selves, always has an ambivalent appeal in this film. On one level, it represents Cathryn’s equivalent of Brewster’s desire to fly: an aspiration to soar into the infinite, beyond all that seems to limit man on earth. But once the couple’s journey is underway, the film’s key image for this desire—a duplicate of Cathryn, barely glimpsed, where hill and sky meet—has countless demonic associations, from a ghost story like Onions’s “The Beckoning Fair One” to Clayton’s visual treatment of Miss Jessel in *The Innocents*. Clearly, Cathryn is being lured to the edge of an abyss. (The editing of the sequences which pass across space and time between different “incarnations” of the heroine constitutes another allusion to *2001*, though the hints of rebirth here are even more ambiguous than in Kubrick’s film.)

That this abyss involves internal and external violence seems implicit in the very stillness of the settings. (There is one short sequence, placed so as to make an almost subliminal effect, in which Cathryn works quietly at her book under a tree, then begins to run as if from an invisible pursuer.) Long before the revelation of the film’s final, murderous “secret,” the stupendous waterfall which looms at the center of the Greencove landscape is menacing, if only because its almost surreal vertical links it to the row of kitchen knives which fixates Cathryn. Likewise, this row of knives evokes imprisoning bars as much as the neatly parallel, serenely aesthetic

streams of blood that pour from Marcel's body when Cathryn fantasizes his murder. The whole cluster of images suggests in a purely cinematic way that Cathryn's attempt to free herself with violence is itself a trap.

So do her obsessions with a dead and a living lover imprison her, though they must have begun in the opposite hope. Much of Cathryn's sexual confusion may be traced to fear, and the title of the children's book she is writing—"In Search of Unicorns"—suggests a quest for an unattainable virginity. Her choice of Hugh as husband alone speaks volumes. But her desire can still flare up sporadically, as in the marvellously erotic scene in which Cathryn, for once, yields to Marcel as he undresses her. We can see her fierce need to protect herself from yielding in her insistence to the dead René (Marcel Bozuffi), "All I wanted from you was a child," and in her constant fantasy-manipulation and interchange of the three men's attributes, which reduces them to nonthreatening projections of her own psyche. (The husband's reprimand to his wife's early hallucinations, "There is only you," becomes a suicidal statement on his part.) All this is sometimes the vehicle for imaginative insight, as in the bizarre comedy of Cathryn's vision of Hugh as her voluptuously nude self. But in that she denies the men their humanity, in that all three relationships end in at least images of death, Cathryn comes to seem as predatory as her half-namesake from *Brewster*, Suzanne. (The confusion between actors' and characters' names in *Images* is certainly insisted upon.)

Even Cathryn's relationship with a surrogate child, Marcel's daughter Susannah (Cathryn Harrison), is permeated with hostility. Susannah is introduced, startlingly, as a ghostly figure in a closet, the repressed image of Cathryn herself as a girl. When Susannah emerges as a "real" person, the two impulsively stick out their tongues at one another. For brief moments, the relationship promises to develop into a friendship that will compensate Cathryn for her childlessness (in Auden's phrase that deeply illuminates this film, her "foiled creative fire"), and Susannah for her lack of all but imaginary play-

mates. However, the physical and emotional resemblance between the two women is eerie enough, and Altman's direction brings it out so disturbingly that it is really shameful he also, at one point, resorts to the trumpery of redundant reflections in a car window. Neither woman can be said to rescue the other from the threat of far deeper emotional disturbance.

In fact, this weirdly suggestive encounter seems to precipitate Cathryn over the edge, as indicated conventionally in the plot by Hugh's enforced return to the city on business. The change is more meaningfully indicated by his parting words, which one reviewer has claimed show Altman's outrageous coyness: "What's the difference between a rabbit? Nothing. One is both. The same." With effort, this can be tortured into a horrendous joke of a piece with Hugh's earlier ones. It makes far more horrendous sense as precisely what Cathryn wishes to hear at this stage: the confirmation of her intuition that distinctions between persons are an illusion. More to the practical point, this constitutes a permission to exorcise her demons as she sees fit. Thus, the next day, when a familiar duplicate of herself (but with an odd, androgynous voice) stops her car, she can run the figure unhesitatingly over a cliff.

On her compulsive drive back to the city, Cathryn enters a night world of abstractly colored lights that suggests the psychedelic corridor of *2001's* Star Gate. (Cathryn is certainly reduplicated as often as Bowman; whether she is reborn is open to question.) The image also evokes a magnified version of the wind chimes and Aeolian harps that, in time-honored fashion, have stood for the imagination throughout *Images*. But if this abstraction is echoed as Cathryn returns to the antiseptic white of her apartment (we also think of McCabe's frozen death and of Constance Miller's last retreat into opium), the reappearance of her other self seems to insist on the claims of reality. With Cathryn's scream, a conventional thriller resolution is offered: we get a shot of Hugh's body at the bottom of the waterfall. Yet it is ultimately as futile to distinguish "fantasy" and "reality" in

*Images* as in any of Buñuel's last four films. The sequence of Marcel's stabbing was quite as convincing as this later murder, even to the suspense ploy of a dog's entering the house on a scent of blood; yet Marcel is subsequently restored to life. Cathryn has also experimented with a kind of narration of possibilities: in one extended sequence, we see Marcel trying to seduce her while her husband sleeps; then we see her trying to seduce her husband while *Marcel* sleeps. Hugh seems to have a premonition of his own death: his joke about "a nun falling down the stairs" is realized in his plunge down the tiers of the falls. And even Buñuel's cinema can offer few images of such a perfect surrealism as Cathryn's duplication in Susannah (or vice versa, as you prefer); yet the plot taken literally would insist on its literal truth.

At the very beginning, a voice in the telephone had spoken to Cathryn of a mysterious address where her husband was seeing a woman; the shot of Cathryn finally returning to her home informs us that this address is their own. On a closer view, that address may be one of the circles of hell, from which there is No Exit; the film seems to end where it began. A final shot of Susannah completing a puzzle (one of the women's shared enthusiasms), however, *may* have the director's "objective" endorsement. Perhaps Susannah has found a way out.

—MARK FALONGA

### THE LONG GOODBYE

Director: Robert Altman. Script: Leigh Brackette, based on the novel by Raymond Chandler. Photography: Vilmos Szigismond.

Robert Altman is the first major director to attempt Raymond Chandler/Phillip Marlowe since Howard Hawks made *The Big Sleep* in 1946. Unlike Hawks, however, Altman has come to bury Marlowe, not to have fun with him. At first, Altman seems a perfectly compatible choice to depict the highly stylized, often bizarre Southern California-based world of Marlowe, which Chandler described in simile-filled paragraphs that resemble nothing so much as the layers and layers of witty images and lines from

*M\*A\*S\*H*, *Brewster McCloud*, and *Images*. Hawks's dialogue pacing in *The Big Sleep*, as well as in his comedies (especially *His Girl Friday*), resembles the snap, crackle, and pop of *M\*A\*S\*H*. Even the weaker films in the Marlowe series have some of the touches that Altman might be expected to appreciate: the pure Chandlerese of the voice-over in *Murder, My Sweet*, *Lady In The Lake*, and even *The Brasher Doubloon*; the a-psychedelic drug scene in *Murder, My Sweet*; the camera eye in *Lady In The Lake*; Mike Mazurki's soft-spoken but inhumanly strong giant in *Murder, My Sweet*; Florence Bates's homicidal old matriarch in *The Brasher Doubloon*; and a general assortment of Hollywood residents who are by nature more bizarre than actors can dream of in their philosophy.

But as Chandler remarked in his 1953 novel *The Long Goodbye*, "in Hollywood anything can happen, anything at all." Altman has proven this with a series of public statements announcing that his new film version of that very novel will "put Marlowe to rest for good." The first step toward this rather unusual goal for the sixth Phillip Marlowe movie was the casting of Elliott Gould as Marlowe. Altman has said that he is out to cast doubt on the continuing validity of the values that Marlowe embodies: *loyalty, honor, duty*. Altman does not believe in Chandler's hero "who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished or afraid." The Gould/Altman Marlowe looks remarkably lonely and silly for having held on so long to such platonic ideals. The rest of Altman's cast seems more in the Chandler tradition, where reality and fiction blur uneasily on the front pages of newspapers. Nina Van Pallandt, famous mainly as hoaxer Clifford Irving's mistress, in the central role of Eileen Wade; Henry Gibson, the flower poet from TV's *Laugh-In*, as Dr. Verringer; Jim Bouton, former baseball player and author turned TV commentator, as Marlowe's friend Terry Lennox; and film director Mark Rydell as a mod, Hollywood-Vegas syndicate boss provide Gould/Marlowe with a density of sensationalism proper to the Chandler world. *Bonanza*'s Dan Blocker was

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originally scheduled as the writer Roger Wade, but died. A bearded Sterling Hayden replaced him and gives a marvelous performance as a virulently virile alcoholic writer who can no longer write. (Altman putting out to pasture still another American hero linked to the tough guy literary tradition.)

This unusual cast is supplemented by bit players creating the rich textural background for which Altman is justifiably famous. For instance, there are four or five nubile, yoga-addicted girls who live next to Marlowe and exercise naked to the waist on their terrace; a black grocery clerk who engages Marlowe in some enigmatic exchanges about cats and girls; David Carradine as Marlowe's hippie cellmate; Mark Rydell's gang which consists of one member of each ethnic minority, including an over-developed refugee from Muscle Beach; cocktail party guests who sincerely chatter the most awful banalities; and a girl whose only importance is to be hit across the face with a bottle—one of the three shockingly violent moments in a film curiously devoid of action.

Leigh Brackett, who had collaborated on the tough, cynical, and cynically romantic script of *The Big Sleep*, has failed to bring character, motivation, or plot into crisp focus. Perhaps Altman's love of the edges of things makes this impossible. Altman credits Brackett with the controversial ending that reverses the events, motivation, and moral tone of the Chandler novel, but this certainly suits Altman's destructive purposes. Plot was never Chandler's strong point except as it suited his general vision of hopeless entanglement solved only by obeying certain basic principles. Yet here in this movie the principles are gone and so is the hope for motivation. The all-important Terry Lennox character who disappears at the beginning fails to maintain a presence in the film; both of the Wades are opaque in the way that all suburban agony is to me but shouldn't be in art; the villainous Mark Rydell gangster is simply unmotivated violence and threat in the current style. Only Marlowe remains to provide some center, some direction, but he lacks either the aggressive



Marlowe as nebbish: THE LONG GOODBYE.

curiosity of the private eye or that hidden moral center that separates Sam Spade, Phillip Marlowe, and Lew Archer from the confusions and amorality within which they move.

A lack of aggression and arrogance is at the heart of the Altman/Gould detective. Their Marlowe is passive, moving in nebbish bewilderment from one scene to the next, never observing or detecting, never dominating a scene as the previous Marlowes did even when they too were ignorant and baffled (but only in the earlier parts of their respective pictures, naturally). Altman's publicly declared premise is putting Marlowe, a forties hero with forties values, in the disillusioned seventies. Gould wears the same blue serge with whiter-than-white arrow shirt and narrow tie in every scene. He even drives a 1948 Lincoln Continental—Gould's own car (one of those blurrings of reality and fiction that Altman loves.) Altman says, "The picture is a commentary on the fifties and seventies—on beliefs then and now." In other words, how does a man with honor appear in a world without honor? Altman's answer lies in the *Raymond Chandler Speaking* collection of letters that he had the entire cast read: "the best thing for getting a sense of Chandler." Undoubtedly, Altman had in mind the lines about "how any man who tried to be honest looks in the end either sentimental or plain foolish." Altman's Marlowe is plainly foolish and foolishly dangerous, but he is not Hollywood's Marlowe, nor Chandler's. Altman seems to have

confused Marlowe imitations with Marlowe himself.

The significant word in the Chandler quote is "looks," not "is." Only the corrupt eyes of an amoral world would see Marlowe as sentimental and foolish. To feel sentiment and to be honest, to have honor are clearly worthy ideals. But Altman fears what has been done in the name of honor, national and private, in the last decade. He fears the tendency in Marlowe (and for that matter in Hammett's Sam Spade and Continental Op and MacDonald's Lew Archer) to act as judge and jury punishing and freeing according to his own private code. Western fans, as well as mystery buffs, know that feeling of dramatic release and psychological climax when the hero finally triumphs in the name of good, when righteousness prevails, and evil is thwarted, even crushed. Although these are justifiable in art, Altman is calling them into question in life—unfortunately through his art.

Chandler's Marlowe accepts the bizarre quality of daily life in Southern California. In the film, Gould/Marlowe is at a total loss. He goes through the film muttering, "I don't know, I don't know, but it's OK with me" whenever faced with still another example of the seventies that he can not comprehend, whether it is the yoga-loving candle-makers next door, the earnest ecology freak with her petition in the bar, or the wealthy Wades whose lives are so entwined with violence, money, and secret sex. Gould embodies perfectly Altman's conception of Marlowe as a bewildered, sincere anachronism who willingly goes to the supermarket at three in the morning to buy the special brand of canned food that his cat prefers.

In other words, Altman envisions Marlowe in the seventies as another McCabe, with the same purposes in mind. Gould's Marlowe does not need to strut the pretensions that McCabe does because he comes with a built-in reputation. Yet they are the same character, the naive nebbish with unsought pretensions due to a completely unwarranted reputation, a man trying to live by an earlier or never-was ethic, a foolish but lovable schmuck who explodes into unexpected vio-

lence. The qualitative difference lies in the complexities in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, developed through the richness of the Mrs. Miller character and the careful plot and image structuring influenced by Altman's love of the Leonard Cohen sound track, which documents a modern hero's journey and the role that the sisters of mercy play.

Despite the creation of the Southern California ambience and the lovely contrasts between nebbish Marlowe and the glamorous clichés that swirl around him, *The Long Goodbye* fails to suggest the heroic attraction in the detective character. In *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* Altman maintains the tension by having the townspeople consistently believe in McCabe's superiority, by having McCabe believe in it, by having Mrs. Miller dismiss it, by having McCabe act against it, and by having so many McCabe images (riding into town alone on horseback, winning the gunfight, his success in town) reinforce it. In *The Long Goodbye* nothing suggests Marlowe's equality, let alone his superiority. One can not satirize or destroy a hero image until one defines it and shows it functioning.

Altman's Marlowe film begins deliberately in the opposite vein. While earlier Marlowe films like *Murder, My Sweet*, *Lady in The Lake*, and *The Brasher Doubloon* open with deliberate repetitions of Chandler monologue to establish the hero's alienation, loneliness, toughness and cynicism, Altman's film opens by undercutting Marlowe by showing him in an unequal battle with his cat. Nothing contradicts that opening until the very end of the film.

Robert Altman has established himself as an important American auteur, and even a failure as obvious as *The Long Goodbye* reflects a large and ambitious talent. Here, however, in his anxiety to express his own disillusionment with a mistrustful decade lacking in ideals and heroes, he relentlessly attacks before he has shown what he wants to attack. Thus Phillip Marlowe is not only a nebbish, but a victim in the hands of Robert Altman.

—CHARLES GREGORY

## TWO OLD MEN'S MOVIES

*Travels With My Aunt*. Director: George Cukor. Script: Jay Presson Allen and Hugh Wheeler (based on a novel by Graham Greene). Photography: Douglas Slocombe. MGM.

*Avanti!* Director: Billy Wilder. Script: Wilder and I. A. L. Diamond (based on a play by Samuel Taylor). Photography: Luigi Kuveiller. United Artists.

If 1969 was the year of the youth movie, 1972 will probably be remembered as the year of the old veteran's triumphant return. The major critical awards went to Luis Buñuel's *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* and Ingmar Bergman's *Cries and Whispers*. The year's big newsmaking star was not a young discovery, but Marlon Brando. Among American directors Alfred Hitchcock (*Frenzy*) and John Huston (*Fat City*) had their first critical hits in more than a decade. Three more Hollywood veterans released movies at the end of the year: Joseph L. Mankiewicz (*Sleuth*), George Cukor (*Travels With My Aunt*), and Billy Wilder (*Avanti!*). Only Wilder found the critics less than generous at twilight time; Vincent Canby, speaking for the majority, labelled *Avanti* "bitterly archaic."

A comparison between *Travels With My Aunt* and *Avanti*—two romantic comedies in what one might call a "bittersweet" mood—is especially tempting. The films share a pointed macabre humor—both hardly new to Wilder's work, but rather surprising in Cukor. Both directors, like Hitchcock, are eager to demonstrate their disrespect for official pieties about death. *Travels With My Aunt* opens at a funeral; the staid bank manager Henry meets his wacky Aunt Augusta while he waits for the urn containing his mother's ashes. From that point on the urn is the subject of a great many jokes—the most outrageous when Mum's ashes are mixed with marijuana during a police search. *Avanti* opens with an American businessman travelling to Italy to claim the body of his father, killed in an automobile accident—along with his mistress—while vacationing at a health resort in Ischia. The rest of the movie is generously seasoned with jokes about the red tape surrounding death certificates, export licenses, zinc-lined coffins, and the theft of the bodies from the local morgue. I wouldn't want to push the parallels too far, but

in both *Travels With My Aunt* and *Avanti*, as in more somber movies like *The Touch* or *Husbands*, the characters' confrontation with death is the dramatic point of departure; their subsequent unconventional behavior is a reaction *against* death. Both movies are studies in liberation and abandonment, and in a lighthearted way, both are challenges to puritanism, celebrations of sensuality; their heroes rediscover life in exorcising their parents' death.

Of course *Travels With My Aunt* and *Avanti* are nothing like *The Touch* or *Husbands* in style. They are fantasy romances, set in exotic dream worlds—exclusive Parisian hotels and Venetian brothels, an island resort in the Mediterranean. Cukor has specialized in romantic comedies, but Wilder established his reputation as a savage satirist, a chronicler of the sordid realities of postwar America. *Avanti* represents a deliberate flight from those realities. There has always been a tentative romantic streak hidden behind Wilder's notoriously cynical facade—demonstrated most compellingly in his elegant fifties comedy, *Love in the Afternoon*; but in *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* and *Avanti*, Wilder has allowed that side of his personality fuller expression than ever before.

Although the Cukor and Wilder movies have similarities in theme, style, and tone, it's interesting to see how differently they turn out: *Travels With My Aunt*, though harmless enough, is an almost total failure, while *Avanti*, admittedly minor Wilder, is a first-class entertainment. Cukor has directed a number of witty, enjoyable movies in the past, and there wouldn't be much point in roasting him now that he's in his dotage—but the extravagant reviews of *Travels With My Aunt* in the auteurist strongholds (which now include the *New York Times* and *Rolling Stone* along with *The Village Voice*) do require an answer. Conceived as a kinkier *Auntie Mame*—a restatement of Mame's credo, "Life is a banquet, and most poor sons of bitches are starving to death"—the film has no genuine exuberance; everything seems forced. Cukor supplies no personal touches that could redeem the seize-the-day clichés; it's just one more story of the blooming of a wallflower. Screenwriters Jay



Presson Allen and Hugh Wheeler (working from Graham Greene's novel) have provided Aunt Augusta with a few witty lines, but none of the outrageous, original gestures that this kind of fantasy requires. And Cukor's fabled skill with actresses has deserted him this time around. As an admirer of Maggie Smith, I was appalled by what Cukor had done to her. She looks ghastly made up as a 75-year-old woman—pinched, wizened flesh, garish over-rouged cheeks, lacquered red wig; and her brittle delivery, in a horrible croaking voice, turns the life-embracing Augusta into a jerking mechanical doll.

Again and again the tone falters. Cukor seems pathetically uncomfortable in a contemporary setting, and when he tries to introduce some hip touches—like a scene of pot-smoking on the Orient Express—they seem embarrassingly stale and flat. The only scenes where Cukor seems at ease are the flashbacks to Augusta's youth. Playing a woman her own age, Maggie Smith relaxes and shows what she can do; and although Cukor's "lyrical" effects—blurred shots of a twirling ceiling from an enchanted dancer's point of view—are banal, the period stylization some times works very well indeed. In a twenties brothel Anthony Powell's stunning costumes and Cukor's expert timing sustain a witty erotic parody of high-style decadence; for a moment you see the elegance and sophistication that the whole film was aiming for and never again achieves.

Several of the other sets are handsomely designed, but the movie has very little atmosphere of exotic places. We have to feel that Henry has

embarked on a magical mystery tour; we need to see his life open up under his madcap aunt's influence. But where are all the fabulous places—Paris, Istanbul, Venice, Spain, North Africa—that Augusta claims to know so intimately? A couple of quick second-unit shots can't satisfy us any more. The film looks frugal and hurried, as if it had been made on a shoestring budget—apart from two or three big scenes where the director was allowed to splurge. (In truth this is probably what happened. Cukor made the movie for cost-conscious MGM, and "smiling cobra" James Aubrey doesn't care about atmosphere; as a former TV mogul, he believes you can fake anything.) However, the budget limitations do not excuse the lack of imagination. *Travels With My Aunt* is just plain tired; Cukor's static proscenium-arch staging—tolerable when he has exceptional dialogue and performers (as in *Adam's Rib*)—has never seemed more oppressive.

The story also has some nasty, unsettling undercurrents that Cukor doesn't quite succeed in dealing with. The luxurious, dreamy flashbacks that show Augusta's love for her seducer Visconti (Robert Stephens) are undercut when we discover that Visconti doesn't share her nostalgia. She risks everything to save his life, and at the climax she learns that she is victim of a badger game; Visconti merely exploited her love to make a small fortune. Yet this final cruel revelation isn't really assimilated into the soft caramel movie; it's simply rushed over. Cukor isn't in control of the ironies; he doesn't have the tough-mindedness necessary to deal with Augusta's disillusionment.

Billy Wilder would have known how to take advantage of those ironies. His films have always exposed the deceptions of love; there are shadings in his romantic scenes. Still, *Avanti* is, for him, an uncommonly tender and affectionate film. Although the central character is very sharply drawn, and although many incidental jokes—an Italian giving the Fascist salute to a visiting American statesman, a tracking shot past a group of nuns lined up to see *Love Story*—reveal his old acid touch, this film is less cruel than almost anything Wilder has done. It makes



◀ TRAVELS WITH MY AUNT

some nervous concessions to the audience, as Wilder's films usually have; a few inappropriately crude farcical scenes are signs of insecurity. At 2½ hours *Avanti* is obviously overlong and overindulgent, and I could have done without the labored TV sit-com jokes about mistaken identity in the first half hour. Gradually, however, Wilder finds his tone, and the movie takes hold. It is actually not so uncharacteristic as it first seems; it is a less troubled variation on the serious themes that have concerned Wilder throughout his career.

Several of Wilder's films revolve around the American in Europe; he has returned to the ambiguous confrontation of European sophistication and American innocence. *Avanti* is somewhat reminiscent of *A Foreign Affair*, in which a prim American Congresswoman discovers the decadence of postwar Berlin. But in that film Wilder compromised his harsh portrait of American self-righteousness; *Avanti*, by contrast, is one of his most straightforward anti-American satires. The heroine speaks for the director in summarizing American Aggressiveness: "You Americans see something you want, and you just grab it. Imagine turning the Queen Mary into a floating cafeteria off the coast of California. Playing golf on the moon. You think you own the world." When Wendell Armbruster arrives in Ischia, he is a caricature of the ugly American abroad—impatient with the relaxed pace of life in Europe, rude, insensitive, conceited, vulgar, demanding. (Jack Lemmon gives a brave, abrasive performance—his best in years; he doesn't soften the conception by playing "cute.") Too busy to spend any emotion on his dead father, Wendell tapes several drafts of his eulogy on the train, and rushes through the arrangements necessary to get the body back in time for the funeral extravaganza planned to intimidate the 216,000 employees of Armbruster Industries (over closed circuit TV). Later Wilder introduces an even more monstrous American gargoyle: the boorish State Department official (played by the supremely vulgar Edward Andrews) who comes to help speed the coffin out of Italy—a definitive satiric portrait of the arrogance of American power. By this point in the

movie Wendell has begun to mellow, after the shock of discovering his father's secret life; but the State Department barbarian is there to remind us what Wendell might have become without the chastening influence of Europe.

In contrast to the brutal, hard-driving American tourists, the Europeans are cultivated, romantic, indolent, tender, passionate. Wilder mocks the excesses of the Italians—particularly in the hilarious portrait of a conniving hotel valet and his murderous Sicilian girlfriend; but he obviously prefers the craziness of the Europeans to the ruthless efficiency of the Americans. Clive Revill, as the imperturbable hotel manager, perfectly embodies Old World urbanity, and Juliet Mills gives a very shrewd and engaging performance as the plump Englishwoman who obliterates American fashion model ideals of antiseptic beauty; her eccentric charm, self-irony, and generosity enchant us along with Wilder's hero.

Besides, the film absorbs us in the rich, languorous atmosphere of an exquisite European resort. Wilder is not known for his visual compositions, and *Avanti*, like most of his movies, takes place inside, skimping on the glorious scenery. But this film is masterfully made. With cinematographer Luigi Kuveiller (who photographed some of Elio Petri's films), Wilder achieves miraculous subtleties in the lighting of the interiors; the colors are from an Impressionist painter's palette. Wilder has made the old hotel—orange brick, green marble floors, soft golden bedspreads, burnt red rugs, pink flowers, the sun streaming through the stained glass windows onto the soft white walls—a vivid sensuous presence. *Avanti* is a celebration of holiday, and it is one of those films that stimulates wanderlust: even the corridors of this hotel—blue, white, and gold—are flooded with the sunlight of dream vacations. The film is something more than an escapist fantasy; it is *about* the importance of escape from the sterile, single minded American workaday world—a tribute to the lazy, romantic holiday spirit that industrious Americans find immoral.

In a more direct sense the film is a challenge to the hypocrisy of American sexual mores.

Eight years ago, in *Kiss Me, Stupid*, Wilder tried to make a sex comedy that ended by celebrating the therapeutic value of adultery. It was condemned with astonishing vehemence by the churches and the press, and Wilder even modified the ending to appease the angry moralists. The sexual revolution in films has been accelerated since then, and has left Wilder behind. In terms of explicit nudity and sex, *Avanti* is discreet, but it is one of the first American movies to present adultery in a wholly positive light. Wilder honors European sexual permissiveness, contrasting the furtive American style of adultery—a quick bang with a stewardess or an out-of-town pickup—to the more civilized and tender European tradition. Adultery humanizes Wendell, and when he finally returns to his family, we know that, like his father, he will be spending his summers in Ischia with the woman he loves. *Avanti* may be a fantasy, but it has Wilder's slyness.

Billy Wilder was born in Vienna, and although he has been in America for close to 40 years, he probably no longer feels in tune with what's happening here. It is no accident that in *Avanti* the book left unfinished by the hero's dead father is *Future Shock*. Wilder used to pride himself on keeping up with trends and fashions; now he's lost interest. *Avanti* is set in the present, but like *Sherlock Holmes*, it represents Wilder turning to the past, to Europe, reaffirming the values of a vanishing way of life.

The differences between *Avanti* and *Travels With My Aunt* offer an instructive lesson on surviving in Hollywood. The great advantage of the Wilder movie is that it has a point of view. As a writer-director Wilder can bring much more even to a relatively light movie; his obsessions enrich and transform any project he becomes involved in. Cukor, an impersonal, moderately skillful, sometimes sensitive craftsman-adapter, has no resources to fall back on. Without a sense of purpose style can't possibly sustain a movie. In *Avanti* the elegant style grows from assurance and control; the film has an underlying seriousness that enables us to relax without abdicating intelligence. It is a very charming, alert, and human comedy.

—STEPHEN FARBER

## L'AMOUR FOU

In Jacques Rivette's first major work to be shown here, *Paris Nous Appartient* (*Paris Is Ours*), the members of an acting troupe may or may not be the victims of a sinister conspiracy. A very Jamesian film with its "gathering web of insinuations," its partial viewpoints out of which some objective reality may be posited but never clearly defined, *Paris Nous Appartient* is also susceptible to the kind of criticism leveled at James's later works, that mystery revolves around mystery in a kind of nebulous cloud with not a terrible amount of substance at the core. At least in James's case (with the possible exception of *The Turn of the Screw*) the individual consciousness through which "the facts" are filtered is lucid. But with *Paris Nous Appartient*, in trying to measure the angle of perceptor refraction we have to contend with obsessed, perhaps paranoid sensibilities, so that we are never sure what is being imagined or distorted and what is actually the case. In defense it could be argued that what better way is there, as Robbe-Grillet and Butor have demonstrated, to explore the epistemological complexities of experience than through a labyrinthine mystery whose center is a question mark? But the fact remains that Rivette provides a solid structural base in *L'amour Fou* that is simply missing from the earlier film. Again using the theater world as a microcosm, Rivette is no longer content simply to use the *idea* of the profession in a metaphoric or analogical way but gives the later film ballast and backbone by building it around the actual ingredients of acting. Where *Paris Nous Appartient*, by the looks of it, sprang from some metaphysical notion, the making of *L'amour Fou* had as its *donnée* actual stage rehearsals of Racine, already in progress, so that whatever metaphysics *L'amour Fou* offers derives from the physical reality of the acting process. Where *Paris Nous Appartient* is idealistic, *L'amour Fou* is epiphenomenal, which may be no improvement philosophically but certainly is cinematically.

*L'amour Fou* takes the narrative film to that

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*L'Amour Fou* takes the narrative film to that

## REVIEWS

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outermost limit where nothing “happens” because everything is a happening and all happenings are equal. There is alternation and change, flash-forward and flashback, pan, cut, and blackout. These rather than “meaning” punctuate the film’s sequences. The film ends with the shots that begin it—Sébastien in his wrecked apartment listening to his runaway wife’s voice on a tape recorder while a sparse audience sits around a bare stage on which Racine’s *Andromaque*, whose fragmented rehearsal has comprised much of the film, is destined never to be performed, and listless actors backstage wait for Sébastien, their director, to appear. These are the two worlds of the film, the private—self-enacted, messily improvised, harrowing, without exit—and the artistic—carefully prepared and thus under control, begun, continued, or ended at will, ideally communicative amongst its members thus always in concert, and without personal risk since each actor has a surrogate character for shield. That may be why, as someone says, “Theater people don’t value their lives highly.” Time in the film, which runs more than four hours, is duration, accumulation rather than revelation, entropy rather than fresh purpose, a self-consuming circularity rather than a linear story. The “story” is a set of relationships: real life vs. play, play vs. play being photographed for TV, hermetic rehearsal hall

and apartment vs. bustling streets, play director of lovers vs. real-life lover, feigned jealousy and passion vs. their real counterparts, eloquent verse vs. inarticulate behavior, the order and delectably *soluble* problems of art vs. the mess and pointlessness of personal life. Both the rehearsals of *Andromaque* and the love-hate relationship of Sébastien and Claire have a progression of sorts. But since the film is framed by the same sequence and since, as Sébastien insists Racine be, it is free of rhetorical emphases, of imposed explanations (for Sébastien, always, “there’s nothing to explain”), the final effect is of film, of lives, simply running out and looping into a circle rather than climaxing.

At least half of *L’amour Fou* is devoted to stage rehearsals of *Andromaque*, complicated by the fact that the rehearsals are not only being recorded by Rivette’s camera but by a TV crew, whose apparatus follows the actors with insect-like intent. Claire (Bulle Ogier), who is playing Hermione, complains to Sébastien (Jean-Pierre Kalfon), who in his role as Pyrrhus is indifferent to the adoring Hermione because of his passion for *Andromaque*, that she cannot perform under such surveillance (though Ogier does brilliantly under Rivette’s). Recording apparatus is an important motif in the film, appearing also in the private-life episodes. Its effect is mysterious. Whatever is recorded is

being commemorated. Words and gestures assume ritualistic importance. What's worth commemoration must be important, so we are being asked to attend. But also we are made keenly aware of process—both the everyday process of speaking and acting and the theatrical process, a commemoration itself being commemorated. The film is far more concerned with process than product. We see the rehearsal process (never anything close to the finished product), the process of a love affair, and, ultimately, the filmmaking process. Sébastien says that what is interesting is "being able to watch [*Andromaque*] made into a film." After Claire has left the stage, Sébastien tells the TV crew to continue: "We know we're being watched." The workings are fully exposed.

The *Andromaque* rehearsals cushion life for Sébastien just as they make the film bearable for us. At the very least art is something to talk about. Perhaps that's the less-than-grandiose claim art should settle for. When Claire walks out on the play (whatever reason she gives, she will no longer take direction from Sébastien), she is choosing to live lucidly only within her own skin. No sublimation, no escape into the comfortable order of art. Against Racine's harmonious alexandrines and the neat white quadrangle of the stage she quite consciously chooses the empty noise of the streets and the equally empty silence of her apartment—just life itself—as her only mode of being. For Claire the rest of the film is a nightmare. We see her mostly in her apartment, thinking about Sébastien, listening to the street noise, sitting in corners, on her bed, sitting in the dark, taking account, going mad from the unblinking confrontation with her life. Later, surrendering to the need for art—for formal expression and commemoration—she delivers some of Hermione's spite toward Pyrrhus into a tape recorder, then, going a step further, becomes her own auteur and tapes her own diatribe against Sébastien's smugly pleasurable double life.

Thus the film makes it clear that without the escape of art—when personal existence is the sole focus of attention—life is maddening. The orgies between Claire and Sébastien are self-

consuming, leaving only ashes in the mouth. Language alone can alleviate the body's fatigue. The titillation of Racine is the elaborately civilized alexandrine servicing unhinged sexual passion. The ultimate in such passion is the desire to cannibalize or be cannibalized by the beloved. In *Andromaque* a spurned lover wants his beloved to "devour the heart I offer her." The tight restraint of the verse form accentuates the throbbing genitalia underneath. Passion swamps reason but there is also the alexandrine to have the last word. Theater people in their true-life *amour fou* must suffer without the balm of language enjoyed by the characters they play. And so Sébastien and Claire have at themselves and their apartment with razor blades, scissors, and axes instead of words. The blood is real, the anguish is without alleviation. Never has "all the world's a stage" been so thoroughly contradicted as by the ease with which Claire deserts Racine but is trapped within the four walls of her marriage. Real life is for real. Language softens literary tragedy but there is no carry-over to the real half of the actor's double life. Language embalms the damned lovers of *Andromaque* but the love-hate of Claire and Sébastien comes out inarticulate and raw. For Sébastien art means language: "Action kills the language." Racine is just people talking. He isn't sure what to do with his actors physically because there is nothing to *do* in Racine. The only time Sébastien is eloquent is when he is talking about Racine (like the hero of *Maud* talking about Pascal). Otherwise he is inarticulate. During one of the few melodramatic scenes in the film, when Claire insists on a verbal confrontation—"Do you want a *divorce*?"—Sébastien insists he has nothing to say and finally slaps her when she persists. What, in the modern view, needs to be said that behavior hasn't spelled out? At the end when he's been told that Claire has left him, she asks a friend what his response was and is informed, "What could he say? Nothing." But in Racine it is all talk and no behavior, or, rather, the talk is the behavior. No character ever touches another, while Sébastien and Claire's life is all touch. The characters are able to explain everything to each other while the

actors are appallingly dumb (Claire tries to explain to a friend why she is leaving Sébastien and ends up by saying "I can't talk, I can't talk"). Sébastien, like Rivette, is against explanation because it is a rhetorical imposition. Where it might seem that the only way to speak Racine is hysterically because the characters' emotions are always at fever pitch, Sébastien's revolutionary concept is to deliver the lines conversationally. The curious effect is passionate content presented in a flat inexpressive monotone. Sébastien wants sheer verbal behavior, just the lines themselves. So the film alternates between the pure physicality of Sébastien and Claire's marriage and the pure linguistics of the readings. For Sébastien, so keenly aware of the "displacement between words and action," there is no mediation between them (at one point Claire must bang hysterically on a wall to force his attention).

Although the film cannot resist some situational correspondences between its two worlds—Hermione-Claire's jealousy of Pyrrhus-Sébastien is only the most obvious—it is really concerned with something more basic, the existential gap between them. The division is absolute. When the actors are not reciting, they are banal, diffused, irresolute. They eat, smoke, make love, kill time. In one after-rehearsal scene they sit around staring at each other with Claire's anguish hanging heavily over them. The fascinating business of the afternoon's rehearsal with everyone busily involved in a common goal has been replaced by the messy, misshapen, above all inexpressible lump of actual relationships. Like almost all the "real" scenes, this one is heavily improvisational—a masterstroke on Rivette's part, for what better way to contrast the finely fashioned form of high art with the witlessness of real life than to depict the latter *cinéma-vérité*. Readings in Claire and Sébastien's apartment are intermediate, the actors half-graced by their characters but also sunk into formless, indeterminate sitting positions: man as legend compromised by man as fact. Rivette's editing juxtaposes but does not bridge the two worlds. Claire walks out on her director, who, after a quick cut, re-surfaces in her apartment

in his real role as husband. Later, Claire will take the even more painful step of leaving him, also. The "detachment" of playing Racine, the cold ceremonial objectivity of art into which Sébastien flees from the hell-fires of his marriage, leads to the detachment of husband and wife from each other. Claire would have liked to amalgamate the two worlds but initiates the crisis of the film when she realizes she can't. She has become too honest, too integral a human being, to *act*—which means to behave to order under surveillance. However, her Laing-like descent into madness—Laing-like because she has stopped conforming and started questioning and because the foregoing of surveillance means the terrifying lucidity of absolute aloneness—is compromised by her attempt to connect the two worlds via tape recorder (reminiscent of the way Cocteau used transmitting apparatus to send elusive messages to the "other world" in *Orphée*). In addition to reviling Sébastien through Hermione's words and then her own, she records her scattered observations of the *cinéma-vérité* going on outside her window. But the observations are non sequiturs, feeble attempts to make artistic sense of the environment. They have no framework, no plot, and, of course, inadequate linguistic resources. Again, it is harder to cope with life than with Racine, and it is harder to cope with life without Racine.

So each world provides a commentary on the other. "What do I do?" asks Andromaque at one point. Similarly, what is the actress playing her to do in her own persona? "He was doing it this way," says someone else of the actor playing Orestes. What to do. How to move. *How to proceed*. "There's the line that wrecks theories," says Sébastien. If Racine who already presents a neatly formalized bundle cannot yield to theory, what about life?

But whatever the correspondences and double entendres, they are rarely exact. The film is steadfastly existential, therefore antisymbolic. A pinball machine recurrently cut to may be an emblem of the film's concern with operational workings; or of the interplay of the characters, the actors, and the actors with the characters; or of the abstract notion of unpredictable yet in-

evitable collisions within a general field of force that applies equally to physics and mechanics, Racine, and human affairs. Like Racine, the film defies theories (a Chinese box which Claire progressively dismantles down to nothing is a rare instance of overt symbolic insistence on this point). When Marta, Claire's replacement both in the play and, for one night, in bed, volunteers a fondness for Pirandello, it seems a thematic plant. But where Pirandello loves to confuse life and art, actor and character, reality and pretense, Rivette, as we've noted, emphasizes their separateness (though through Sébastien's unintoned, understated rendition of Racine he depicts a *stylistic* correspondence with the way the personal life sequences pick up and trail off without emphasis or climax).

For example, some "acting" goes on in real-life scenes. Claire watches Sébastien sleeping. He is really awake, however, and sneakily observed her observing him until she leans over him with a hat-pin, whereupon he hastily "awakens." But this gamesmanship is less a parallel to the rehearsal scenes than a contrast to their honesty and directness. Similarly, the games between the two, involving toys, pets, wallpaper, etc., are embarrassingly forced and witless in contrast to Racine's fine game. Another example of surface parallel but underlying disparity is Sébastien's "what a nice couple we make" mirror game, which he plays both with Claire and Marta. But the serious business of acting has nothing to do with play-acting, and when it comes to Racine Sébastien never shows the least narcissism or ego. Where he is forever appropriating his actresses in real life he is fearful of over-manipulating them in their roles; *there*, they are worthy of tender handling. Where he is messy and careless in his private relations he is a demanding purist with Racine, complaining, for example, that the rehearsals have become too physical and mechanical and that the company must "start again with just facts and words." Racine arouses him to a rapt and finely calibrated attention, to precise, appropriate response. Racine has true subject status; he is a "thou." Claire is an object, which it has pleased him to handle but never to explore. Racine is

worthy of passionate disinterest, Claire of self-interested passion and, ultimately, of no interest until she disappears.

The film makes it seem as if the problem Sébastien has in giving Racine more than his due and personal relations less than theirs is less psychopathological than in the nature of things. Racine provides a mimetic schematism that begs for expression (minimal expression in Sébastien's view, just enough to be heard). Racine invites collaboration, he is something to be *done*. Other than the obvious collaboration of sex, it is a real question what else is to be done between Sébastien and Claire. What else can they collaborate on if not a mutual venture like *Andromaque*? What kind of behavioral pattern would satisfy Claire? In implicitly raising the question, the film does not shade off into sociology or, worse, soap opera. Rather, it simply opposes art, as a viable endeavor, to life, which tends to be unmanageable. And the implied reason is that art offers life something to feed on without which life can only feed on, and so exhaust, itself.

Against the proposition that the film is less psychopathological than existential there are, unfortunately, two or three miscalculated moments that furnish ammunition to those who would argue that Sébastien's determinedly flat interpretation of Racine marks him as emotionally deprived à la Antonioni. When he is told that Claire has attempted suicide, his reaction is ludicrously minimal. And during a sequence when she is accusing him of callousness and threatening separation, he slashes hysterically at his shirt and pants with a razor blade as if to get through to himself, to open himself up (one comes dangerously close to thinking that perhaps Sébastien is an ordinary thespian ham after all). But these apparent revelations of some deep psychic blockage in Sébastien go against the behavioralistic grain of the film, according to which gesture, tone, and expression are simply a way of approaching something, a stylistic matter, not signals from the psyche.

Toward the end, life begins seriously to get in Racine's way for Sébastien. Claire's show of independence prompts the start of his own



breakdown as the theater world becomes progressively more remote. Its increasing intangibility is paralleled by the increasingly poignant realization of Claire's departure. We are left at last with only two images, the bare white stage to which the film has constantly returned as if to a basic measuring point, the equivalent of the writer's bare white page. And Sébastien listening to Claire on their tape recorder. She has never been able to have a real dialogue with him, but now he is at last in touch with her, her physical absence a seeming necessity for communion on any other level. Sébastien is being finally sired into the real world by the ghost of Claire's voice (*that* captures his imagination), which has found its eloquence at last. His assistant had warned him that "people really do have to talk to each other." Now only a tape recorder can partly serve the purpose. Sébastien has taken Claire's place in their now haunted apartment, listening to his loss, no longer even conscious of his other loss, the hypnotically lovely, irrelevant world of Racine. —LAWRENCE SHAFFER

### CHLOE IN THE AFTERNOON

L'Amour, l'Après-midi.) Written and directed by Eric Rohmer. Photography: Nestor Almendros. Music: Arie Dzierlatka. Columbia.

When the films of the French New Wave began rolling out a decade and a half ago, Rohmer made hardly a splash. In fact, his first full-length film—*The Sign of Leo* (1959)—has still had no theatrical release in the US. But over the past few years Rohmer has gained just about as much popularity and critical acclaim in the States as any foreign-language film-maker can expect, and at last fall's New York Film Festival his brand-new *Chloe in the Afternoon* took the gala opening-night spot immediately before going into theatrical release.

It's a measure of Rohmer's success that there have been some grumblings of critical reaction, on "Yes, but he's not *that* great" lines. This isn't surprising, because the American acclaim for his breakthrough film, *My Night at Maud's* (1968), though well deserved, resulted partly from a misreading. Since this was the first of his Moral Tales to be released in the States, the

basic theme of the six films—what happens when a man's self-image or philosophy is challenged by sexual temptation—remained latent, and audiences judged the film in isolation. Now, for this particular variation of his theme, Rohmer had chosen a key inspired by Blaise Pascal, the seventeenth-century mathematician and Catholic philosopher. Not only was the film's protagonist also a mathematician and devout Catholic, living in Pascal's native city (Clermont-Ferrand), but Pascal's thought was a recurrent topic of conversation in the film. With its overtone of religious anguish, *Maud* could easily remind viewers of Ingmar Bergman—a superficial resemblance that was strengthened by the wintry settings and the spare black-and-white photography.

With Rohmer's next film to appear over here, *Claire's Knee* (1970), the resemblance to Bergman vanished. Here everything was in glowing summer-vacation color with action to match: no deep drama but a kind of psychological judo tournament. Although the interplay of characters and the terse authority of Rohmer's style helped keep many American reviews favorable, even its warmest champions felt it was overshadowed by *Maud*; others shook their heads at the idea of an entire film about a man wanting to put his hand on a girl's knee, for God's sake! Anyway, *Claire's Knee* made it clear that Rohmer, the most intellectual of French film-makers (he recently completed a doctoral thesis on "The Organization of Space in Murnau's *Faust*," a title which sounds almost like a parody), hardly fitted the stereotype of Foreign Film-Maker Most Likely to Succeed in the States. In his somewhat abstract exercise of composing six filmic variations on a theme, he worked within narrow self-imposed limitations; despite his admiration for Hitchcock, his films offer none of the melodramatic tributes that recur in Truffaut, Chabrol and Rivette; and he hardly pays even lip service to social and political awareness.

If Rohmer seems to fit any stereotype at all, it is that of the Cartesian Frenchman who prizes lucidity and rational thought, believing that external reality can be mapped onto a set of mental constructs which can be communicated with

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If Rohmer seems to fit any stereotype at all, it is that of the Cartesian Frenchman who prizes lucidity and rational thought, believing that external reality can be mapped onto a set of mental constructs which can be communicated with

precision. Few directors getting their first chance to make a full-length feature would have chosen the austere linear pattern that Rohmer followed in *The Sign of Leo*. The film is about an American musician living in Paris who runs out of money in August, when everyone he knows is out of town, and gradually degenerates into a bum. An implausible idea? Well, Rohmer offers a step-by-step demonstration—mild inconvenience (simpler meals), discomfort (walking to the suburbs to see a man who isn't there), unpleasantness (being ejected from his hotel), indifference to his appearance (no longer worrying about a stain on his clothes), humiliation (caught trying to steal), and so on—which has the single-minded logic and persuasiveness of Euclid. Though *Chloe* is far more complex, the impulsion behind it remains essentially linear, without flashbacks or cross-cutting.

The opening scenes rapidly sketch out the basic premise: Frédéric (Bernard Verley), a youngish married businessman, believes that his passive admiration of other women merely reflects his love for his wife Héléne (Françoise Verley). Though there is no apparent contrivance in the home and office scenes, Rohmer makes them so terse, shears away so much naturalistic woolliness, and overlays them with such a cool and well-worded narration that Frédéric's character becomes partly generalized: behind the individual stands the Married Man, the Bourgeois, the Dreamer, with capital letters. Then, about one third of the way through the film, Frédéric's belief is put to the test. Chloe (Zouzou), the ex-mistress of a former friend, turns up in Paris after a long absence and calls on him for help in finding a job. Coarse-featured and lackadaisical, she bears no resemblance to the elegant creatures of Frédéric's fantasies, and before he realizes the threat to his complacency he is hooked. From here on the film centers on Frédéric's struggle to maintain his orderly illusions against Chloe's increasingly open onslaught.

In this last third of the film, contrivance does show through. In trying to build the struggle to a crisis, Rohmer slips into the one big pitfall of

Cartesianism—instead of mapping reality onto a set of mental constructs, he imposes constructs arbitrarily on reality. When Chloe tells Frédéric outright that she loves him and intends to have a baby by him, he surely has to react *some way*: break with her, make it with her and to hell with fantasy, or at least get worried; but Rohmer, preoccupied with the pattern of his approach to the crisis, lets Frédéric go smiling along the same as ever.

At this point, too, the contrivance in Chloe's character begins to show. Earlier, when Frédéric says lightly that in another, imagined world he'd marry her, Chloe declares that she never has such daydreams. The contrast emerges briefly and believably. But in the last third of the film, Chloe's character—disillusioned, blunt, depressive—seems too deliberately conceived as a challenge to Frédéric's. It's not clear why she persists with him—whether she really loves him or is simply playing a game. There are no independent clues to her deeper character, and in the end she is reduced from an intriguing mystery to a function of the plot.

Yet these signs of abstract contrivance are far outweighed by Rohmer's sensitivity to the richness of reality. Throughout the film he draws on the expressive power of settings, objects, gestures, and tones of voice without reducing them to abstract symbols (a clock merely to represent time, an empty room for loneliness, etc.). He begins and ends the film with a closeup of a bureau in the corner of Frédéric's and Héléne's living room—a hint that external reality may precede and outlast mental constructs. And the whole film develops into a rebuttal of Frédéric's assumption that his ordered view of life and of his relations with other people has any existence outside his mind.

Rohmer begins the rebuttal gently, almost imperceptibly. As in *Maud* and *Claire*, the tone is set by the central male character. In the first third of *Chloe*, Rohmer allows—or rather, subtly arranges for—external reality to reflect Frédéric's complacent outlook. Photography and editing create a crisp succession of scenes in which Paris appears as a bright, delicately col-

ored, orderly pageant. Even the casual flow of life in the streets can fit into Frédéric's pattern: he likes Paris, he says, because there are people around at all hours—in other words, a crowd of extras on his personal sound stage—and Rohmer inserts a shot of pedestrians surging across a street as if on cue. Yet in these early scenes—and here *Chloe* goes further than *Maud* or *Claire*—Rohmer is already beginning to hint at the independence of reality.

One ambiguous sequence opens with a pretty girl sitting alone at a café table. The camera holds on her while Frédéric's narrative voice explains (at length) that he is no longer capable of flirting. Eventually, a brief shot of Frédéric reveals him at another table watching the girl; then she suddenly looks up and smiles as her boyfriend arrives. The viewer is left free to either accept Frédéric's statement or to conclude that he is making a virtue of necessity.

Even more pithy are the seemingly casual scenes involving the two secretaries in Frédéric's office—girls who were clearly hired for their decorative looks, to play attendant roles in his fantasies. The girls say very little, express hardly any opinions, and yet they acquire a much greater presence than is usual with supporting parts of this size. Early in the film, in a brief scene where the secretaries are lunching together, Rohmer focuses on a salad in front of one, a sundae in front of the other. There is no explanation, no "naturalistic" chatter about diets, simply the flashing suggestion that the girls are involved in all kinds of choices and actions which go far beyond Frédéric's simple image of them.

The biggest challenge to Frédéric's mental world comes, of course, from *Chloe* herself. In casting Zouzou, Rohmer took a big chance. Her first appearance in the film clashes so sharply with the kind of femininity that attracts Frédéric (and, indeed, with general conventions of screen beauty, as Rohmer ironically suggests by parading the leading actresses of his previous *Moral Tales* through one of Frédéric's fantasies) that I, for one, felt a sudden letdown: does Rohmer expect us to believe that Frédéric will fall for this gloomy slob? But gradually, from scene

to scene, Zouzou/*Chloe* asserts her own brand of attractiveness, which the viewer and Frédéric come to recognize at the same rate. Rohmer makes this happen partly by his orchestration of physical details—later, for example, when *Chloe* takes a job in a boutique, she is shown for the first time in a dress, revealing her well shaped legs—and partly by giving her abrupt shifts of mood for which Frédéric can see no rational explanation and which therefore keep him guessing—something his fantasy women never do.

Most significant of all is the reason for Frédéric's final decision to leave *Chloe*, which happens just when she is lying naked and waiting. As he pulls his sweater over his head he remembers performing the same gesture when playing with his baby son. Now, because it is implausible that Frédéric would have waited so long before breaking with *Chloe*, this sweater-over-head memory may come across as a contrivance, a sentimental device like the timely discovery of a wife's photograph or a scarf she knitted that saved many an old-time Hollywood hero from infidelity. But although the scene misfires, it is certainly neither sentimental nor conventional. The sweater itself has no symbolic meaning: its removal is a nexus of tactile and kinesthetic sensations which suddenly connect Frédéric with reality. It is brought home to him physically that he can no longer rationalize his attraction to *Chloe* as an extension of his love for *Hélène*. At long last (if only temporarily) Frédéric breaks out of the imaginary world in his mind.

This is not an easy ending to accept, since it involves a denial of adventure and an apparent retreat into the security of the familiar. It's tempting to complain that Frédéric is merely playing it safe—and to extend this charge to Rohmer himself. In today's "global village," a serious film-maker who shuts out all references to social, political, and economic issues is expected at least to demonstrate some powerful ecstasy or anguish. Yet Rohmer quietly works and reworks an extremely narrow territory of human behavior.

Rohmer's apparent weaknesses are, I believe, his strengths. It's all too easy for a film-maker to pay lip service to relevance by dropping in a

mention of drugs or race prejudice, or to make a play for profundity by exaggerating the violence of words or actions. Rohmer's restraint suggests toughmindedness rather than timidity.

In all of his films that have been shown in the States, he takes at least one big risk: he expects the audience to identify with a thoroughly unheroic character. No happy extrovert, or lovable rogue, or self-possessed philosopher, or any other robust personality. Instead, he casts the viewer as a somber moral prig in *Maud*, an insecure intellectual in *Claire*, and—most difficult of all to accept in this knowing age—the naive Frédéric in *Chloe*. Rohmer does not ingratiate himself with his public by flattery.

With *Chloe* he takes an even bigger risk. In each of his previous Moral Tales, the woman

who disturbs the protagonist's equanimity appears obviously attractive from the start. But the irruption of *Chloe* is so unexpected that it threatens the whole fabric of the film. If this had been Rohmer's first Moral Tale, I might assume he simply miscalculated. Since it is his last, I think he aimed at a bigger and more active clash between idea and reality than ever before—but within a concentrated framework that would still draw the viewer into his protagonist's experience. It's an extraordinary difficult balancing act, and he brings it off with no more than a stumble.

No, Rohmer does not play it safe. He occupies a small territory, but he fills it with the antinomies of coolness and intensity, calculation and surprise.

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**Brother Sun, Sister Moon.** Here we are back in the Italian middle ages and it's great to be poor—since there are a few million dollars around to give poverty a face lift. Fields burst into blossom whenever the camera rolls, a dyer's sweat shop glows like Chartres cathedral, and St. Francis's robe is always fresh from the cleaner's. All the poor people in the neighborhood of Assisi are slim, gentle, and pious. All the rich people, except Francis's mother, are ugly, bad-tempered and hypocritical. One day Francis notices the difference and joins the beautiful poor. Much later, he goes off to quote the gospels at the Pope, who is infinitely richer than the burghers of Assisi but nevertheless keeps his temper. Director Franco Zeffirelli relaxes a little in the untrammelled opulence of the papal scenes and begins to reveal a certain visual sense. But common sense remains absent to the end. Though I can hardly recommend *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*, it does provide a useful object lesson in how not to make a film, and it kept me laughing.

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**The Heartbreak Kid.** The mild case of schizophrenia present in *The Heartbreak Kid* comes to the fore at the outset. The movie is, we are told, Neil Simon's, yet it is simultaneously an Elaine May film. As a further element, those who read Bruce Jay Friedman's "A Change of Plan" in *Esquire* a few years back recognize that the

story has left a definite imprint on the adaptation. A movie, then, with multiple personalities. That *The Heartbreak Kid* manages to synthesize May's improvisational satire, Simon's situation comedy, and Friedman's bitterly black humor, and emerge as an occasionally brilliant, if indecisive, American comedy is an achievement very much out of the ordinary. Furthermore, Elaine May's second directorial effort is carried off with such a casual comfort and buoyant pace that the contrasting threads are only rarely visible. If one is alert to such things, *The Heartbreak Kid* bears more than a superficial resemblance to a number of films of the past few years, chiefly *The Graduate* and *Goodbye, Columbus*, which shouldn't come as much of a shock. Ms. May shares with her former partner Mike Nichols a sparse, dialogue-oriented style and a quizzical perspective. Similarly, Philip Roth's friendly anti-Semitism is strikingly similar to Friedman's. Despite this familiarity, the one consistent quality found in *The Heartbreak Kid* is the ability to take us by surprise—which is above all what makes this movie one of the few really enjoyable comedies by a young American director in recent years. The first half of the movie concerns the wedding and honeymoon of Lenny and Lila (Charles Grodin and Jeannie Berlin). He is a good-looking, self-assured sporting goods salesman and she is an attractive, though sloppy, incipient yenta. While in Miami Beach, Lenny meets and becomes entranced by Kelly (Cybill Shepherd) and decides to leave his wife of less than a week. While Grodin and Berlin are both entirely capable and

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quite likeable, Ms. Shepherd's performance is an absolute delight. Hers is the type of acting that generally goes unrecognized due to its subtlety and lack of theatrics. In one scene, where Lenny confronts Kelly's father, perfectly played by Eddie Albert, Kelly and her mother sit at the table and barely utter a syllable during the entire conversation. Shepherd makes this scene her own by conveying just the right amounts of amusement and self-absorption to capture the attitude of a bored, rich campus beauty queen. Grodin adapts the surface mannerisms of other prominent personalities (frequent flashes of Lenny Bruce, for one), but manages to be both ingratiating and grating. Ms. Berlin, Ms. May's daughter, is just splendid, especially as she resembles her mother. Her kvetchy Jewishness is just a touch too obvious, however, which diminishes the impact. *The Heartbreak Kid* disposes of Lila after the first half and sends Lenny to Minneapolis to seek out Kelly, despite the protests of her father. Lenny eliminates Kelly's "captain of everything" boyfriend by posing as a narc in one of the movie's finest moments, then goes to a deserted cabin with Kelly to play nude games. They marry, and the film ends with a *Graduate*-like party during which Lenny discusses his business prospects with Mr. Corcoran's friends.

At the core of *The Heartbreak Kid* is a serious moral dilemma. This dilemma hinges on whether Lenny is correct in cruelly dumping Lila in order to pursue his dream girl. Neil Simon's traditional response to complex human relationships is to pass them off with a gag line, and it is to Elaine May's eternal credit that she did not allow *The Heartbreak Kid* to deteriorate into *Barefoot in the Park*. By lingering on the characters for a brief moment after the scene's punctuation with a joke, she enables us to see that the humor coincides with confusion and sadness. Framing the film with almost identical weddings, down to the music ("Close to You"), also reinforces the lack of resolution in the intervening comedy. The most disturbing aspect of Simon's comedic formula in the past has been his tendency to give his hand away, to anticipate his own punch line and rob us of the joy of discovery. May's gift has been quite the opposite; she lets us believe that she is guileless, totally distanced from the humor in the situation. In the role of innocent participant rather than sophisticated commentator, she allows humor to evolve where Simon's dissolves. *The Heartbreak Kid* permits Simon his pokes in the ribs, but May's emphasis falls on the side of the people involved. Like Lenny himself, *The Heartbreak Kid* manages to win one over by virtue of its surface charm. Unlike the film's rather dubious hero, however, the film has a lot going on beneath the exterior.

—MITCHELL S. COHEN

**The Jail.** It is axiomatic that institutions are microcosms of society at large. What goes on in a school, a hospital, a courtroom, a jail parallels what goes on outside: how people are treated, who's on top and who's on bottom, what's considered important. *The Jail* is an 80-minute documentary examination of the San Francisco County Jail—but it represents all county jails and, on a larger scale, all of society. It was made by four Bay Area film-makers/writers—Michael Anderson, Paul Jacobs, Saul Landau, and Bill Rahraus—and is about the best of this kind of *cinéma vérité* film I've seen in a long time. It's not as polished as the documentary work of, say, Frederick Wiseman or the Barrons, but in a way this lack of polish heightens its sense of realism. All of the film-makers had been in jail (usually for some radical cause) so they more or less knew what to look for. Still, even they were surprised on occasion: they weren't aware, for example, of the jail population's great fascination with the Queen's Tier, the homosexual wing. Thus, a lot of the film (too much, actually) deals with these intriguing jail-types. The film—shot over a two-month period with the complete cooperation of the then newly elected, radical-reformer sheriff, Richard Hongisto—captures perfectly what most of jail life is all about: boredom and noise. The din of the place is overwhelming. Scientists tell us that the danger level for hearing and psychological health is 40 decibels; the uproar in this jail—built in 1934 to a design which permits 700 men to hear any noise made anywhere all the time—is a constant 80 decibels, enough to drive sane men crazy. In a series of remarkable interviews, we also get a sense of familiarity with some of the more memorable inmates and their keepers. For most of the staff, it's just a job ("mainly because we're not educated enough for anything else," one guard admits), but for some their work goes further than that. There's one kindly, sensitive black sergeant who seems anxious not to make life any more miserable than it already is for the men. But there's also a white lieutenant who is almost a parody of The Compleat Law'n'Ordure Freak: his prescription for a good jail is "a concentration camp in the deserts of Arizona or somewhere, with just enough food for prisoners to keep them alive." He also believes that crime has no genesis in the poverty and discrimination of our society; he believes that criminality can be laid at the feet of "the Communists" and "the radicals" who apparently agitate the poor people to rob and kill each other. Again, a look at the microcosmic statistics should be a good indication of what's going on out there beyond the walls: Ten years ago, blacks made up 30% of this jail's population; today it's 47%, with 23% Chicano, 12% Asian; the rest are Caucasians convicted mostly of victimless crimes (dope, drunkenness,



quite likeable, Ms. Shepherd's performance is an absolute delight. Hers is the type of acting that generally goes unrecognized due to its subtlety and lack of theatrics. In one scene, where Lenny confronts Kelly's father, perfectly played by Eddie Albert, Kelly and her mother sit at the table and barely utter a syllable during the entire conversation. Shepherd makes this scene her own by conveying just the right amounts of amusement and self-absorption to capture the attitude of a bored, rich campus beauty queen. Grodin adapts the surface mannerisms of other prominent personalities (frequent flashes of Lenny Bruce, for one), but manages to be both ingratiating and grating. Ms. Berlin, Ms. May's daughter, is just splendid, especially as she resembles her mother. Her kvetchy Jewishness is just a touch too obvious, however, which diminishes the impact. *The Heartbreak Kid* disposes of Lila after the first half and sends Lenny to Minneapolis to seek out Kelly, despite the protests of her father. Lenny eliminates Kelly's "captain of everything" boyfriend by posing as a narc in one of the movie's finest moments, then goes to a deserted cabin with Kelly to play nude games. They marry, and the film ends with a *Graduate*-like party during which Lenny discusses his business prospects with Mr. Corcoran's friends.

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—BERNARD WEINER

**San Francisco Good Times** takes its name from a central institution of the counterculture—an underground newspaper which evolved from a radical political journal to a broadly cultural paper. The film, made by Allan Francovich and Eugene Rosow with help from a lot of friends, traces the paper's trajectory as it reflected a changing era: it is a bold hour-long attempt to turn the usual devices of synch-sound documentary away from portraits of persons or crises, and toward the "writing" of history. From quiet sequences of talk and making up the paper, it moves out into the major themes of rock's liberating effects, property, back-to-the-land, prisons. There is a moment during the struggle over People's Park in Berkeley (which raised Proudhon's cry, Property Is Theft, to a current political question about land) that looks like something out of Buñuel's *L'Age d'Or*: a young couple nuzzle each other affectionately and sit down on a curb—while a few yards away the police fire a barrage of tear-gas shells and the streets are full of fleeing people. But the film is not your ordinary we-shall-overcome tract. It's often funny; the radical raps it contains range from the high and manic to the glum; the practical problems of the paper are not skimmed; the film is inhabited by real people some of whom make idiotic pronouncements along with brave and stirring ones. And for those who don't seem to know what has happened to the counterculture, the film will give at least some answers: it has emigrated to the country; it has become deeply cynical about the reform of institutions—which are all more or less prisons; and the good times are too often distinctly jumpy. (Source: 2104 Acton St., Berkeley, Ca. 94702.)

—E. C.

**Soylent Green** is an interesting bad film. Based on Harry Harrison's science fiction novel *Make Room!*

*Make Room!* it depicts an environmental nightmare of the year 2022, when the population of New York City has exploded to 41 million. Of these, the wealthy few live in plush air-conditioned apartment buildings guarded like fortresses. The remaining millions sweat it out in crowded tenements or junked autos, existing on squares of processed food turned out by the powerful Soylent corporation—on Tuesdays, green squares purportedly made of plankton. One day a member of the Soylent board is assassinated, and detective Thorn (Charlton Heston) sets out to discover why . . . The badness of the film is obvious: gratuitous mayhem, perfunctory "romance," the mystery preserved with clumsy artifice to the last possible moment, and more. The major interest arises indirectly, as *Soylent Green* demonstrates the pitfalls of extrapolating a future society. The film accepts the man's world of Harrison's novel (which antedated the women's lib movement), and the fortresses of the apparently all-male Establishment come equipped with concubines known as Furniture. Although women might for some unforeseen reason slip back in the next fifty years, an SF prophet has to convince us here and now, and the man's world of *Soylent Green* looks like yesterday's future, not today's. On the other hand, a prophet cannot stick too closely to today's mores or his future will simply be the present in light disguise. *Soylent Green* rightly suggests that suicide could be socially approved in an overcrowded world, but it keeps our present tabu against anthropophagy as firm as ever. This is where the film's central mystery comes in. Thorn discovers that Soylent Green is being made not from plankton (since life in the oceans has been killed off) but from the bodies of the human dead. He is horrified—a reaction which director Richard Fleischer underlines by his treatment of the "waste disposal" scenes, lingering on shrouded corpses and deep vats as if they belonged to Lionel Atwill's wax museum. But would the film's desperate society really be as shocked as we are at this kind of recycling? The horror strikes false, especially when Thorn's elderly colleague (Edward G. Robinson in his last screen role) reacts to the news by dashing to a suicide center—thus inconsistently speeding his own body's conversion to Soylent Green. Still, the film offers a somewhat more thoughtful picture of a grim future society than did *A Clockwork Orange*, in the making of which Stanley Kubrick apparently assumed that he could best portray a disintegrating society by ignoring all background consistency. The best scenes in *Soylent Green* are effective because simple: Thorn reveling in water from a faucet or in a dinner of genuine meat and vegetables—luxuries almost beyond imagining in his world. Though the film is only a routine thriller beneath its clothing of environmental

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concern, at least it is dressed with some care.

—WILLIAM JOHNSON

**That Certain Summer**, directed by Lamont Johnson, was, in a certain sense, not a TV movie, but a “happening”: in prime time, American television presented a story in which two homosexual characters are living together, and it did so without any homophobic moralizing about their behavior. But if the showing of the movie was interesting as an historical event, the movie itself wasn’t very interesting, at least aesthetically. Its boredom, though, may well have been calculated. Richard Levinson and William Link, the writer-producers, seemed intent on showing that homosexuals could be as dull as other people, perhaps on the principle that this would be reassuring to the mass audience, and maybe even to homosexuals themselves. The dullness of the two homosexual characters was proclaimed as health by Merle Miller in the *New York Times*, and eulogized as going beyond the limp-wrist cliché in *The Village Voice*. The film initially does have a certain novelty value because the homosexual characters are not being presented as objects of humor, but the novelty soon fades when it becomes apparent that they aren’t being presented as homosexuals either. The writers didn’t necessarily have to show the characters as being effeminate, but by avoiding any of the homosexual behavior or mannerisms in voice, dress, etc. that bother heterosexuals, they not only succeeded in making the characters blank, but in making a mockery of the principle of tolerance. It is like showing blacks in white face, doing all the things that white middle-class people do, and then saying: “Tolerate blacks because they’re really ordinary middle class people just like you.” But the movie does at least evince some intelligence in manipulating audience attitudes. The center of the drama is, as it should be in a propaganda piece, not homosexuality but homophobia: the exaggerated reaction to homosexuals or horror and loathing. Quite cleverly, the writers use our normal sense of feeling for our parents (one shouldn’t reject one’s own father) to encourage us to hope that the teenage boy will get over his homophobia. Unfortunately, the boy is just too weak and confused a character to make his homophobia a compelling dramatic center. The writers, by not giving us any real insight into the boy’s fears, give us soap opera without the sympathy or affect of soap opera. A more powerful drama would have given us a much stronger homophobic character as dramatic antagonist, like the judge in David Viscott’s *The Making of a Psychiatrist*. It may be that any drama based on a real-life incident would have been too controversial for TV. Perhaps the solution lies in a non-dramatic *cinéma vérité* treatment of

homosexuals, as in the second episode of *An American Family*. Whatever the affectations of a Lance Loud, at least he isn’t dull, nor does he pretend to be just a normal white middle-class American. Nevertheless, *That Certain Summer* is important because it seems to reflect a growing tolerance of homosexual behavior between consenting adults among younger viewers (whom the advertisers are so desperate to court). Societies like the Marquesan, which are not homophobic and which are permissive about sex in general, have few habitual homosexuals. The problem of course is that our own society is still seriously repressive about sex in general. And if Gay Liberation is right in having criticized *That Certain Summer* for not having had more open displays of physical affection between the homosexual characters, TV could also be criticized for not having more open treatment of physical affection between heterosexual characters.

—ROBERT CHAPPETTA

*The Visitors* doesn’t quite work, but it certainly deserves more than the humiliating eight-day New York run it received. In trying to minimize the blatantries of his son’s script, Elia Kazan tried for a cool, controlled style which turned against itself, its very deliberateness providing unneeded italics instead of the intended understatement. But his guidance of an unmistakably Brandoesque actor is a reminder of Kazan’s pre-eminence as an actors’ director. The performance Kazan has coaxed out of Steve Railsback—a performance *only* Kazan could get from an actor—is a late-in-the-day vindication of Actors Studio naturalism. Railsback’s Method-drenched performance is marvelously detailed, a mosaic of uncompleted gestures, steely glances, erratic phrasing, sly pauses and backtrackings, nervous facial tics. In the great fifties Brando-Dean tradition, his acting is an exhibition of relaxed intensity. Railsback’s brooding and menacing sexuality (a recall of earlier Kazan heroes) is especially appropriate to his role as an unwanted visitor to the isolated farmhouse of his former army buddies. Railsback unnerves everyone at the farmhouse, from his constrained “buddy” (who turned him in for his brutal treatment of a Viet Cong girl) to the buddy’s twitchy commonlaw wife to her assertively hem man father. Smoldering, threatening, both attractive and repellent, the Railsback character is genuinely unsettling, and by using his actor’s presence as the dramatic fulcrum, Kazan discovers complex sexual tensions which probably aren’t in the original script. *The Visitors* fits right in with the current movie obsession with paranoia and violence. As in *Straw Dogs*, a house is invaded and defiled, and the reticent master of the house establishes his manhood by fighting against the intruders. Like *Straw Dogs* (and *Dirty Harry* and *The*

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*The Visitors* doesn’t quite work, but it certainly deserves more than the humiliating eight-day New York run it received. In trying to minimize the blatantries of his son’s script, Elia Kazan tried for a cool, controlled style which turned against itself, its very deliberateness providing unneeded italics instead of the intended understatement. But his guidance of an unmistakably Brandoesque actor is a reminder of Kazan’s pre-eminence as an actors’ director. The performance Kazan has coaxed out of Steve Railsback—a performance *only* Kazan could get from an actor—is a late-in-the-day vindication of Actors Studio naturalism. Railsback’s Method-drenched performance is marvelously detailed, a mosaic of uncompleted gestures, steely glances, erratic phrasing, sly pauses and backtrackings, nervous facial tics. In the great fifties Brando-Dean tradition, his acting is an exhibition of relaxed intensity. Railsback’s brooding and menacing sexuality (a recall of earlier Kazan heroes) is especially appropriate to his role as an unwanted visitor to the isolated farmhouse of his former army buddies. Railsback unnerves everyone at the farmhouse, from his constrained “buddy” (who turned him in for his brutal treatment of a Viet Cong girl) to the buddy’s twitchy commonlaw wife to her assertively hem man father. Smoldering, threatening, both attractive and repellent, the Railsback character is genuinely unsettling, and by using his actor’s presence as the dramatic fulcrum, Kazan discovers complex sexual tensions which probably aren’t in the original script. *The Visitors* fits right in with the current movie obsession with paranoia and violence. As in *Straw Dogs*, a house is invaded and defiled, and the reticent master of the house establishes his manhood by fighting against the intruders. Like *Straw Dogs* (and *Dirty Harry* and *The*

concern, at least it is dressed with some care.

—WILLIAM JOHNSON

**That Certain Summer**, directed by Lamont Johnson, was, in a certain sense, not a TV movie, but a “happening”: in prime time, American television presented a story in which two homosexual characters are living together, and it did so without any homophobic moralizing about their behavior. But if the showing of the movie was interesting as an historical event, the movie itself wasn’t very interesting, at least aesthetically. Its boredom, though, may well have been calculated. Richard Levinson and William Link, the writer-producers, seemed intent on showing that homosexuals could be as dull as other people, perhaps on the principle that this would be reassuring to the mass audience, and maybe even to homosexuals themselves. The dullness of the two homosexual characters was proclaimed as health by Merle Miller in the *New York Times*, and eulogized as going beyond the limp-wrist cliché in *The Village Voice*. The film initially does have a certain novelty value because the homosexual characters are not being presented as objects of humor, but the novelty soon fades when it becomes apparent that they aren’t being presented as homosexuals either. The writers didn’t necessarily have to show the characters as being effeminate, but by avoiding any of the homosexual behavior or mannerisms in voice, dress, etc. that bother heterosexuals, they not only succeeded in making the characters blank, but in making a mockery of the principle of tolerance. It is like showing blacks in white face, doing all the things that white middle-class people do, and then saying: “Tolerate blacks because they’re really ordinary middle class people just like you.” But the movie does at least evince some intelligence in manipulating audience attitudes. The center of the drama is, as it should be in a propaganda piece, not homosexuality but homophobia: the exaggerated reaction to homosexuals or horror and loathing. Quite cleverly, the writers use our normal sense of feeling for our parents (one shouldn’t reject one’s own father) to encourage us to hope that the teenage boy will get over his homophobia. Unfortunately, the boy is just too weak and confused a character to make his homophobia a compelling dramatic center. The writers, by not giving us any real insight into the boy’s fears, give us soap opera without the sympathy or affect of soap opera. A more powerful drama would have given us a much stronger homophobic character as dramatic antagonist, like the judge in David Viscott’s *The Making of a Psychiatrist*. It may be that any drama based on a real-life incident would have been too controversial for TV. Perhaps the solution lies in a non-dramatic *cinéma vérité* treatment of

homosexuals, as in the second episode of *An American Family*. Whatever the affectations of a Lance Loud, at least he isn’t dull, nor does he pretend to be just a normal white middle-class American. Nevertheless, *That Certain Summer* is important because it seems to reflect a growing tolerance of homosexual behavior between consenting adults among younger viewers (whom the advertisers are so desperate to court). Societies like the Marquesan, which are not homophobic and which are permissive about sex in general, have few habitual homosexuals. The problem of course is that our own society is still seriously repressive about sex in general. And if Gay Liberation is right in having criticized *That Certain Summer* for not having had more open displays of physical affection between the homosexual characters, TV could also be criticized for not having more open treatment of physical affection between heterosexual characters.

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# three european directors

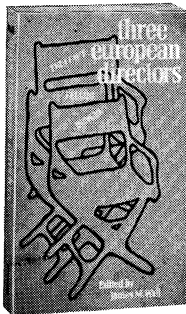
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Editor

The importance of film as a medium of both artistic and social expression is increasingly being recognized, due in large measure to the strong influence of contemporary directors.

Here are illuminating essays on three of Europe's most famous film directors: Luis Bunuel (by Peter Schillaci), Federico Fellini (by Roger Ortmyer), and Francois Truffaut (by James M. Wall). Each includes a complete list of the films made by the director, as well as a bibliography of books, major articles, and reviews. Though each writer approaches his subject differently, all are concerned to clarify the major themes

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*Walkabout*. There is an ethnographic film about one of the very few Australian aborigine families still living off the desert. They dig roots and grubs; their eyes are constantly beset by flies. Aside from Buñuel's *Land Without Bread*, it is one of the most unsettling films about the human condition that exist, and only anthropologists seem to be able to bear it. *Walkabout* strikes us as strange, but it's a comfortable strangeness. The story—of a teen-age city girl and her 8-year-old brother marooned in the desert by their berserk father, and saved finally by meeting a teen-age aborigine boy—is told in a curiously old-fashioned way, like a silent film of circa 1912. "The Girl": and we are shown a couple of choice shots of the girl. "The Father": and we are duly presented with his dismal life. Later on, though a more conventional syntax obtains, the method is still art, with gorgeous sunsets, long, languorous dissolves, and a curious vagueness about geography. (In such circumstances it is not an irrelevant technical detail to wonder from what direction the sun is shining!) There is a positively Griffithian moment of intercutting between a tree-climbing bit of fun and an aboriginal family fooling with the wreckage of the father's car, and a thing straight out of the French avant-gardists where tree shapes are made to stand in for the girl's body (this gives the chance for some Poetic crotch shots). Roeg shows us the boy's astonishing powers of spearing kangaroos; but then he insists on putting in a literal reminder that if the boy bloodily butchers his prey, our butchers do exactly the same for us. Jumping about the continent for dramatic photographic effects, the film's exoticism actually involves a disrespect for the Australian environment which it theoretically counterposes to the decadence of "civilization"; Australians find its muddled geography hilarious, and probably nobody can imagine what an aborigine would think of it. It is a civilized film in the worst sense. —E. C.



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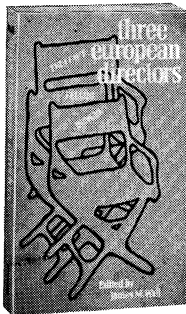
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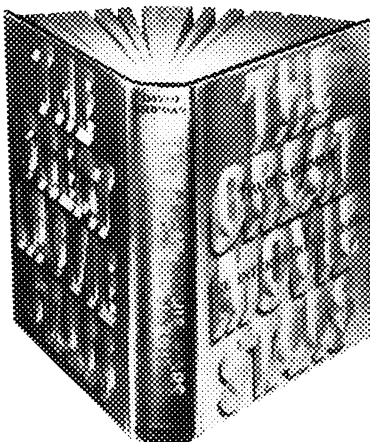
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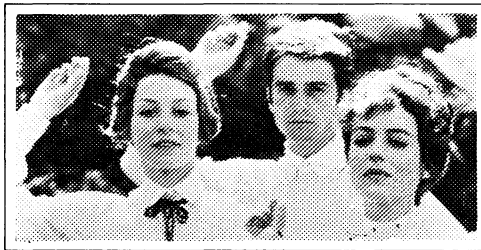
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