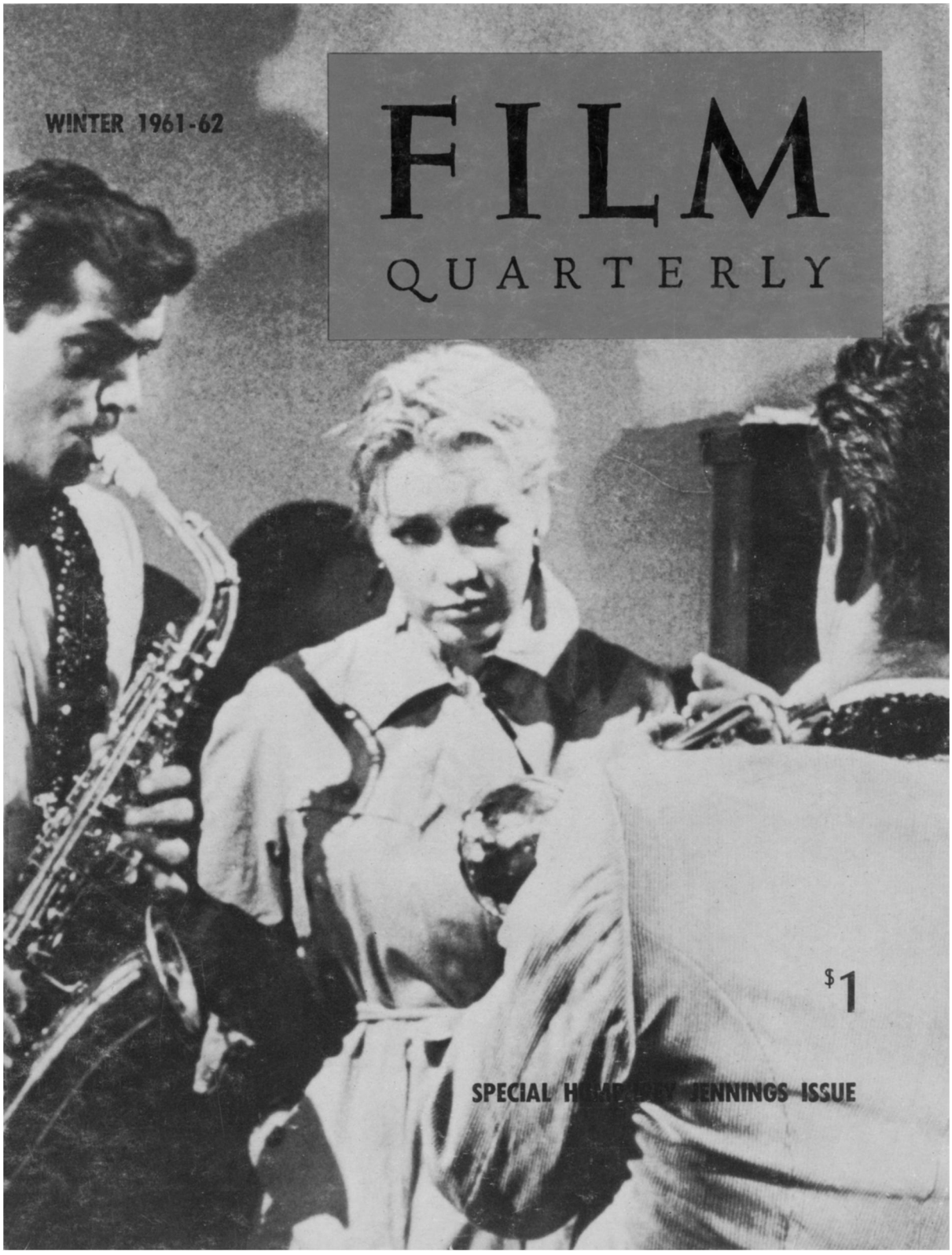
WINTER 1961-62
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ENNINGS ISSUE

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FILM QUARTERLY

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Editor's Notebook

The Importance of Humphrey Jennings

What counts about Jennings is his unfaltering sense of grace: grace in the people of his films, grace in his fluid and intuitive handling of images and sound, grace in his implicit artistic attitude. His Britain is the opposite of that we see in Lindsay Anderson's *O Dreamland.* Yet Anderson's article, which we reprint in this issue by permission of *Sight & Sound,* where it appeared in 1954, is the best appreciation of Jennings' films so far. His Britain is of course akin to the sociological image of British documentary of his period, though it is far more personal. Most of the other documentarists made reformist pamphlets in varying degrees of disguise. They were useful, and we could use some, ourselves. But Jennings is a poet. He does not want to make us "understand" or "do," only to *see;* he is able, because he assumes we already understand, to exercise an enormous artistic restraint.

Jennings' films rest on a foundation of patriotism and national pride. Yet, far from being offensive, this oddly gives his films a universal appeal. They are the most successful body of films made on a thoroughly poetic basis in the history of the cinema to date. If there is a future for what Eisenstein announced as "the intellectual cinema," it is Jennings who shows the way. Eisenstein's contention was that the film might recreate in the spectator's mind, by the judicious use of montage, not a story but a coherent process of *thought.* The juxtaposed images, analyzing "reality," would give rise to ideas; the result was to be the equivalent of a discourse. Eisenstein brought this theory of cinema to a spectacular dead-end in *The Old and the New,* an immense, occasionally lovely puzzle of film metaphors, graphic-arts formalism, and tedious laboring of points. Without a structuring lyric impulse, the theory proved barren. Without poetry, it can bear no edible fruit. The field of the serious non-plot film has been occupied by sociological documentary and by "experimental" films. The witless gravity, misplaced beauties, and unbearable talkiness of the former have joined with the pomposity, crudeness, and lack of artistic force of the latter to give the entire idea a bad name.

Yet in principle the non-plot film is at least as open for the artist as the plotted film, and it is one of the worst sicknesses of the industry that short-film production is so restricted in the United States. The example of Jennings proves that a great film artist may operate successfully outside the formula of the feature. It is also encouraging to note that Jennings made his major films as a civil servant. Like film-makers at the Canadian National Film Board, he was allowed to be truly experimental, even if he could not always do things exactly as he wanted them.

Jennings' lyricism is seemingly simple, and film teachers in the United States, whose students were small children during the Battle of Britain, find them nonetheless struck by the films. The articles which follow are unusually biographical for *Film Quarterly,* partly to suggest some of the richness that can be missed in Jennings' work. It is helpful to know that he studied Gray, that he was deeply involved in studies of the human meaning of the industrial revolution. It is also, perhaps, valuable to have a rounded portrait of a type relatively rare among film-makers: the humanist and poet. Jennings brought to film-making an unusually broad personal culture; yet he worked in the tough and hurried field of sponsored and government documentary. He became a professional; yet he brought to his films the passion of the individual artist.

There are not many things in our world that are obvious enough to enable a film-maker to leave them unstated. Films assuming that a war must be won now seem inconceivable; the only meaningful heroic challenges lie in art, science, perhaps politics. Films that touch on war are either bitter satire or inadvertent farce,

like *On the Beach.* If a new Jennings appeared, he would find that the ground has slipped from under us. The loyalty to individual truth, the concern with honesty in emotion, that one hopes for in a western society, are submerged in a sea of alienation—and confronted, on the Soviet side, by convenient sentimentality and ideological conformity. Our best artist—Antonioni—centers precisely on the ensuing corruption, passivity, and paralysis. His work is a magnificent last-ditch stand.

To a lyric artist of Jennings' sort, however, this theme, which seems to us the primary one, the one in which cinematic vitality really lies because it is at the heart of our cultural malaise, would be foreign. It would demand irony, obliqueness. It would be hopeful only through sardonic, black comedy.

But Jennings does not come from this world; he belongs, really, in the psychology of the pre-war world, the pre-*1984* world, the world whose knowledge of good and evil was rudimentary enough to be comforting. Jennings, then, cannot teach us what is to be said. But we can learn endlessly from his poetry, his uncanny instinct for the medium, his musical and (if the phrase may be allowed) unBritish flair for the fluid, powerful, graceful interrelation of sound and image. And more too, perhaps. For Jennings' humility before his subject (or whatever we call that complex of feelings and ideas which works of art both express and grow from) gave him strength. It is the attitude of any true artist who, like Jennings, really knows what he is doing. His films will last.

Creative Cinema Awards

The Society of Cinematologists is announcing the establishment of two annual awards in creative cinema. The awards are to be given by the Richard and Hinda Rosenthal Foundation, and will consist of one $1,000 prize for the best original shooting shooting script intended for a feature-length, dramatic production, and one $1,000 prize to the accredited director of the best film submitted. Participants must be Americans, under twenty-five years of age. The winners will be judged by the Rosenthal Awards Committee, headed by Professor Robert Gessner of New York University, New York 3, N. Y. Closing date for entries in both script and film categories is March 1, 1962. Enquiries and applications invited.

About Our Contributors

LINDSAY ANDERSON, whose article "Stand Up! Stand Up!" was the definitive polemic in favor of commitment, was one of the writers who founded *Sequence* and made *Sight & Sound* outstanding. He has made several short films, and is now working on a feature.

GAVIN LAMBERT was editor of *Sight & Sound* and is a member of the advisory board of this journal. He wrote the script for *Sons and Lovers,* with T. E. B. Clarke, and is the author of *The Slide Area.*

JAMES MERRALLS is the editor of the Australian *Film Journal,* and is the Melbourne theater and film reviewer for the Australian fortnightly, *Nation.*

GERALD NOXON is president of the Society of Cinematologists and teaches at Boston University. He has worked in British and American films, broadcasting, and television.

DONALD RICHIE, co-author of *The Japanese Film,* has been spending recent months in Europe, and has been writing on Yugoslav and German films.

ROGER SANDALL is an anthropologist and film-maker who works at the American Museum of Natural History.

WILLIAM SANSOM is the author of many novels, including *The Face of Innocence,* and several collections of short stories, including *A Contest of Ladies.* He wrote, with James Gordon and Stephen Spender, *Jim Braidy: The Story of Britain's Firemen.*

ELIZABETH SUTHERLAND has written reviews for this journal and was the editor of *Four Screenplays of Ingmar Bergman*. She visited Cuba in September.

Periodicals

Two new and glossy magazines covering the movies among other popular arts have recently begun publication. *Show Business Illustrated* is an offshoot of *Playboy* and displays the largely adolescent sophistication which predominates there; it sells for fifty cents and is virtually ubiquitous. It is loaded with ads, and doubtless has a rosy future. Lots of pretty girls, in full color, but hardly any interesting articles; the reviews lack the reliability as well as the wit of *Time's;* and the features manage to suggest that show-biz is very exciting without really saying much about it.

Show: The Magazine of the Performing Arts, was announced as the "handsomest magazine in America." It is not. And its pretensions are harder to take than the straightforward vulgarity of most of "SBI." It contains some good articles, a lot of fancy layout, and the distressing spectacle of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., writing on the movies. On this new frontier of criticism *Generale della Rovere* is a great success; Visconti "has learned much from the neorealists"; the "central neorealist conflict" was between partisans and Nazis; Rocco possesses "sturdy decency"; *La Dolce Vita* is "savage satire"; and "The film, on the whole, has been a disappointing art." Schlesinger should be got rid of, fast. Leslie Fiedler comes through, however, with a nicely written and possibly serious analysis of the (surely) inadvertent anaphrodysia of *The Immoral Mr. Teas.* Other movie items in the first issue included a "personality" article on Orson Welles far below Kenneth Tynan's usual standard, and a fan note on Monica Vitti. There are also "previews"—evaluationless blurbs. $1.00.

Film Journal, available from 10 Zetland Road, Mt. Albert, Victoria, Australia, is edited by James Merralls (see his article on Jennings in this issue) and frequently contains substantial articles of an informational nature, as well as reviews. It seems to draw primarily from a film-society cadre, like *Film.* Nicely produced, in a format resembling *Sight & Sound.*

COMING IN NEXT ISSUE

Our Spring issue will almost entirely be devoted to Hollywood—and the question of under what circumstances, if any, creative artists can function there. It will assess the "independent" producing situation, the role of various suggested villains such as MCA, the talents of established directors and aspiring ones, and the attitudes that underlie Hollywood as a production center. Discussions, interviews, articles, reviews. We suggest you subscribe now to be sure of receiving this issue, which seems likely to sell out quickly.

LINDSAY ANDERSON

Only Connect: Some Aspects of the Work of Humphrey Jennings

It is difficult to write anything but personally about the films of Humphrey Jennings. This is not of course to say that a full and documented account of his work in the cinema would not be of the greatest interest: anyone who undertook such a study would certainly merit our gratitude. But the sources are diffuse. Friends and colleagues would have to be sought out and questioned; poems and paintings tracked down; and, above all, the close texture of the films themselves would have to be exhaustively examined. My aim must be more modest, merely hoping to stimulate by offering some quite personal reactions, and by trying to explain why I think these pictures are so good.

Jennings' films are all documentaries, all made firmly within the framework of the British documentary movement. This fact ought not to strike a chill, for surely "the creative interpretation of actuality" should suggest an exciting, endlessly intriguing use of the cinema; and yet it must be admitted that the overtones of the term are not immediately attractive. Indeed it comes as something of a surprise to learn that this unique and fascinating artist was from the beginning of his career in films an inside member of Grierson's G.P.O. Unit (with which he first worked in 1934), and made all his best films as official, sponsored propaganda during the second world war. His subjects were thus, at least on the surface, the common ones; yet his manner of expression was always individual, and became more and more so. It was a style that bore the closest possible relationship to his theme—to that aspect of his subjects which his particular vision caused him consistently to stress. It was, that is to say, a poetic style. In fact it might reasonably be contended that Humphrey Jennings is the only real poet the British cinema has yet produced.

Reprinted, by permission of the British Film Institute, from *Sight & Sound*, April-May, 1954.

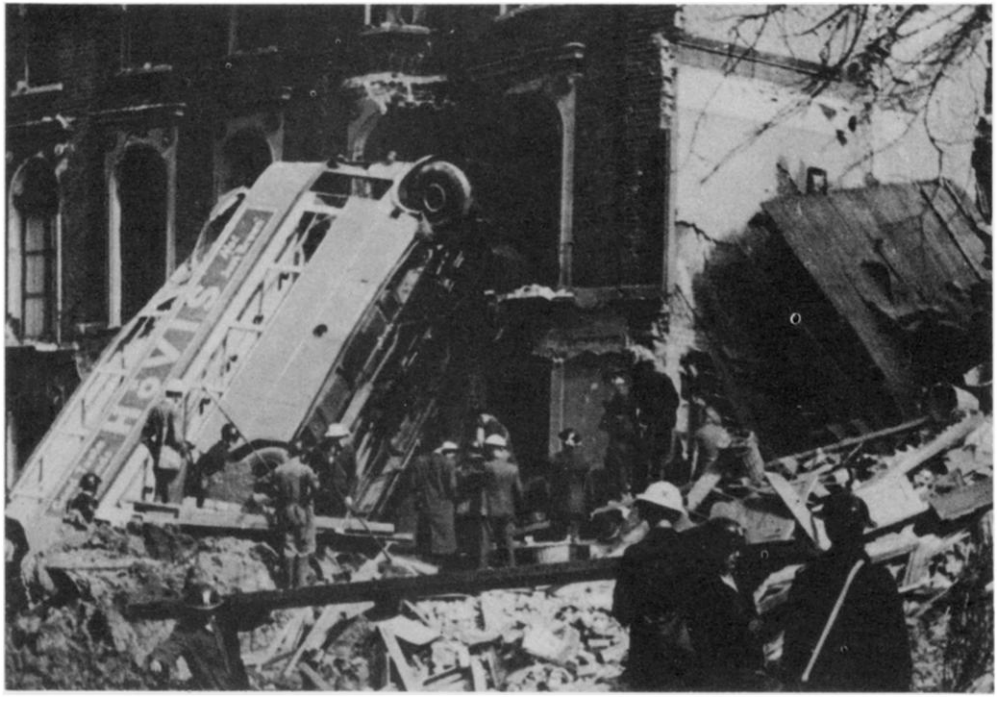
II

He started directing films in 1939 (we may leave out of account an insignificant experiment in 1935, in collaboration with Len Lye); and the date is significant, for it was the war that fertilized his talent and created the conditions in which his best work was produced. Watching one of Jennings' early pictures, *Speaking From America*, which was made to explain the workings of the transatlantic radiotelephone system, one would hardly suspect the personal qualities that characterize the pictures he was making only a short while later. There seems to have been more evidence of these in *Spare Time*, a film on the use of leisure among industrial workers: a mordant sequence of a carnival procession, drab and shoddy, in a Northern city aroused the wrath of more orthodox documentarians, and Basil Wright has mentioned other scenes, more sympathetically shot—*"the pigeon-fancier, the 'lurcher-loving collier' and the choir rehearsal are all important clues to Humphrey's development."* Certainly such an affectionate response to simple pleasures is more characteristic of Jennings' later work than any emphasis of satire.

If there had been no war, though, could that development ever have taken place? Humphrey Jennings was never happy with narrowly propagandist subjects, any more than

he was with the technical exposition of *Speaking From America.* But in wartime people become important, and observation of them is regarded in itself as a justifiable subject for filming, without any more specific "selling angle" than their sturdiness of spirit. Happily, this was the right subject for Jennings. With Cavalcanti, Harry Watt, and Pat Jackson he made *The First Days,* a picture of life on the home front in the early months of the war. On his own, he then directed *Spring Offensive,* about farming and the new development of agricultural land in the Eastern counties; in 1940 he worked again with Harry Watt on *London Can Take It,* another picture of the home front; and in 1941, with *Heart of Britain,* he showed something of the way in which the people of Northern industrial Britain were meeting the challenge of war.

These films did their jobs well, and social historians of the future will find in them much that makes vivid the atmosphere and manners of their period. Ordinary people are sharply glimpsed in them, and the ordinary sounds that were part of the fabric of their lives reinforce the glimpses and sometimes comment on them: a lorry-load of youthful conscripts speeds down the road in blessed ignorance of the future, as a jaunty singer gives out *We're going to hang out our washing on the Siegfried line.* In the films which Jennings made in collaboration, it is risky, of course, to draw attention too certainly to any particular feature as being his: yet here and there are images and effects which unmistakably betray his sensibility. Immense women knitting furiously for the troops; a couple of cockney mothers commenting to each other on the quietness of the streets now that the children have gone; the King and Queen unostentatiously shown inspecting the air raid damage in their own back garden. *Spring Offensive* is less sure in its touch, rather awkward in its staged conversations and rather over-elaborate in its images; *Heart of Britain* plainly offered a subject that Jennings found more congenial. Again the sense of human contact is direct: a steel-worker discussing his A.R.P. duty with his mate, a sturdy matron of the W.V.S. looking straight at us through the camera as she touchingly describes her pride at being able to help the rescue workers, if only by serving cups of tea. And along with



LONDON CAN TAKE IT (1940)

these plain, spontaneous encounters come telling shots of landscape and background, amplifying and reinforcing. A style, in fact, is being hammered out in these films; a style based on a peculiar intimacy of observation, a fascination with the commonplace thing or person that is significant precisely because it is commonplace, and with the whole pattern that can emerge when such commonplace, significant things and people are fitted together in the right order.

Although it is evident that the imagination at work in all these early pictures is instinctively a cinematic one, in none of them does one feel that the imagination is working with absolute freedom. All the films are accompanied by commentaries, in some cases crudely propagandist, in others serviceable and decent enough; but almost consistently these off-screen words clog and impede the progress of the picture. The images are so justly chosen, and so explicitly assembled, that there is nothing for the commentator to say. The effect—particularly if we have Jennings' later achievements in mind—is cramped. The material is there, the elements are assembled; but the fusion does not take place that alone can create the poetic whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. And then comes the last sequence of *Heart of Britain.* The Huddersfield Choral Society rises before Malcolm Sargent, and the homely, buxom housewives, the black-coated workers, and the men from the mills burst into the Hallelujah Chorus. The sound of their singing continues, and we see landscapes and noble buildings, and then a factory where bombers are being built. Back and forth go these contrasting, conjunctive images, until the music broadens out to its conclusion, the roar of engines joins in, and the bombers take off. The sequence is not a long one, and there are unfortunate intrusions from the commentator, but the effect is extraordinary, and the implications obvious. Jennings has found his style.

III

Words For Battle, Listen to Britain, Fires Were Started, A Diary For Timothy. To the enthusiast for Jennings these titles have a ring which makes it a pleasure simply to speak them, or to set them down in writing; for these are the films in which, between 1941 and 1945, we can see that completely individual style developing from tentative discovery and experiment to mature certainty. They are all films of Britain at war, and yet their feeling is never, or almost never, warlike. They are committed to the war—for all his sensibility there does not seem to have been anything of the pacifist about Jennings—but their real inspiration is pride, an unaggressive pride in the courage and doggedness of ordinary British people. Kathleen Raine, a friend of Jennings and his contemporary at Cambridge, has written: *"What counted for Humphrey was the expression, by certain people, of the ever-growing spirit of man; and, in particular, of the spirit of England."* It is easy to see how the atmosphere of the country at war could stimulate and inspire an artist so bent. For it is at such a time that the spirit of a country becomes manifest, the sense of tradition and community sharpened as (alas) it rarely is in time of peace. *"He sought therefore for a public imagery, a public poetry."* In a country at war we are all members one of another, in a sense that is obvious to the least spiritually-minded.

"Only connect." It is surely no coincidence that Jennings chose for his writer on *A Diary for Timothy* the wise and kindly humanist who had placed that epigraph on the title page of his best novel. The phrase at any rate is apt to describe not merely the film on which Jennings worked with E. M. Forster, but this whole series of pictures which he made during the war. He had a mind that delighted in simile and the unexpected relationship. (*"It was he,"* wrote Grierson, *"who discovered the Louis Quinze properties of a Lyons' swiss roll."*) On a deeper level, he loved to link one event with another, the past with the present, person to person. Thus the theme of *Words for Battle* is the interpretation of great poems of the past through events of the present—a

somewhat artificial idea, though brilliantly executed. It is perhaps significant, though, that the film springs to a new kind of life altogether in its last sequence, as the words of Lincoln at Gettysburg are followed by the clatter of tanks driving into Parliament Square past the Lincoln statue: the sound of the tanks merges in turn into the grand music of Handel, and suddenly the camera is following a succession of men and women in uniform, striding along the pavement cheery and casual, endowed by the music, by the urgent rhythm of the cutting, and by the solemnity of what has gone before (to which we feel they are heirs) with an astonishing and breathtaking dignity, a mortal splendor.

As if taking its cue from the success of this wonderful passage, *Listen to Britain* dispenses with commentary altogether. Here the subject is simply the sights and sounds of wartime Britain over a period of some twenty-four hours. To people who have not seen the film it is difficult to describe its fascination—something quite apart from its purely nostalgic appeal to anyone who lived through those years in this country. The picture is a stylistic triumph (Jennings shared the credit with his editor, Stewart McAllister), a succession of marvellously evocative images freely linked by contrasting and complementary sounds; and yet it is not for its quality of form that one remembers it most warmly, but for the continuous sensitivity of its human regard. It is a fresh and loving eye that Jennings turns on to those Canadian soldiers, singing to an accordion to while away a long train journey; or on to that jolly factory girl singing "Yes, My Darling Daughter" at her machine; or on to the crowded floor of the Blackpool Tower Ballroom; or the beautiful, sad-faced woman who is singing "The Ash Grove" at an ambulance station piano. Emotion in fact (it is something one often forgets) can be conveyed as unmistakably through the working of a film camera as by the manipulation of pen or paint brush. To Jennings this was a transfigured landscape, and he recorded its transfiguration on film.

The latter two of these four films, *Fires Were Started* and *A Diary For Timothy,* are more ambitious in conception: the second runs for about forty minutes, and the first is a full-length "feature-documentary." One's opinion as to which of them is Jennings' masterpiece is likely to vary according to which of them one has most recently seen. *Fires Were Started* (made in 1943) is a story of one particular unit of the National Fire Service during one particular day and night in the middle of the London blitz: in the morning the men leave their homes and civil occupations, their taxicabs, newspaper shops, advertising agencies, to start their tour of duty; a new recruit arrives and is shown the ropes; warning comes in that a heavy attack is expected; night falls and the alarms begin to wail; the unit is called out to action at a riverside warehouse, where fire threatens an ammunition ship drawn up at the wharf; the fire is mastered; a man is lost; the ship sails with the morning tide. In outline it is the simplest of pictures; in treatment it is of the greatest subtlety, richly poetic in feeling, intense with tenderness and admiration for the unassuming heroes whom it honors. Yet it is not merely the members of the unit who are given this depth and dignity of treatment. Somehow every character we see, however briefly, is made to stand out sharply and memorably in his or her own right: the brisk and cheery girl who arrives with the dawn on the site of the fire to serve tea to the men from her mobile canteen; a girl in the control room forced under her desk by a near-miss, and apologizing down the telephone which she still holds in her hand as she picks herself up; two isolated aircraft-spotters watching the flames of London miles away through the darkness. No other British film made during the war, documentary or feature, achieved such a continuous and poignant truthfulness, or treated the subject of men at war with such a sense of its incidental glories and its essential tragedy.

The idea of connection, by contrast and juxtaposition, is always present in *Fires Were Started*—never more powerfully than in the

beautiful closing sequence, where the fireman's sad little funeral is intercut against the ammunition ship moving off down the river—but its general movement necessarily conforms to the basis of narrative. *A Diary For Timothy,* on the other hand, is constructed entirely to a pattern of relationships and contrasts, endlessly varying, yet each one contributing to the rounded poetic statement of the whole. It is a picture of the last year of the war, as it was lived through by people in Britain; at the start a baby, Timothy, is born, and it is to him that the film is addressed. Four representative characters are picked out (if we except Tim himself and his mother, to both of whom we periodically return): an engine driver, a farmer, a Welsh miner and a wounded fighter pilot. But the story is by no means restricted to scenes involving these; with dazzling virtuosity, linking detail to detail by continuously striking associations of image, sound, music and comment, the film ranges freely over the life of the nation, connecting and connecting. National tragedies and personal tragedies, individual happinesses and particular beauties are woven together in a design of the utmost complexity: the miner is injured in a fall at the coal face, the fighter pilot gets better and goes back to his unit, the Arnhem strike fails, Myra Hess plays Beethoven at the National Gallery, bombs fall over Germany, and Tim yawns in his cot.

Such an apparently haphazard selection of details could mean nothing or everything. Some idea of the poetic method by which Jennings gave the whole picture its continual sense of emotion and significance may perhaps be given by the sequence analyzed and illustrated here, but of course only the film can really speak for itself. The difficulty of writing about such a film, of disengaging in the memory the particular images and sounds (sounds moreover which are constantly overlapping and mixing with each other), from the overall design has been remarked on by Dilys Powell: *"It is the general impression which remains; only with an effort do you separate the part from the whole . . . the communication is always through a multitude of tiny impressions, none in isolation particularly memorable."* Only with the last point would one disagree. *A Diary For Timothy* is so tensely constructed, its progression is so swift and compulsive, its associations and implications so multifarious, that it is almost impossible, at least for the first few viewings, to catch and hold on to particular impressions. Yet the impressions themselves are rarely unmemorable, not merely for their splendid pictorial quality, but for the intimate and loving observation of people, the devoted concentration on the gestures and expressions, the details of dress or behaviour that distinguish each unique human being from another. Not least among the virtues that distinguish Jennings from almost all British film-makers is his respect for personality, his freedom from the inhibitions of class-consciousness, his inability to patronize or merely to use the people in his films. Jennings' people are ends in themselves.

DIARY FOR TIMOTHY (1945)

IV

Other films were made by Jennings during the war, and more after it, up to his tragic death in 1950; but I have chosen to concentrate on what I feel to be his best work, most valuable to us. He had his theme, which was Britain; and nothing else could stir him to quite the same response. With more conventional subjects—*The Story of Lilli Marlene, A Defeated People, The Cumberland Story*—he was

1

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DIARY FOR TIMOTHY

The characters have been introduced, and the theme of the film established – a poetic summary of life in Britain during the last year of the war. This sequence covers the late summer and autumn of 1944. (Only those shots which are *not* illustrated are described. The commentary is italicized.)

1. . . . *And you didn't know, and couldn't know; and didn't care. Safe in your pram.*
   A bugle call sounds, faintly.
2. **L.S. Quarry. A group of miners some distance away are looking at a newspaper.**
   But listen, Tim; listen to this.
   The call continues.
3. Bugle call swells up.
4. **The headline of the newspaper flapping in the wind: the word ARNHEM.**
   Bugle call fades under the voice of a B.B.C. war reporter, Australian accented.
   About five miles to the west of Arnhem. . . .
5. **A wireless set. The camera tracks in.**
   . . . in a space 1,500 yards by 900 on that last day I saw the dead and the living. . . .
6. **A working class family group gathered round their wireless.**
   . . . those who fought the good fight and kept the faith with you at home, and those who still fought magnificently on. They were the last of the few.
7. **C.U. wireless set speaker.**
   I last saw them yesterday morning, as they dribbled into Nimegen.
8. *They had staggered and walked and waded all night from Arnhem, about ten miles north. We were busy asking each other if this or that one had been seen.*
9. **C.U. another wireless.**
   Late in the afternoon before, we were told that the remnants of the 1st Airborne Division were going to pull out that night.
10. **C.U. Tim's mother listening.**
    Perhaps I should remind you here that these were men of no ordinary calibre. They'd been nine days in that little space I mentioned, being mortared and shelled, machine-gunned and sniped from all round.
11. **C.U. another wireless.**
    For the last three days they had had no water, very little but small arms ammunition, and rations cut to one-sixth.
12. *Luckily or unluckily it rained, and they caught the water in their capes and drank that. These last items were never mentioned: they were Airborne weren't they; they were tough and knew it. All right: water and rations didn't matter – give them some Germans to kill, and one chance in ten, and they'd get along somehow.*
    At "water and rations" the sound of Beethoven's Appassionata sonata creeps in softly.
13. **Camera tracks back from keyboard.**
    The Appassionata· forte chords on cut.

JENNINGS' METHOD

14. **L.S. Platform at a National Gallery concert. Myra Hess at piano.**
Appassionata continues.
15. Appassionata continues through the rest of this sequence, to shot 27.
16. **Poster announcing Fifth Birthday Concert at the National Gallery.**
17. **Camera tracks along a row of listening faces.**
18. **M.S. Myra Hess at piano. Camera tracks in to her hands.**
Under music B.B.C. commentator's voice is faded up, repeating:
. . . Luckily or unluckily it rained, and they caught the water in their capes and drank that . . .
19. Sudden forte in music precipitates cut.
20. **L.S. Another static water tank in London street.**
21. **Bombed roofs of London houses.**
It's the middle of October now. . . .
Appassionata continuing under commentary.
22. **A builder mending slates on a bombed roof.**
And the war certainly won't be over by Christmas. And the weather doesn't suit us. . . .
23. **Another roof mender.**
And one-third of all our houses have been damaged by enemy action.
The sound of the workman's hammer pierces the music.
24. *Did you like the music that lady was playing? Some of us think it is the greatest music in the world. Yet it's German music, and we're fighting the Germans.*
At "some of us think . . ." the pianist's hands are superimposed over the image of roofmenders.
25. **C.U. Pianist's hands.**
There's something you'll have to think over later on.
26. **The wet surface of a road; the legs of a man leading a pony pass diagonally across frame.**
Sound of water trickling merges with Appassionata.
Rain . . . too much rain.
27. **A miner at the coal face.**
It's even wet under the earth.
The Appassionata is lost under the sound of picking.
28. **A miner heaps coal on to a conveyor.**
Look at the place where Goronwy has to cut coal.
The fierce sound of drilling on the cut.
29. **C.S. Drill.**
Drilling continues.
30. *And you — all warm and sleepy in your cot by the fire. . . .*
The subdued sound of rain trickling down a window pane.

obviously unhappy, and, despite his brilliance at capturing the drama of real life, the staged sequences in these films do not suggest that he would have been at ease in the direction of features. *The Silent Village*—his reconstruction of the story of Lidice in a Welsh mining village—bears this out; for all the fond simplicity with which he sets his scene, the necessary sense of conflict and suffering is missed in his over-refined, under-dramatized treatment of the essential situation. It may be maintained that Jennings' peacetime return to the theme of Britain (*The Dim Little Island* in 1949, and *Family Portrait* in 1950) produced work that can stand beside his wartime achievement, and certainly neither of these two beautifully finished films is to be dismissed. But they lack passion.

By temperament Jennings was an intellectual artist, perhaps too intellectual for the cinema. (It is interesting to find Miss Raine reporting that, *"Julian Trevelyan used to say that Humphrey's intellect was too brilliant for a painter."*) It needed the hot blast of war to warm him to passion, to quicken his symbols to emotional as well as intellectual significance. His symbols in *Family Portrait*—the Long Man of Wilmington, Beachy Head, the mythical horse of Newmarket—what do they really mean to us? Exquisitely presented though it is, the England of those films is nearer the "This England" of the prewar beer advertisements and Mr. Castleton Knight's coronation film than to the murky and undecided realities of today. For reality, his wartime films stand alone; and they are sufficient achievement. They will last because they are true to their time, and because the depth of feeling in them can never fail to communicate itself. They will speak for us to posterity, saying: "This is what it was like. This is what we were like—the best of us."

HUMPHREY JENNINGS

Working Sketches of an Orchestra

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December 6th, 1948. Albert Hall. 10 a.m.

Rehearsal of concert for same evening under Josef Krips.

Mozart Symphony 39.

Mahler *Kindertotenlieder.*

Brahms Second Symphony.

9.40 a.m. The horns in the bandroom prac-

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tising in the dark (or that is the impression). The bar—a table of workmen. The gas lights in the passages (curving away into nothing: 19th-century image). The bell in the bar. The latecomer.

Lewis (the orchestral manager): "Now, boys," clapping his hands. Exciting view of the conductor through the square glass panel in the door leading from the artists' room to the platform; the word SILENCE above it.

The conductor singing with the music: "Strings—strings"—"basses—come with me." The emotional moment (last movement of the Brahms—the theme) when the conductor, having criticised and gone back to letter H, turns to the first violins humming and says as they play: "That's *nice*—that's good . . ." Criticising the finale: "Excuse me, please—*ta-ta-ta*—not la-la-la—that's too *cosy*!"

Kathleen Ferrier comes in in large hat and heavy coat—gets chair from up behind 'cellos—orchestra have given slight applause on music-stands at her entry—she begins singing sitting—ends without hat, coat, and standing. At emotional moment Krips says "wait—wait" to orchestra—leans over to soloist as though to pull the notes out of her mouth.

At this moment of quiet one can hear the inevitable "men working on the roof" and see the cleaners in the boxes. Krips singing again: "Seconds"—"now firsts" . . .

At 9.10 a.m., a grey winter morning; puddles of night rain. Kensington looks misty and deserted. The front of the Albert Hall closed, at the back the night watchmen's lights in the street still burning. A "decorative florists" van outside door 12; two cars already parked outside the artists' entrance; three tiny figures (two carrying violin cases) come past the Albert Hall Mansions; a taxi and then another. A milk can belonging to Express Dairies and three empty milk bottles outside artists' entrance.

Inside the "decorative florists" are putting the flowers in position in boxes along the platform, men are dealing with chairs, the conductor is discussing the layout of the orchestra . . .

Slight applause for conductor, who comes in briskly, waving baton and smiling and bowing slightly; says a few words about phrasing to firsts, to basses, to cellos . . .

Weber.—Krips: "Pa-pa-pa *pa*! Yes?" "Letter D. Tempo. No, slower" (talking to the brass). "Ah, ah, ah, ah! Strongly—yes? 14th bar—whole orchestra except first violins *subito mezzo*—otherwise I can't hear—te-yum pa-pa! then the—one, two, three—fourth bar, the whole orchestra . . . Yes?" And so on through the *Oberon* Overture—not actually playing but explaining. Then a moment of tuning, and silence. A break off after two bars and begin again . . . "Tempo . . .*one* and *two* and *three* and *four*, tempo!" Break off to talk about the horns of Elfland blowing: "A little lighter—elfs! What is called elf here?" (i.e. in English). The orchestra: "Elf!" "Elf? Yes?" Restart the brass entry three times: "Ta-ta-ta — *without push* . . . please is it possible to play pa-ya not pa-pa?"; "without any ritardando—I told that — only diminuendo" (leader writes on score); "I hope you remember it . . . much better . . . tempo—*tempo* . . ." (with a little stamp). Extreme pianissimo — then "tempo": bang from drummer—"sorry, that's too much—yes?" Pianissimo again: "Elfs: . . . Ha pa fi-ya-fi-ya—basses, tempo!" (Into *Allegro*) "more *soul*—Elfs—ti-ya . . ." Insistence on breadth and warmth of playing . . .

Beethoven: The same drill (i.e. instruction first), plus question of repeats. The emotional effect here of very well-known passages suddenly appearing as fragments in a rehearsal—broken off before completion and just as one warms to them: "Will you remember that?" "Now let us start," pushing away score and desk. Speaking and chanting as usual during playing: "Sing—sing!" to the strings—shouting out "Basses!" with cupped hand. The problem of turning pages at a moment of tension—for first violins especially — reminding them that after all they *know* the score and can wait and turn over later . . . There is a nice warm laugh at the end of the first movement: "Life

is too short." A photographer takes a flash and produces a series of extraordinarily dramatic effects by taking flashes from between seconds and timpani which punctuate like lightning the increasing drama of the scherzo and finale.

Clearly Sargent's absolutely soundless and precise conducting has advantages for the microphone.

"Very nice playing" from Sargent; "listen very carefully to play-back . . ." Question of strings changing bows at 2nd bar. Recording crew (five of them altogether) come in for play-back, which starts on buzzing signal and comes down from speaker on floor by the harps. Comment by Sargent at one point. Odd remarks between Sargent and leader about playing and then discussion of balance. Now they return to the question of the horn-players' position; they are moved to behind flutes (centre of wood-wind). Comment for the strings generally: "It keeps too level . . ." "Winds, I want to ask you—at 2, don't breathe —4th before 3 . . . try No. 2 please . . ." "Stop us when you are ready with the wax."

"Next variation excellent—we will do a quick test of this—whole thing please . . ." Buzz, light as before . . . Before playback to wood-wind: "I think you'll find there are two places where you are unhappy—one is 6 . . ." (A player later criticized Sargent for finding fault *before* play-back was heard.) During play-back flautist asks "Is that the one?" "That's the one . . ." Flautist at this point is smoking a pipe—extravagant as that may sound.

A man comes in and fiddles with a mike. Coming to the horn-passage in play-back Sargent puts up his thumb to horns. General comment: "Very good . . ." "Settle down for master-record, please!" Final fiddles with mikes by men in white coats—man looks at connection on floor. Final word: "First violins—you have got to be really sensitive about that . . ."

There is a noticeable tension (not necessarily artistic) in the playing for wax which you don't get in the concert hall—no coughs, no squeaks, extreme attention to no wrong notes and to page-turning—also important to note the reactions of the players when not playing. . . .

In passing, notice the varieties of solid 'cello cases standing like statues watching their masters from the far end of the studio.

Tea break: both here and at the Albert Hall there is a dash for the canteen by dignified orchestral players (perhaps half the orchestra) very similar to Cumberland miners coming off shift or the break for lunch in a Tyneside shipyard—it includes, for example, George Stratton, the leader, who is nearly always in a dark suit.

The lady viola-player who wants to make a note on her score has to look in her bag for pencil, which makes her a moment or two behind the others.

. . . the Central Hall platform is a difficult place to come on to late, as a cellist and flautist find. A few moments later George Eskdale walks in and says, "What time?" (he is the Haydn soloist). "Do you mind much later?" (Conductor is looking at the clock.) "Well, they should have let me know." "Well, since you're here we had better do it now . . ." Continues Mendelssohn until Eskdale enters with his trumpet and score.

Conductor calls for applause for soloist with a smile—orchestra give some straight applause and some in mock derision (boo! etc.)—he is one of them! Straight into the Haydn with a glance from conductor to soloist checking tempo . . .

During a discussion between Eskdale and conductor, the L.S.O. porter comes in in shirt-sleeves with pipe in his mouth—judges this is the wrong moment to intrude and exit . . .

There is a discrepancy between the letter or figure numbers in the conductor's score and the orchestral parts: result—"ten bars from the end—no, nine bars from the end—two bars of *forte*, then *piano* . . .", etc.

During the heavenly slow movement the fat and untroubled cleaner mops her way along the stalls. George Eskdale waiting during the string passage at the opening of the third movement, beating time on his instrument with

the fingers of his right hand. Note the very young drummer who is "standing in" this morning. At the close the orchestra give Eskdale really genuine applause (on their stands) without being asked. Eskdale shakes hands with conductor and leaves.

"Will somebody just see if the other two (i.e. violin and 'cello soloists for the Brahms) are there? Would you mind, Mr. Lewis . . . ?" They are not: back to Mendelssohn. The orchestra are not really taking things very seriously; those at the back, especially the younger ones, are fooling around a lot—dropped pencils and even a dropped bow—and then from ragging they slide on, though without realizing it, into a real performance of the first movement of the *Italian* Symphony . . .

The extraordinary capacity of orchestral players, especially on an unimportant occasion like this, to talk and smile across at each other and then pick up exactly as the conductor says "2 before 6" or wherever it is. . . .

Fauré, 2nd Movement: "We have lost our trumpets." "Most of the thing could be a little more *precise,* I think, on phrasing—just at the end we lose the precision—a little more *espressivo.*" It is noticeable this morning how much the string sections depend on their leaders for interpretation and method.

3rd Movement: "Right—we go on . . ."; "right—very crisp"; and just as he says and they play *pianissimo* but *espressivo,* two women cleaners with buckets come out of the back of the stage and down the wings, and remind us of the discrepancy between Fauré and Camden Town.

"Ladies and gentlemen, shall we play the trombone works first?" No discussions—straight into the *Magic Flute* Overture; only occasional stops. ". . . that very spot, do we know it?—*piano,* no *mezzo-forte.*" Sheet flies off conductor's desk—picked up by viola-leader—smile—all during playing.

What are this evening's audience doing at this very moment, when this is preparing for them? Quite an important question. Why is each of them coming? Their faces now, and the same faces in the evening—their wishes—and the orchestra's wishes?

Splendid gesture by conductor at end of one run-through of Mozart with only two breaks—takes up score and shuts and throws it on floor on very last beat. . . .

Beethoven Violin Concerto. 1. "Gentlemen, you don't know Mr. Rostal, do you?" "No!" in derision, plus some tapping on desks.

Before his first entry Rostal beating tune with his "vibrato" fingers—worrying about the platform flooring. "Less—still less": R. playing snatches of their violin parts with orchestra. One feels perhaps a little something between him and the strings: 1sts, 2nds, violas—behind him, watching him. One senses the world of the theater.

Someone smashes a cup in the distance, clearing up tea-things; conductor peers behind him. Cadenza cut in rehearsal. . . .

As they put on their coats conductor, soloist, and drummer begin to run through the cadenzas. A viola-player says: ". . . found them in Vienna—says they are Beethoven's original—nobody else plays 'em."

10.30 a.m. Splendid opening picture—a totally empty Albert Hall. We are looking from the steps up from band room; we can see the lights in the battens and beyond them, in the gloom, 5000 vacant seats. In the foreground the desks are in position but the platform is also bare except for the aged figure of the librarian, who is slowly distributing the orchestral parts, section by section (the librarian and Ernie the L.S.O. porter are, of course, key figures in the early stages of a rehearsal or concert). . . .

The soloists just indicate their parts—sitting like monks. Roof: "Up on that one, Harry!" Soprano singing angel's recitative without music in 15. "Up, Harry! Wo!" "17, please." "2 bars from the end—really have a short bow at the end then it doesn't go on." "Good." 18: In the gloom under the dome the unlit lamps swing and clank. "Up!" Imagine the

L.S.O. seen from the point of view of Harry in the roof! "21 is out"—everyone marks this.

It is freezing in the Albert Hall these mornings; the boilers below ground are hissing away, no doubt, but are quite inadequate for the size of the Hall and the weather. The timpani, who are standing about with little to do, keep stamping their feet like horses; the double-basses are absolutely not paying attention, their leader audibly talking—they sit, of course, much more in a row and more spaced out than any other section, and any comment or joke has to be passed along.

Curious effect of *pizzicato,* as in Brahms 1st Symphony, 3rd Movement, 6 before A, this morning, in the huge empty hall. The sweat on the conductor's face in the artists' room in the break, alone in empty room puffing a cigarette, with glass of water on the table. Agent comes in: conductor: "How's the house?" "So-so."

Why, after all, should people come? Timpanist says it's snobbery pure and simple. We have now some little idea of musicians' motivation (as we call it)—what is the audience's? Bach: "To the Glory of God, and pleasant recreation . . ." 20th century: "Pleasant recreation (and, to the Glory of God . . .)"?

The timpanist (sitting this morning with his son next to him, who sometimes deputizes) explaining things in the score (both with overcoats on): he of all members of the orchestra overlooks the scene—sees the conductor far off, and beyond him the empty seats or the audience.

Individual tuning and warming up, especially brass, is a fascinating thing: there are definite systems – remember particularly the squeak of the wood-wind's reeds on their own.

One of the seconds said: "Dislike Kingsway Hall. Bad ventilation. Sloping floor. Overwarm. Depressing place."

Note: H. carries his own 'cello always—"they get knocked about in the van—not his (i.e. Ernie's) fault, but they do"; practices on same instrument. . . .

Clarinets have a little case of reeds like a fisherman's flies—carry them in their mouths and so on; they squeak like bats. . . .

Clearer and clearer becomes the connection between the temperament of the player and the instrument—brass, horns, trombones, both behave and look like fighter pilots or clever street salesmen. In comparison, the basses are philosophical comics.

The train to Mitcham Junction sweeps out of Victoria, over the river, right under the chimneys of Battersea power station, and into the grey landscape of industrial streets, railway yards, and back gardens with washing and struggling trees. Then the train gets into more open country—lines of prefabs, nissen huts, allotments, Tooting football ground; rows of seagulls sitting on flooded furrows.

Mitcham baths hall is like Cheam, but less successful—the orchestra, though of only forty-five players, is going to be cramped, and is placed right under the stage, which won't help the sound. Ernie is there by 2 p.m., having fixed the Denham film session this morning—it appears the timps want a rostrum at the back; some of the orchestra have come from Denham.

The four horns are late—march in with a wink, carrying their cases. (Note: horns usually travel in the same car.)

3.6 p.m. "We do the symphony—then we'll have tea at once."

As the Beethoven opens, four women cleaners come up as though from nowhere and begin to polish the chairs—to me, looking down on them from the timps, they look like cotton-pickers bending over the infinity of white-labelled chairs. The percussion climb over the side of the platform with difficulty. The conductor is being fussy over the Beethoven. (A violinist said the other day that, frankly, he didn't like playing Beethoven and much preferred the *Water Music*—"has some good tunes in it".) . . .

Note: usual place for lighted cigarettes

during playing is on desk by clip holding. First horn gets lighted cigarette in his mute! Full of smoke! The other horns are convulsed.

One of the young students—young man, age 20-ish—is following Sibelius and Sargent like a spectator at a fight, conducting with his hands, blowing imaginary brass with his cheeks, anticipating phrases and smiling at them as they come up. . . .

3rd Movement: A girl student beats time as though conducting the rapid opening of the 3rd movement—two others studying score—crashing of teacups, etc., behind—repeating of the conductor's rhyme, "ticker der, ticker der, ticker der *dum*" especially to the trombones.

One sees more and more the point of a whole Sibelius concert – by the L.S.O. for themselves—especially in view of the difficulty of the 5th.

Letter H. Sargent is saying, "Gentlemen, the tempo is always pushing ahead. Yum pa hum, hum, hum—now we must pull it back." At this point a hammer in the roof begins a sort of drum roll and the drummer instinctively looks up—smiles—imitates without sound with his sticks—looks across at the basses and indicates the man in the roof with his sticks. . . .

Confusion of nationalities; Navarra speaking in *French*; the expression marks in the score being in *German, "Etwas schneller"*; Kubelik, who was to have conducted, was a *Czech* refugee; the *London Welsh* W.O. in uniform marches through with a bag; Cervantes, *Spanish*. . . .

At the beginning of the Strauss, or rather while the strings are rehearsing a section of Var. 9, Navarra goes into the auditorium, wiping his neck and hand and face from sweat.

Always when a section of the orchestra play like this, the others watch them intently and applaud or even hiss in mock derision.

The Performance.

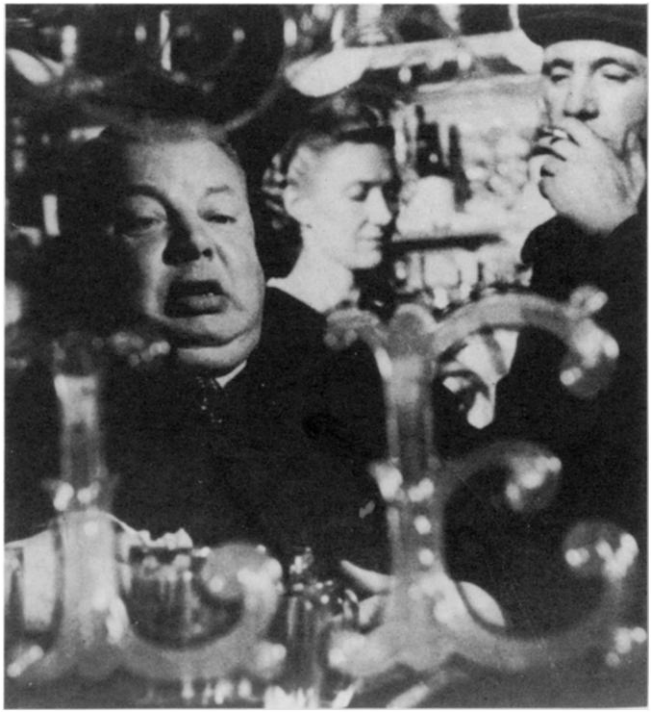
It is clear that the "moment" may occur, thanks to a soloist as well as or instead of a conductor: the moment of overflowing emotion occurred, I suppose, immediately after the Dvořák, in the interval when they were drinking beer in the bar and George Stratton was making his way through a crush of wives, sweethearts, and autograph hunters in full evening dress, with two cups of coffee for the conductor and the soloist.

"What an artist!"—that is the word used. If the orchestra often seem to be hard in their judgments, it is because they reserve their enthusiasm for a moment and a player like this.

The emotional and cathartic effect on the orchestra of an evening like this is very great; it influences their playing for weeks.

The audience during the concert: note the number of opera glasses trained on Ida Haendel. A girl nearby (admittedly not English) at the end of the 1st movement has tears in her eyes as the last violin note is heard. This is a "moment": the audience waits on the conductor's final beat, then rustles itself into new

FAMILY PORTRAIT (1951)



positions and lets go of its coughs. And then the opening of the 2nd movement swells up.

A London Symphony. The orchestra give Vaughan Williams a great round of applause. Adored by musicians, the majestic grey figure—old, bowed, but immensely impressive—begins to conduct the symphony of the old grey city. With Vaughan Williams there is absolute humility, humanity—following his own sure company without bravura. The gestures absolutely economical. One can understand what the orchestra means by saying that Weingartner "just looked at us"; if the figure is impelling, real enough (and here we are face to face with genius): then the love created is sufficient to light the playing. . . .

The Performance. I must now record a faint image of the evening's performance. The audience was not large—a fine group of music students at the back of the arena, a general scattering of real music-followers in the boxes and amphitheatre, some people high up, and an extra number of smart art-cum-film-cum-music-cum-socialites for the occasion of Walton's return to England. Not very many of them paying for their seats, I should say: photographers everywhere, and some evening dress (people going on to a party and so on). . . .

The tension in the orchestra as they took their places after the interval was something like stage fright. After all, Vaughan Williams was 77, was ill, had lost his voice: possibly this was the last time he would conduct them?

Then, the *London Symphony* is not just a piece of great music in the abstract—it is of us, written for us, written about us: this makes a performance in London a social event in the real sense (cf. the social stuff above). All this one felt.

And after all the curious and different and interesting and uninteresting conductors, here is the composer with the gift of the spirit as he alone sees it and imparts it. And here he is—a great silver-haired figure, slowly appearing from the artists' room. Silver hair (as I say), the most splendid countryman's head and shoulders, huge arms and hands that in past generations held the axe and the plough. The orchestra sweeps to its feet: He is their god: yes, a god! His particular attributes—his creative fire and with it his tenacity and above all his humility—are all that they reverence in the world. He hesitates, bows to the audience, bows to the orchestra, and slowly (how slowly!) climbs the rostrum to open the huge score (for his sight is not good) like a Bible; spreads his arms like a tree, and with the first four bars we know that we are in the Presence.

The first crash of the cymbals that breaks the quiet comes as though we had never heard it before. The listener shivers with emotion; the Presence is not on the platform only—it spreads like incense all over the hall . . . The sound delights us as music, but with it goes reverence for the man himself and the deepest of all feelings, that we are part of it all: it is not a concert at all, but an act of music-making.

Here let me record that among the small audience, I don't think there was present one of the L.C.C. officials in whose hands the great city is supposed to lie, nor any of the propagandists who are always crying for social realism and such like, though here, if ever, they might find it, written before some of them were born. . . .

For the rest I cannot emulate the writers of programme notes or the notices of the next morning. I can say that what the music says, we as Londoners had all been through: I remember our worry as the conductor's hand occasionally stole back to the rail to steady himself, that his fingers fumbled in turning the pages, that once the orchestra carried on as he was lost, that there were tears in our eyes, that Richard Capell said to Gordon Walker: "I say, you chaps backed him up splendidly," that George Stratton came off the platform really crying and said: "You can't help playing well—he doesn't show off!"—that of all the minutes of one's life, we can say that those spent this evening *were well spent.*

GERALD NOXON

How Humphrey Jennings Came to Film

A proper approach to the study of the films of Humphrey Jennings must, I think, involve a clear understanding of two things: first, Jennings came to film with a quite extraordinary background of scholarship in literature, philosophy, and art history as well as great personal talent in the art of painting; second, he never allowed this background to prejudice him in his approach to film. He never applied to film, in an arbitrary or automatic fashion, principles or methods which he had learned in other areas of creative art. Although the whole breadth of his knowledge, talent, and skills is certainly there in his films, in fact in every one of his deceptively simple-seeming camera set-ups, it has invariably been "passé par le tamis," as Humphrey himself used to say, meaning that it had been strained through his own particularly fine-meshed cinematic filter.

It is about Humphrey Jennings as a man, a scholar, and a painter that I wish to write, to explain something of how he came to make films and something of what he brought with him.

These are personal memories and personal opinions about a friend whose loss I can never forget nor cease to regret. If there are small inaccuracies of time and place in what I write, it is because I am dealing with events which took place some thirty years ago, of which I now have very few written records, and besides, as Humphrey often quoted, "That was in another country."

I first met Humphrey Jennings in 1928 when I was an undergraduate in my first year at Trinity College, Cambridge, taking a modern language Tripos. Humphrey, who was at least three or four years my senior, had already received a first-class honors degree in English and was engaged in postgraduate work at Pembroke College. Unlike the vast majority of Cambridge students at that time, Humphrey was married and so he lived, not in college, but with his wife, Cicely, in lodgings in the town, to be precise at 68a St. Andrews Street, a charming byway which has since been demolished.

The fact that I met Humphrey so soon after coming up to Cambridge was due to two somewhat unusual circumstances. First, in company with Francis Baker-Smith and Stuart Legg, I started the Cambridge Film Guild which was, as I recall, the second film society to be formed in Britain. Humphrey, immediately attracted by films having a kind of artistic merit which was new to him, was among the first members. Second, I was the publisher of an undergraduate little magazine called *Experiment*, in which Humphrey at once took a lively interest and to which he later and rather reluctantly contributed some of his rare written communications.

Experiment rapidly became a focal point of intellectual interest in the Universtiy. Its editorial board included J. Bronowski, William Empson, and Hugh Sykes-Davies, and among other resident contributors were Basil Wright, Richard Eberhart, John Davenport, Malcolm Lowry, George Reavey, James Reeves, Kathleen Raine, Timothy White, Julian Trevelyan, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Jack Sweeney. From outside the University came contributions from Conrad Aiken, Richard Aldington, James Joyce, Mayakovsky, Boris Pasternak, and Paul Eluard. I give these names because they

indicate, I think, the kind of intellectual and aesthetic climate which prevailed in Cambridge at the time. From it Humphrey certainly derived almost as great a stimulus as he gave to it.

When I first met Humphrey he presented a striking physical appearance which seemed to have an unusually significant relationship to his over-all personality and is therefore, I think, worth some description. He was rather tall, very angular and bony, with a wild crop of straggly fair hair, usually quite uncontrollable. He had a large, sharp nose and an extremely prominent Adam's apple which jumped around all over the place when he talked—which was a great deal of the time.

He was an acutely restless person, and found it almost impossible to sit still except when painting. He habitually paced the floor as he talked—"Terrific, terrific,"—jerking and gesturing in a thoroughly Mediterranean fashion. Humphrey had many distinctly personal physical habits. For instance, he was at the time greatly addicted to China tea, which he drank in quantity and at all hours. He would hover over the sugar basin like a blue jay, suddenly dive with his long bony fingers, pick up a cube of sugar, dunk it in his tea, and then, holding it delicately between his thumb and his index finger, he would suck at it, thus interspersing his conversation with loud sibilant noises as he paced the room. Finally with a flick of his finger the lump when down and a few moments later he would reach for another.

To say that Humphrey was a brilliant talker is a truth that does not in the least convey his impressive gifts in this area, which were beyond those of any other person I have known. When Humphrey addressed himself to a subject he did so with a lucidity, a forcefulness, and a kind of internal illumination generated by his immense enthusiasm. To be sure, he often spoke in outrageous hyperbole, made fantastically sweeping generalizations, made deductions totally unjustifiied on the basis of the known facts, but, *BUT*, nobody was more aware of these flights of fancy than Humphrey himself, and he was always the first to acknowledge them. In fact he knew exactly what he was about. It was all part of his technique of verbal exploration of the subject, of creating channels of communication with all those around him, even if he had to shock, outrage, and even seriously anger them in the process.

Verbal and visual communication came naturally to Humphrey, communication via the written word did not. When he first introduced me to the subject of pre-historic cave paintings and I became greatly excited about them, particularly about their significance in relation to the development of the moving image, I begged him to write an article on the subject for *Experiment*. He agreed, but kept putting it off. In the end I had to become the co-author of the article in order to force him to get his ideas down on paper, so the piece finally appeared over both our names. It was mostly my writing and his thinking.

When I first met Humphrey, as I have said, he was doing postgraduate work at Pembroke. His degree in English, a really brilliant "first," had of course involved a wide range of literary scholarship, but his field of specialization was Elizabethan drama and poetry. A specific research project which he was carrying on with the aid of a small grant from the college was the production of a revised text of Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis." The idea was to study all the existing folios and other text sources and to come up with a definitive version. Humphrey eventually completed the project and I published his version of the text under the imprint of the Experiment Press. It was a paperback book because we wanted to sell it for half-a-crown, which we did in modest numbers. To my sorrow I do not today possess a single copy of what was, I think, an outstanding piece of literary scholarship (and fine printing by R. I. Severs of Cambridge), supervised in toto and to the very last comma by Humphrey, of course.

Humphrey's specialized work in the field of

Elizabethan literature, which was in itself remarkable, formed only a small, if very important part of his broader background of knowledge in world literature, philosophy, and art history, which he had begun to acquire at an unusually early age. He had been in fact something of an infant prodigy, already thoroughly grounded in Latin, Greek, and English languages and literature in his early teens. Partly because he was not a product of an English "public school," where sports activities were often stressed at the expense of intellectual development, Humphrey was extremely well and widely read when he came up to Cambridge. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that he acquired his secondary education in the town of Cambridge at the Perse School and had many friends among undergraduates and dons while he was still at school and was therefore exposed at first hand to such teachers and scholars as Arthur Quiller-Couch, A. E. Houseman, I. A. Richards, C. K. Ogden, and F. R. Leavis before he became an undergraduate. Humphrey was in fact a product of Cambridge in the most complete sense of the word, and, I think, of the very best kind. And here I have to stress the fact that Humphrey Jennings was an *Englishman*, not a Scot, nor an Irishman, nor a Welshman, as so many Britons famous in the arts and literature have been. Humphrey came from East Anglia and his family, although living in London, had an Elizabethan cottage home near Thaxted in Essex, not so far from Cambridge.

In his formative years at the Perse School Humphrey had been influenced particularly by certain English writers and artists of the past—by Shakespeare and Marlowe, of course, but more unusually perhaps by John Milton, John Bunyan, John Constable, and William Blake. The works of these men remained in Humphrey's background as a permanent frame of reference. Their kind of Englishness was Humphrey's kind of Englishness. To say that Humphrey Jennings was a typical Englishman is, of course, a contradiction in terms, for the most characteristic quality of the English is their nontypicalness, their eccentricity. In fact, he was most English in his eccentricity, which happened to include a complete lack of what are often considered English characteristics—snobbishness, intellectual and social, hypocrisy, insularity, arrogance, and indifference. For in spite of his brilliance and his sophistication Humphrey remained utterly nonsnob, utterly candid, utterly noninsular, essentially humble, and completely and enthusiastically involved and in love with art and life everywhere.

While Humphrey's intellectual development was primarily founded in the classic aspects of art and literature, he was when I first met him already immersed in the study and practice of contemporary painting, Picasso, Braque, Leger, Klee, Mondrian, Masson, Max Ernst, and Macritte—these were a few of the host of contemporary painters, some well known at the time, some virtually unknown, whose work he studied, admired, or rejected, as he himself painted constantly, ever evolving as an artist. I happen to think that Humphrey was a painter of great quality, although his work remained practically unknown except to a very small circle of friends. He was never much interested in showing his paintings, which he thought would not be understood, and in this he was quite right. As for selling paintings, there was never much question of it. All the same, we did set up together a small "Experiment Gallery" in Cambridge—it was located in the downstairs part of the little house in which he and Cicely lived—where we showed the work of a few local and continental artists; and occasionally one of Humphrey's own paintings was included. But essentially his painting was for himself—it was an essential part of his explorer-adventurer technique in the arts. The use of brushes, paint, and canvas came so naturally to him that self-expression and self-revelation through painting were an integral part of his daily existence. If people did like his paintings he was frankly delighted; if they disliked them or ignored them he was not in the least surprised or concerned.

As I have said, Humphrey was one of the first members of the Cambridge Film Guild. Our programs of contemporary French, German, and Russian films were a revelation to him since such films were not generally shown at all in Britain at that time. There was in fact only one theater in the whole country in those days where films other than the standard American or British product were shown. That was the Shaftesbury Avenue Pavilion where Stuart Davis maintained a lonely and precarious beachead for continental films. We got some of our films from him, often ones that he could not hope to exploit commercially; others we obtained from a variety of obscure sources. Sometimes we imported films ourselves directly, sometimes in collaboration with the London Film Society. At first we were concerned only with silents, but gradually sound films from France and Germany began to trickle in. It was a great event, I remember, when we imported Pabst's *Dreigroschenoper* in collaboration with the London Film Society. Humphrey was much impressed by Pabst's direction, by the acting, by Kurt Weill's score, and particularly by the décor. This response to Pabst's film reminds me that he was very interested and involved in amateur theatrical activities. While at the Perse School and later as an undergraduate he did some acting, perhaps even some directing, and designed settings and costumes for a number of Cambridge productions including, I seem to recall, Stravinsky's *Histoire d'un Soldat,* Honegger's *King David,* and Purcell's *King Arthur.*

LISTEN TO BRITAIN (1942)

Throughout his Cambridge days, however, Humphrey's interest in films, though lively, remained appreciative, critical, and theoretical. Unlike Stuart Legg and myself, who got our fingers jointly and properly burnt in a 35 mm. "documentary" about Cambridge, made in conjunction with Bruce Woolf of G-B Instructional Films, Humphrey confined his practical activities to drawing and painting and stage designing.

In the summer of 1932, when both Humphrey and I had left Cambridge and *Experiment* had died the natural death of a somewhat successful little magazine, we shared a converted windmill tower known as "La Tourelle" on the outskirts of St. Tropez. We lived there in joint ménage and monetary poverty for several months before returning to England to face the difficult realities of the depression, which had finally fallen with full impact on a disordered Europe.

During those months at St. Tropez Humphrey was living off a small legacy which either he or Cicely had come into, and during that time Humphrey was one hundred per cent painter and artist. I think he knew that he was enjoying a unique period of freedom from worldly responsibilities which would not last very long and he was determined to use every instant of it in a concentrated attack on the artistic and creative problems with which he was so seriously concerned.

When we returned to England I went to work for John Grierson at the Empire Marketing Board film unit where Stuart Legg and Basil Wright were already working. Humphrey, declining all job possibilities as long as there was anything left of the legacy, continued to devote all his time to painting. At that time he had no notion whatsoever of going into film production in any capacity, although he remained in close touch with all of us at the E.M.B. and of course knew Legg,

Wright, Elton, and others from Cambridge days. It was not until 1934 that Humphrey came to be a film-maker and the circumstances were, I think, sufficiently odd to be worthy of some mention here.

When the E.M.B. film unit was taken over by the General Post Office in 1933 John Grierson asked me to take on the job of organizing and directing a nontheatrical road-show distribution system for the G.P.O. films. I worked at this for about a year and then left to set up a film department in a London advertising agency which had some clients who were anxious to make films. One of these was a large American oil company. They were launching a new motor oil with a huge press campaign. It was based largely on the threat to the life of a car engine caused by the breakdown of ordinary motor oils and the consequent formation of a mythical substance referred to constantly in the advertising as "SLUM." "Beware of SLUM in your crankcase," ran the big slogan.

The oil company wanted a film showing the horrid realities of SLUM with which they might be able to frighten motorists at the annual Olympia Motor Show. There was an adequate budget for the film and I was in charge of it.

About this time Humphrey and Cicely were facing a serious dilemma. The legacy had practically come to an end and there was no other source of income in sight. Furthermore their household had received an addition in the shape of a baby girl. I knew that Humphrey was very hard up. There was no real possibility of his selling any of his paintings and in spite of his many qualifications it would not be at all easy for him to find work. I thought of Humphrey and I thought of the SLUM film. Humphrey had had absolutely no practical experience of film direction, but I had a cameraman who was experienced and coöperative. I felt confident that Humphrey could handle the job successfully, if he wanted to. But I hesitated. It really was a horrible sort of a film to ask any artist to undertake, experienced or inexperienced in film work. But there was the money, ready and waiting. So rather tentatively I asked Humphrey if he would be interested in directing the film. Of course, I should not have hesitated. I should have known that Humphrey's insatiable appetite for new experiences in communication would make the proposition irresistible. He accepted instantly and in no time at all had made friends with the cameraman, written the script, charmed and amazed the oil company men, inspected the small rental studio on Marylebone Road where the film was to be shot, designed the set, and worked out the lighting.

The visual content of the film consisted principally of studio shots involving a very beautifully built cut-away automobile engine, a full-scale job whose gleaming moving parts were activated by an electric motor drive. Humphrey was at once intrigued by this elaborate and costly toy. Unlike some artists of a highly developed and sophisticated aesthetic turn, Humphrey was always moved to enthusiastic response by fine craftsmanship in any form. His reaction to the cut-away engine was almost ecstatic.

The purpose of this engine was, of course, to explain just how the noxious and dangerous substance SLUM was bound to be formed in any motor-car engine. And in a theoretical sort of way it did this effectively enough. However, there inevitably came a point in the script when the actual substance, SLUM itself, had to be shown. Scouts were therefore sent out to drain the crankcases of the most disreputable, neglected, and ancient cars which could be found on the used-car lots of the Edgware Road. In this way gallons of dirty crankcase oil were obtained. Unfortunately when photographed these samples looked like nothing more sinister than black ink. Even when compounded and boiled (a hideous task which Humphrey insisted on attending to personally) the result remained photographically innocuous—nothing even remotely corresponding to the substance so vividly described in the newspaper advertising.

But nobody had to tell Humphrey what to do in this dilemma. "I'll fix it," he said, "I'll bloody well make some SLUM that will look like SLUM." And he did. The next day he arrived at the studio with a basinful of a concoction so horrible in its glue-like consistency, so deadly menacing in its vague lumpiness, so acutely threatening with its hints and glints of iron filings and ground class, that even the studio crew were appalled. Humphrey never did disclose the formula, but I gathered that it involved varnish paint plus the scrapings from many palettes and the remnants of a few "collages manqués" from the artist's scrap pile. Anyway he created in reality the SLUM which the copywriters had invented as a verbal abstraction.

Many suggestions were made by all on hand as to how the beastly nature of this concoction could best be brought out in the photography. Humphrey, however, continued to reject all the methods put forward by his cameraman and others. He was seeking his own way. Suddenly he removed the tweed jacket which he habitually wore, even under the heat of the studio lights, rolled his shirt sleeves up high above his elbows and revealed what he intended to do.

"SLUM," he said, "is not a real substance. It is an idea, and what is more it is essentially an emotional idea. Therefore its nature must be demonstrated in a way which will produce a direct emotional response from the audience. There's no thinking needed here, boys."

So saying, he plunged both hands and arms right up to the elbows into the ghastly mess and began to play with it like a child making mud pies, lifting it up in horrible dripping clots and letting it slurp back heavily into the pan, squeezing and squirting it through his interlaced fingers.

The film turned out to be a minor triumph and Humphrey, it seemed, was from that moment destined to become involved in film work. It surprised both of us, for I'm sure neither of us had thought of this odd film as anything other than a handy way of relieving a rather pressing financial situation.

There remained, however, many strange and devious byways to be followed by Humphrey before he came into his own at the Crown Film Unit. There was, for instance, the brief and improbable association with a Methodist film production company headed by the heir to a flour-milling fortune, J. Arthur Rank. I have forgotten exactly how this came about, but Humphrey was asked to do a shooting script from a novel entitled, as I recall, *Three Fevers*, by Leo Walmsley. Unlike most productions undertaken by the Rank Methodist organization up to that time, this was not a biblical story but a tale of North Sea fishermen with a highly moral content. I know that Humphrey worked on the script for we discussed it several times and in considerable detail. Whether the film was eventually produced I do not know. I have a feeling that it may have been completed but I certainly never saw it.

It must have been about the same time, that is sometime during 1935, that Humphrey and Len Lye collaborated on preliminary work for the G.P.O. Unit in connection with some kind of animated film project. This does not mean that Humphrey joined the G.P.O. regular staff at that time. Indeed there were very few persons permanently employed by John Grierson at the G.P.O. in those days. Production personnel and particularly writers and directors were hired for individual projects and paid by the week or on a fee basis. This is almost certainly the basis on which Humphrey did his first work for the G.P.O. Unit and, as far as I know, no film resulted from this preliminary work. Even if a regular full-time job had at that time been open to him at the G.P.O., I doubt very much whether he would have taken it, for his whole approach to life and art was in many ways directly opposed to that of Grierson. It was not until later on, after Humphrey had worked with Stuart Legg in a quite different connection, that he committed himself seriously to film making for the G.P.O.-Crown group. This was almost certainly due to the influence of Stuart Legg rather than that of

Grierson. Of course, by the time Humphrey started on his series of wartime films, both Grierson and Legg were in Canada starting up the National Film Board. The last opportunity I had to talk with Humphrey in general terms about his attitude to film work was early in 1940. We met by accident in a little East Anglian town, perhaps it was Saffron Waldon. We were both engaged in making location shots in the surrounding area, although for different films. It was a discouraging period for documentary film-makers in England, for we had all come under the control of the Ministry of Information whose ponderous bureaucracy and continuous internal struggles for power had virtually eliminated documentary production. And this at a time when we felt it was so badly needed to offset the dismal condition of national morale produced by the "phony war." As a matter of fact we were both rather lucky to be doing any kind of actual production work at that time. Humphrey was, I suppose, completing *Spring Offensive*. Anyway, I had the impression that while he was glad to have film work at that time for many practical and other reasons and would be glad to continue making films during the war if he could help in that way, his real interest still lay in painting. Of course, that was before he had achieved any notable and widely recognized success in his film work, that is, before he made *London Can Take It*. How his wartime experiences affected him in connection with his attitude to film work I do not know. It is a fact, of course, that he continued to make films after the war, but I still have the feeling that if Humphrey had inherited anything like an adequate independent income, he would have left film work and gone back to painting as the main occupation of his life.

But to get back to 1935: this was also the period when Humphrey was interested in and employed in an advisory capacity by two color film development companies, Gasparcolour and Dufaycolour. As a producer I experimented with both these systems and I suffered with Humphrey from the bizarre and unpredictable results which both commonly yielded at that time.

In the meantime, on a different level, Humphrey had become increasingly involved in the Surrealist movement. As I have mentioned before, communication via the written word did not come easily to Humphrey. By that I do not mean that he did not do a lot of writing. He did write constantly, both poetry and prose works, but he was impatient and unsatisfied with what he did. The words could not come fast enough or right enough to match his visions and his meticulous sense of design. That was what made it so hard to get anything out of him that he would consent to have printed. Apart from the four articles in *Experiment* written while he was at Cambridge I know of only three other published works with which he was concerned. And the first of these came about through his association with the Surrealist movement and his friendship with David Gascoyne. This was *Remove Your Hat—Twenty Poems by Benjamin Peret*, "selected and translated from the French by Humphrey Jennings and David Gascoyne with an introductory note by Paul Eluard," published in 1936. In his next appearance in print, in 1937, Humphrey managed to achieve the highest degree of anonymity he could hope for in the publication of *May, 1937*. Together with Charles Madge, Tom Harrison, and others including Stuart Legg, Humphrey had been responsible for the birth and growth of "Mass Observation," a group which had the aim of investigating public opinion qualitatively and quantitively by the direct observation of behavior in public places and above all by listening to people's conversations. It was a form of loosely organized visual and aural eavesdropping conducted with the best of motives and the highest purpose. Although many condemned it and indeed laughed at it for its lack of "scientific method," I think it produced results of great interest and true significance. Humphrey's particular task in connection with Mass Observation was to coördinate and correlate the large numbers

of reports which came in from individual observers and, more important, to design a method of presenting the essence of these reports in a form suitable for publication. It was a tremendously difficult task and *May, 1937*, a thick and weighty volume, is a monument to all concerned with Mass Observation. In particular it is a monument to Humphrey's persistence and conceptual brilliance. But his involvement in Mass Observation developed in Humphrey qualities far different from those required of an editor; it intensified his understanding of and respect for people in all walks of life. It brought him in daily contact with men and women whose lives were utterly different from his own yet with whom he felt a bond of deep understanding and warm sympathy. It was this kind of experience which led Humphrey to make *Spare Time*, his first significant work as an artist in film. There are those who think that Humphrey had a satirical purpose in certain sequences of *Spare Time*. I am sure that he did not. Humphrey was a man of deep sentiment, but he was not sentimental, nor was he capable of holding simple people up to ridicule. No, when Humphrey looked at people he accepted them, he looked at them with the eyes of Bunyan and Blake, Constable and Hogarth, and with the inner vision of the blind Milton, he looked at them and loved them, not so much as individuals but as all mankind. It was above all this power to see clearly yet love well that Humphrey Jennings brought to his films.

FIRES WERE STARTED (1943)

WILLIAM SANSOM

The Making of Fires Were Started

As an ordinary fireman abruptly employed as an actor, on the scene and not behind it, I can only view Humphrey Jennings as he appeared to us from floor-level, leaving out all the organizational work and premeditatory thinking which did not come our way but surely came his.

The film was begun in a bleak month early in 1943 and carried through into high summer: it was begun on location among the cobbles and bricks and rafters and ruins of London dockland, by then badly bombed, and finished at Pinewood Studios, with green country all around. My actor-colleagues and I were chosen from different stations all about London—none of us professional players—and seconded from fire-fighting duties for the period. It was a dull lull period, with little bombing, so this was something to do. We were all glad to be away from station routine, all rebellious that we were not paid extra for these expert duties. Humphrey thus had to deal with an enthusiastic lot who had a convenient grudge ready whenever necessary—ideal constituents of the British temper.

He dealt well. Democracy the rule, Christian names all round, discussion and beer together after work—he gave us the sense of making the film *with* instead of *for* him. No script. A general scheme, of course, which we did not know about. The film was shot both on and off the cuff. Dialogue was always made up on the spot—and of course the more genuine for that—and Jennings collected detail of all kinds on the way, on the day, on the spot.

For instances. The penny-whistle blower was heard one morning in the streets by Wellclose Square, in the East End, where we were shooting, and instantly coöpted. And when I was asked to honky-tonk the piano in the station before the fire-call, the tune selected—*Please Don't Think About Me When I've Gone*—was the result of only five minutes general discussion. Likewise, he wanted also a more spectacular piano piece full of finger-play: so on the spot I improvised a rumba-type reach-me-down, and this went into the can within the day. And then the remarkably glib Fred Griffiths—the big-faced fellow who boxed with the boy early on—was often called to supply types of cockney dialogue. He had a specially rhythmic, and thus emphatic, manner of speaking which delighted Humphrey, who thus again used what he heard on the spot.

These instances I particularly remember may be multiplied many times: and then again multiplied by the many visual background discoveries on the daily way through the dockland streets. Humphrey could be likened to an obsessive insect with antennae always alert and instantly sensitively selective, without human hum and ha, of what was needed.

But human he must have been, to have understood so well the human elements of the characters in his films. However, he gave little of his own personal life away, he talked little of himself and only of work. He worked obsessed with the job in hand—and because he never spared himself he endeared himself to his employees, though he showed few of the usual endearing qualities, and certainly neither flattery nor histrionics. He was a man of medium height, tow-haired, with sharp blue eyes, inwards-pointing teeth and the shaped but blubbery lips of a Hollander; and his neck

was so straight it pushed his head forward and often to one side. He shouted awesomely, and often smiled—but with the quick fade of one who has really no time for it.

In the winter dockland streets he always wore a long tweed single-breasted overcoat, and with his hands in the pockets, and walking with quick short shuffling steps as if in slippers, he gave the impression of a man out on the pavements in his dressing-gown: say, the traditional figure of the distraught father-to-be, up all night and having the baby – which, of course, he was. Only, he was the Dad who knew what the kid was going to be, and no question.

He always stressed his need for music in the film; and I think it is plain that, apart from any material music he used, his films were composed in the swelling – dying, theme and repeat-theme notation of a kind of musical composition. It must have been a strong sense with him – for in this film there was much night-to-night distraction, with us firemen setting fire to the place in delighted reversal of our usual role. Most of us had been through the Blitz with hardly a scratch – but in this job we all got burned, and so did Humphrey and his assistants. We operated usually in empty warehouses, and the fires we started were reasonably restricted. But of their nature they tended to get out of hand, and at least in one case too dangerously – I think it was gluttonously near to a champagne depository – and the real brigade had to be called.

Personally, I shiver still to recall an episode at the Pickle Factory, a two-story building whose flat roof was used for the high-fire scenes atop an eight-story warehouse. In the pickle factory, we set a wooden staircase alight. I had to climb up this flaming staircase, normally quite a reasonable act in fire-boots and if you move quickly. However, to avoid trouble an assistant was told to empty a bucket of water over me before I went up. Unfortunately, he chose the bucket of paraffin standing nearby for feeding the fire. With all the smoke-smell about nobody noticed. And so I ascended through the fire drenched with fire-lighting fluid. By some miracle of flash-points – or perhaps a last exudation of Humphrey's forceful will – that lively little living torch never went up.

And then there were scenes that never, I think, appeared in the final version – I remember having to run five times in front of two fire-maddened dray-horses who then had to rear back to miss me, rolling their awful eyes, hammering the air with their giant hoofs a few feet from my tender tin-hat. And the same thing with a locomotive in Woolwich Arsenal: a private locomotive indeed, but none the smaller for that and with most sharp-looking wheels. And my colleagues were sent climbing up hot kilns, or lowered sixty feet from a warehouse roof (never as sure as it looks, you can break a rib or a head against the wall on the way down).

Why did we do these things? In a way, they looked and felt more dangerous than they were. And we were in uniform, and duty-bound. Yet I think also our immediate acceptance came because it was Jennings who asked for it, and we had developed by then a kind of hero-worship of him. But I can hear a thousand adulatory voices echoing this kind of sentiment all over the place – this laurelled love of the Director. It may be a commonplace, a result of infection more than affection. Film-making, though for the actor about the slowest and most boring blank-minded eternally on-the-wait non-experience possible, carries nevertheless a curious heat and excitement during the actual moments of shooting. Naturally, Humphrey inherited the warmth of this atmosphere: but above this a personal passion, an obsessive drive, and the knowledge that he was a thoroughly intelligent tough aesthete carried him way above the ordinary run.

The only revolt occurred over the funeral episode. Some of the men had already attended the real funerals of burned up friends. They refused to carry this false coffin. Beneath this, I suspected deeper superstitions: they did not like acting in the old weed-grown churchyard,

on holy ground, and among the symbols of death. They were, in fact, shocked. It took a long while and a lot of explanation before, sharp-eyed and sour for the first time, the men bore the coffin to and fro through the city weeds.

Lastly, as a then practicing fireman, I would say this: the film was true to life in every respect. Not a false note – if you make the usual allowances for the absence of foul language which was in everybody's mouth all the time. It may be thought that, working with the men on the spot, such truth would be an inevitable result. I don't believe it. Romanticism, tricks for tricks' sake, false patriotism, militant smartness, intrusive humor, and many another nugget of Director's Delight could have crept in. But this director kept it clean, and infused the meat of realism with his own passion and intellect to make of it all a poetic work of art.

"Cud!" as he would say, who was unable to pronounce a "t."

JAMES MERRALLS

Humphrey Jennings: A Biographical Sketch

Humphrey Jennings was an intellectual artist who used the cinema as one of the means of expressing his thoughts. He was born in 1907 and died in an accident in Greece in 1950. His adult life spanned three periods: the desperate 'thirties, the war years, and the early postwar years up to the Festival of Britain ten years ago. He died at forty-three when his closest friends believed his best work lay before him. Though he left some poems, a little prose, paintings and films, the body of work surviving him was small; he fascinated those who knew him by the purity and agility of his intellect, but now even they find the fabric of his thought elusive, sometimes lost. He excelled in conversation, most transient of all arts. Charles Madge, who knew him as well as anybody, says now, "He was a very strange man. And in writing I realize afresh how little I knew of the inner workings of his mind."

His grandfather Tom Jennings was a celebrated racehorse trainer at Newmarket whose own father had lost his fortune by investing in coaches when the railways came. His grandmother was French. His father settled in Walberswick, Suffolk, where he was an architect. His mother, who was an art student when she married, ran a pottery shop there. His parents were ardent subscribers to A. R. Orage's celebrated weekly *The New Age* and were influenced by Orage's enthusiasm for guild socialism and peasant art. When Humphrey Jennings was quite small he was taken by his parents upon extensive travels abroad in search of pottery, especially to Brittany which he came to know intimately. His parents were encouraged by Orage's championing of the Perse School, Cambridge, which was at the time under the great headmastership of Dr. W. H. D. Rouse, to send Humphrey there. He stayed at Cambridge for all his formative years until after his marriage. At Perse he led an active life which was distinguished perhaps more by his athletic achievements than aca-

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JAMES MERRALLS

Humphrey Jennings: A Biographical Sketch

Humphrey Jennings was an intellectual artist who used the cinema as one of the means of expressing his thoughts. He was born in 1907 and died in an accident in Greece in 1950. His adult life spanned three periods: the desperate 'thirties, the war years, and the early postwar years up to the Festival of Britain ten years ago. He died at forty-three when his closest friends believed his best work lay before him. Though he left some poems, a little prose, paintings and films, the body of work surviving him was small; he fascinated those who knew him by the purity and agility of his intellect, but now even they find the fabric of his thought elusive, sometimes lost. He excelled in conversation, most transient of all arts. Charles Madge, who knew him as well as anybody, says now, "He was a very strange man. And in writing I realize afresh how little I knew of the inner workings of his mind."

His grandfather Tom Jennings was a celebrated racehorse trainer at Newmarket whose own father had lost his fortune by investing in coaches when the railways came. His grandmother was French. His father settled in Walberswick, Suffolk, where he was an architect. His mother, who was an art student when she married, ran a pottery shop there. His parents were ardent subscribers to A. R. Orage's celebrated weekly *The New Age* and were influenced by Orage's enthusiasm for guild socialism and peasant art. When Humphrey Jennings was quite small he was taken by his parents upon extensive travels abroad in search of pottery, especially to Brittany which he came to know intimately. His parents were encouraged by Orage's championing of the Perse School, Cambridge, which was at the time under the great headmastership of Dr. W. H. D. Rouse, to send Humphrey there. He stayed at Cambridge for all his formative years until after his marriage. At Perse he led an active life which was distinguished perhaps more by his athletic achievements than aca-

demic success. But he did fall under the influence of the English master, Caldwell Cook, and he began to develop a significant leaning toward drama, revealing a flair for decor and scenic design which he was to carry further when he went up to Cambridge in 1926. When he went up he went not to an academic college such as King's or St. John's but to Pembroke, one of the sporting colleges, but also the college of the poet Thomas Gray.

He took a starred first, an exceptional honors degree, in the English Tripos, and although he was not offered the Fellowship his friends anticipated he remained at Cambridge during the Depression as a graduate working first on an edition of Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis" and then on the poetry of Gray. It was Gray's poetry which gave him some of the ideas about the nature of poetry which he used in his own poems and later in his films. These are the significance of allusion, of quotation by allusion, and the importance in literature of the association of meaning and allusion. The films contain many examples of his use of allusion, often so nice as to be almost imperceptible. The image of the dome of St. Paul's recurs in *Family Portrait*. It also appears in the poetry. One poem, a war poem, begins:

> I see London.
> I see the dome of Saint Paul's like the forehead of Darwin.

This is not used in the way the British Council might depict St. Paul's on the cover of a brochure. St. Paul's embodies in its architecture the rational side of Protestantism. It stands as a monument to the opening of the Age of Enlightenment, that great era of material and mental expansion which Jennings made his special interest. And yet at the same time the dome of St. Paul's is only one dome of many domes. It stands for all domes and, by metaphor, for all the dome-like foreheads of scientists, for the collective intellect of centuries and nations. Wren, Newton, the Enlightenment, the spirit of enquiry, the discoveries of science, Charles Darwin. The impact of Cambridge life upon Jennings' imagination recalls the young Wordsworth finding:

> Where the statue stood
> Of Newton, with his prism and silent face,
> The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of thought alone.

Yet he opposed what he called "literary" effects. The word, the phrase, the poetic image are not sufficient in themselves, and the idea that the production of a purely sensory or intellectual satisfaction in the reader or hearer was one of the functions of art was anathema to him. The image must be particularized, concrete and historical, never invented. To him physical manifestation was the final test of imaginative truth. And so the films, poems and paintings abound with images of the Industrial Revolution: the steam engine stands juxtaposed with the plough. But the steam engine is Stephenson's engine or the engine which bore the body of Huskisson, changed in one of his poems to the coffin of Byron, the image of aristocratic society in decay, of man born free in the age of the machine. The plough is Jethro Tull's or Jefferson's.

But Jennings was also not opposed to technique. In fact he called for "the use of technique as technique, to create mutations in the subject, and the subject thereby to be in its proper place, as the basis of a metamorphosis by paint and not by literary substitution." That is to say the idea of the image is not enough in itself.

Cambridge also provided the second of the important influences of Jennings' imaginative development. He was a member of a brilliant group of students under I. A. Richards who sought to identify the relation of science and poetry in the mainstream of imaginative thought. Dr. J. Bronowski, now head of the British Coal Research Laboratories, who has also written one of the works of authority on the poet Blake; William Empson, poet and mathematician; Kathleen Raine, poet, Cambridge don, and physicist, were also of this

group. Charles Madge, now Professor of Sociology at Birmingham, explains the intellectual bonds which brought them together thus, "We had in common a sense of the important shifts in vision which were taking place in the giant intellects of the nineteenth century, and which changed the relation of prose and poetry and undermined the older antithesis of material and spiritual." They were, as I have said, fascinated by the great imaginative upsurge from which the Industrial Revolution sprang. And they read Newton, Faraday, Darwin for their poetic content, that is their intellectual vigor, as much as for their science.

Thirdly there was the political influence of Cambridge society where left-wing politics were part of the intellectual climate. Jennings was attracted by the imaginative materialism of Marxism, though he was far from being at any time in his life a dogmatic political Marxist. His interest in Marxism drew him into the Mass Observation movement. This movement was the product of three minds, each very different: Tom Harrisson, the anthropologist just back from the New Hebrides and bent upon conducting a huge anthropological investigation of the drab wastes of the Lancashire slums; Charles Madge, a political Communist, concerned with the practical effects of the Industrial Revolution on the lives of those most affected by it; and Humphrey Jennings, synthesizing what he saw with his intellectual apprehension of the history and imaginative mainsprings of the Industrial Revolution, finding Blake's "dark, Satanic mills" in the wasteland of Burnley.

Throughout his work is the reconciliation of apparent antithesis: the juxtaposition of horses and locomotives, images of the highly strung energy of the natural order and the consuming power of the machines, of the farm and the factory, agriculture and industry, prose and poetry. *Family Portrait* quotes E. M. Forster's "the rainbow bridge that connects the prose in us with the passion." In his films, too, he attempted a new kind of fusion of prose (statement) with poetry (association and form). In *Listen to Britain* there is no narration. The dialogue consists of scraps of conversations overheard in passing. The theme of the film is the oneness of the British people at war, and we see shopgirls and factory workers, the Queen at a Gallery concert, engine-drivers and airmen, soldiers on leave, Flanagan and Allen at a lunch-time concert in a factory canteen, all seen as part of the fabric of British life in a time of stress. One sequence in particular is a memorable example of the oblique method Humphrey Jennings was developing in his later film essays. It is the concert at the National Gallery; as in *A Diary for Timothy* Dame Myra Hess is playing. During the concert the camera glides away from the pianist, first lingering on the audience, entranced by a Mozart concerto, then gliding around the Gallery, along the sandbagged walls where the paintings ought to be hanging, then outside to the noble classical portico, out into a bright London spring day until the rumble of the traffic drowns the music and the image fades into one of a factory, the roar dissolves into the music of a brass band. It is a sequence which stays in the mind's eye, for it is one of the loveliest in English cinema.

As a young graduate he was offered a Chair of English Literature in Japan, but he preferred to stay in his own country and lived on in Cambridge in a small flat, painting and designing for the repertory theater there while he continued his reading in Gray and the occurrence of triumphs in poetry. The painter Julian Trevelyan was associated with him in the small art gallery he ran in premises adjoining his flat. He recalls Jennings at this time: "Humphrey's was a prodigious intelligence; he devoured books, and as a dialectician he seemed invincible. He introduced us all to contemporary French painting through the medium of Cahiers d'Art and through various books on Picasso. He was alive to the ever-changing value of 'contemporariness' in art, and the word *weltanschauung* was used much by us at the time. 'That picture of yours hasn't got 1931ness,' he would say, and the least one

could say of his own work was that it always had *that*. His enthusiasm was immense; I remember his waking me up at eight in the morning to show me a picture he had painted during the night. At his best his work had the purity that one associates with Ben Nicholson but without the somewhat dehydrating good taste. But his output was erratic; he had, so to speak, to talk himself into a picture. What did we talk about in Humphrey's flat? I can remember great monologues from Humphrey on Petrarch's triumphs, on the Chinese sage Chuang-Tzu, on the Industrial Revolution, and on Picasso. But conversation, even with Bronowski, slipped quickly into gossip; our generation were not great talkers, I fancy."

He joined the G.P.O. Film Unit in about 1934 through the good offices of Stuart Legg. Grierson respected his intellect, but the two did not get on well together. Jennings was quick to perceive the short-comings of public institution documentary, "the process and the chaps" as he called it, and he was too outspoken to hide his views for long. Grierson, for his part, rather resented Jennings' dilettantish ways and intellectual antecedents. Denis Forman recalls Grierson's inviting him when he was showing him around the Crown Unit to "come and see Humphrey being nice to the working people." When he first joined the G.P.O. Jennings worked mainly on scenic design. He designed the sets for the Unit's first sound film *Pett and Pott* (Cavalcanti) in 1934 and in the same year played a telegraph boy in a farcical short produced by Cavalcanti to celebrate a reduction in the price of telegrams called *The Glorious Eighth of June*. Somewhere about this time William Coldstream took over the set designs, and Jennings directed his first film *Post Haste*. This was a pictorial history of the post office and was possibly the first film which was entirely composed of prints and drawings. Shortly afterward, in about 1936, he left the G.P.O. and worked first at Shell with Len Lye on a puppet and animation film in color and then with a firm called Gasparcolour. They had a new color process and were interested to show what it could do, mainly with advertising films in mind. Jennings made some films applying to Gasparcolour techniques rather similar to Lye's. At about this time he was associated with the leading members of the French Surrealists. André Breton was a close friend, and Jennings played an active part in the preparation of the Surrealist exhibition in London in 1936. The Surrealists' ideas about images interested him, but he differed from them in stressing the paramountcy of the public image rather than their private images. He also knew André Masson well and when he could visited Paris for exhibitions. He rejoined the G.P.O. (now the Crown Unit) around the beginning of 1938. It was then that he made his Mass Observation documentary *Spare Time*. Basil Wright says of this film that it was highly unpopular with most of the documentary people at the time who accused it of laughing at the ordinary people. The rather pathetic Kazoo band sequence especially drew their fire. Wright now believes that the criticisms were wrong.

Jennings evacuated his wife and two daughters to America during the war and himself lived in London at the house of Ian Dalrymple (then the producer of the unit) and his wife. As Dalrymple recalls it, he came for a night's sleep during the blitz and his visit lasted two and a quarter years. This was the period of his

SPARE TIME (1939)

best-known films; and it was probably then that he devoted himself more wholeheartedly to his film work than at any other time. His eccentric method of working, in manic bursts, drove his colleagues to distraction, but all were devoted to him. He worked particularly closely with Stewart McAllister, his editor, with whom he virtually made his films in the cutting-room, and the sound recorder Ken Cameron. Even so probably none of the films is as Humphrey Jennings would have made it had he been given a perfectly free hand. This is not to say that he was not given a great amount of creative freedom by his producers. He was, and the films each bear his personal stamp. But sponsorship meant that they had to be made in a hurry, and Jennings was a perfectionist who liked to make his own pace. I suspect that some of the rather jumpy continuity is brought about by his having to work to a timetable. It should also be remembered that he was an experimentalist forced to make films before he really wanted to and before he had fully mastered his craft. Some of the images are not especially interesting photographically and might have been improved had another angle of vision been used. But these faults are small against the achievement, and I believe that the films do speak to us, removed by distance of time and place, as immediately as when they were made.

He remained at Crown after the war, though the spark which fired the war documentaries seemed to have dimmed. The reason in Dalrymple's opinion, was that the war had stimulated his creative power and the sort of war films he made gave him the fullest opportunities for the use of his peculiar cultural interests: the unity of purpose and comradely spirit which inspired the whole British people were also an inspiration to him. At this time he was heavily engaged in work on his immense collage of written materials about the imaginative changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution, which was to be published with his own annotations under the title *Pandemonium*. At his death the materials collected for this work filled a tea chest. The choice of texts was designed to illustrate shifts in vision of the natural world and shifts in attitude toward human beings and their interrelation: the rationality of science and the rationalistic, utilitarian ethic of capitalism. An early note in *Pandemonium* reads: "The first stage (1660-1730) is the phase of pure science, direct experiments and clear philosophical and materialist thinking. The invention was as yet only on paper. The people—the impact on life—and consequent exploitation, had not yet arrived. Suggestion: when these ideas, scientific and mechanical, began to be exploited by capital and to involve many human beings, was not this the period of the repression of the clear imaginative vision in ordinary folk? and hence of its being possible for them to be emotionally exploited, e.g. by Wesley?" He often discussed his ideas of the history of English sensibility with Charles Madge. Madge comments upon this passage: "It may help to explain the significance for him of Sir Christopher Wren and St. Paul's Cathedral. For him this building, with its rational proportions and forms, was a symbol of what he called 'the first stage.' In the second stage he thought the inhuman, mechanistic side of scientific rationality came uppermost. The building which symbolized this stage was Bentham's Panoptikon, a design for a gaol in which every prisoner would be visible from a central point of observation. In the nineteenth century he thought there was a return to a more human and emotional attitude to life, although the social evils of industrialization were then at their height. The confused optimism of the Great Exhibition of 1851, and the Crystal Palace in which it was housed, was his symbol for this stage."

He prepared a rough draft for a film of Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd* for the J. Arthur Rank organization, but the scheme came to nothing. In 1950 he was commissioned to make the film which became *Family Portrait* as one of the official films of the Festival of Britain. It was originally intended to be a long

history in film of British imaginative thought, but time and money and the sponsor's directions whittled it down to the form in which it finally appeared, as a statement in summary form of his ideas and a tribute to the peculiar genius of England.

In 1951, shortly before *Family Portrait* was issued, he left England for Greece where he was to begin a film which was to be one of six in a series called "The Changing Face of Europe." Each was to take a specific topic illustrating an aspect of European recovery. Jennings had chosen health (*The Good Life*) because it gave him a chance to deal with other than severely material aspects. He went out from Athens one Sunday to one of the islands to obtain a representational shot for the titles. He did not go to the island he intended, having *en route* met a Greek acquaintance who misinformed him about the little steamers. He climbed a low cliff to get a comprehensive view: but the edge was very dry, his foot slipped, and he fell some thirty feet onto the shore, where his head hit a rock. A blood transfusion was not available, and he was dead within a few hours. He is buried in the British cemetery in Athens. A copy of Trelawny's *The Last Days of Shelley and Byron* was found on him when he died.

Films of the Year

[In this section, which will appear regularly in succeeding issues as "Films of the Quarter," a group of the country's outstanding critics will comment briefly on the films that have seemed most interesting to them during the preceding three months. For this issue, however, we have invited them to range over the entirety of 1961. Due to the geographical irregularity of release dates, not all the critics will have seen the same films. However, since we seek not a box score but an illumination of different approaches and tastes, this should not be a serious problem.]

Pauline Kael

(Author of articles and reviews in SIGHT & SOUND, FILM QUARTERLY, *and other journals; conducts radio program on* KPFA *and associated stations.)*

It had begun to look as if only those with a fresh, primitive eye – working in poverty and inexperience and in underdeveloped countries, discovering the medium for themselves—could do anything new and important (like *The Apu Trilogy*). The future of movies seemed to lie with film-makers who didn't know that it had all been done before. For those with great traditions behind them, the only field to explore seemed to be comedy—and "black" comedy at that—or, at least, works which suggest black comedy: *Eroica, Kagi, Breathless, The Cousins, Smiles of a Summer Night, The Seventh Seal.*

L'Avventura is, easily, the film of the year, because Antonioni, by making his movie about this very problem—depleted modern man—demonstrated that the possibilities for serious, cultivated, personal expression in the film medium were not yet exhausted. *L'Avventura* is a study of the human condition at the higher social and economic levels, a study of adjusted, compromising man—afflicted by short memory, thin remorse, easy betrayal. The characters are passive as if post-analytic, active only in trying to discharge their anxiety—sex is their sole means of contact and communication. Too shallow to be truly lonely, they are people trying to escape their boredom in each other and finding it there. They become reconciled to life only by resignation. Claudia, the only one capable of love, is defeated like the rest; her love turns to pity.

It's a barren view of life, but it's a *view*. Perhaps compassion is reserved for the lives of the poor: the corruption of innocence is tragic in *Shoeshine*; the intransigeance of defeated man is noble in *Umberto D.*; hope and gullibility are the saving grace of *Cabiria*. But modern artists cannot view themselves (or us) tragically: rightly or wrongly, we feel that we defeat ourselves – when were we innocent? when are we noble? how can we be "taken in"? Antonioni's subject, the fall (that is to say, the exposure) of rich, handsome, gifted man is treated accumulatively and analytically—an oblique, tangential view of love and society, a view (bravely) not raised to the plane of despair. In its melancholy *L'Avventura* suggests Chekhov. Because it is subtle and ascetic, yet laborious in revealing its meanings, it suggests the Henry James who chewed more than he bit off. And perhaps because the characters use sex destructively as a momentary black-out, as a means of escaping self-awareness by humiliating someone else, it suggests D. H. Lawrence. Most of all, I think, it suggests the Virginia Woolf of *The Waves*: the mood of *L'Avventura* is "Disparate are we." Antonioni is an avowed Marxist—but from this film I think we can say that although he may believe in the socialist criticism of society, he has no faith in the socialist solution. When you think it over, probably more of us than would care to admit it feel the same way. A terrible calm hangs over everything in the movie; Antonioni's space is a

kind of vacuum in which people are aimlessly moving—searchers and lost are all the same, disparate, without goals or joy.

For those who can take movies or leave them alone, *La Dolce Vita* is obviously the film of the year: audiences can enjoy its "vice" (the name they give their own fantasies when somebody else acts them out) and they can hold up their hands in horror (peeking through the fingers) at all that wicked decadence and all those orgies.

Stanley Kauffmann

(Regular film reviewer for THE NEW REPUBLIC, *whose movie coverage he has made perhaps the most reliable in the country.)*

The best picture I have seen so far this year (Oct. 15) is *L'Avventura,* in which Antonioni moves toward a kind of drama possible only in film: poetic immersion in character instead of conflict of character. Almost as if to rebut it, De Sica's *Two Women* flowers out of the orthodox theatrical: an inconclusive but rich, flavorful film with an appropriately Mediterranean performance by the long-underrated Sophia Loren.

La Dolce Vita demonstrated two things: (1) Fellini's stunning virtuosity; (2) *I Vitelloni* is still the one Fellini film that is not in some way distorted to display that virtuosity.

Godard's *Breathless* may be a happy accident, but it certainly is happy—if that is the right word for a film that so perfectly matches method with a theme of dispassionate immorality. More Godard must be seen before one can be quite sure about him. But one *can* be sure about de Broca's talent. *The Love Game* and *The Joker* prove that he has inherited a good deal of René Clair's ability to look at stern realities with an unflinching comic eye.

Just when many of us thought that we had had enough of Britain's belated social realism, along came Karel Reisz' *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning;* and now we *have* had enough, unless further examples are as beautifully made as this film. Guy Green's *The Mark* and Ralph Thomas' *No Love for Johnnie* dealt interestingly with psycho-sexual and politico-sexual subjects, and *The Bridge* revealed Bernhard Wicki's clean story-telling skill.

A Cold Wind in August was surprisingly genuine, thanks to Alexander Singer's direction and Lola Albright's performance. *The Hustler,* a somewhat vacuous script, was forcefully played by Paul Newman and incisively directed by Robert Rossen. *West Side Story,* despite its lame last third, was my favorite American film of the year and the best film musical I can remember. Not to discount Robert Wise—*viva* Robbins!

I hope I may be spared one more line to help deflate, if possible, Visconti's *Rocco,* a film remarkable in that it manages to be simultaneously gaseous and ponderous.

Gavin Lambert

(Former editor of SIGHT & SOUND; *author of* THE SLIDE AREA; *screenwriter for* SONS AND LOVERS; *now lives in Los Angeles.)*

Most impressive: *L'Avventura* and *A Bout de Souffle.* Their styles couldn't be more dissimilar, yet in a way they're about the same thing, the dislocated and baffling lives that many people seem to be living, human nature as something basically elusive, gratuitous, and amoral. The French film, with its jagged cutting style, is really the existentialist shrug vividly translated into terms of cinema. *L'Avventura,* more substantial, examines this same shrug with a marvelously polished, dreamlike deliberation. It's a most elegantly uncomfortable work, with a subtle beauty of rhythm and composition.

Also enjoyed: *The Misfits,* something of an American *Avventura.* An uneven film in which Arthur Miller's writing alternates between the powerfully incisive and the portentous, the performances by Monroe and Clift are remarkable, and the direction by Huston his best in a

long while. It has personality and daring, and a lot of it sticks in the memory. *Ballad of a Soldier,* a Russian butterfly which I see has been pinned on several big critical wheels, struck me as a slight, unpretentious young-lovers-in-wartime story very touchingly and freshly done. Only the puritanical attitude to adultery struck a dreary, sour note. Lastly, the reissue of *GWTW,* of which the first half especially is splendid, a rich example of the grand "Hollywood manner" applied with zest and taste to skindeep but extremely entertaining material.

Dwight MacDonald

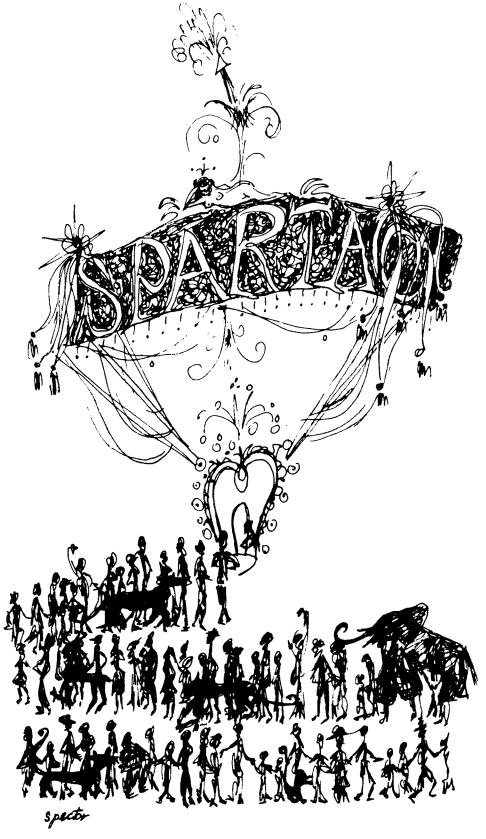
(Regular film reviewer for ESQUIRE; *also on the staff of* THE NEW YORKER; *formerly edited his own magazine,* POLITICS.)

Three films last year expanded my idea of cinema and so I suppose they were the best ones: *Shadows* and *Breathless,* which used improvisation and de-clichéd cutting and camera to bring one close to reality, and *L'Avventura,* which used the greatest control and refinement of technique to get the kind of psychological depth and subtlety one finds in a good novel. Three other films should also be mentioned: *The Connection* (an honest and resourceful solution of a difficult problem), *Shoot the Pianist* (which tries to combine farce and tragedy; it fails but is more interesting than most successes), and *Rocco and His Brothers* (the first hour, until the morbidly protracted rape, fighting, and murder scenes plunge us into Visconti's private obsessions). And—perhaps—Buñuel's *Viridiana.*

Jonas Mekas

(Editor of the New York Journal, FILM CULTURE; *active in movement to produce films in New York.)*

In alphabetical order:
Anticipation of the Night, Stanley Brakhage
Ashes and Diamonds, Andrzej Wajda
Blazes, Robert Breer
Breathless, Jean-Luc Godard
King of Kings, Nicholas Ray
La Dolce Vita, Federico Fellini
L'Avventura, Michelangelo Antonioni
Leda, Claude Chabrol
Prelude, Stanley Brakhage
Sunday, Dan Drasin
The Flower Thief, Ron Rice
The Sin of Jesus, Robert Frank
The Young One, Luis Buñuel



Festivals 1961

Recognizing the impossibility of giving complete reports on even the leading handful of festivals, we have assembled below a chronological series of thumbnail sketches which attempt to convey something of the special flavor of a few of the 1961 festivals.

Cannes DAVID STEWART HULL

Although the 1961 Cannes festival may not have been the dullest in the fourteen years of the event's existence, it certainly proved a hot contender for this dubious distinction. And not only were most of the films bad. Old-timers remarked that even the parties weren't what they used to be now that most of the hotels had raised their prices for catering receptions. Nary a starlet fell into a swimming pool. Only the sun proved faithful, and the beaches were packed with cinematic refugees, disconsolately stalked by hordes of nervous photographers trying in vain to find some excitement for the readers back home.

At Cannes, two films are shown each day, the first both in the morning and afternoon, and the second, usually the more important film, three times later in the day. The most glamorous screening is always at 9:45 in the evening.

Large numbers of films are screened throughout the day in local cinemas out-of-competition, giving the visitor an extremely good sampling of what has been going on around the European studios in the last twelve months. This year, almost all the really good films were shown in such a manner, and the tiny "locals" were often packed while the great Palais played host to but a handful of devoted journalists.

The Palme d'Or was split this year, with some justification, between Henri Colpi's *Une Aussi Longue Absence* and Buñuel's *Viridiana.* The special jury prize went to the Polish *Mother Joan of the Angels.*

René Clément's Che Gioia Vivere was a major disappointment. With all the fanfare that preceded it, one was hardly prepared for a very unfunny comedy, the sad product of an apparently huge budget, Henri Decae at the camera, and a group of talented young actors. Unfortunately for Clément, a retrospective showing of six of his past films was arranged at a local cinema, and the decline from the masterly comic direction of *King of Hearts* was painfully apparent.

One expected better of Mauro Bolognini than *La Viaccia.* With each film he has become more sure of himself, and though *Il Bell' Antonio* and *La Notte Brava* are seriously flawed, they have passages of real genius. Here Bolognini evidently was not very interested in his subject, preferring to treat it as an exercise in style.

The Italian film that proved the most interesting was Franco Rossi's *Odissea Nuda,* shown out of competition in an unfortunately unsubtitled and rather battered print. *Odissea Nuda* would seem to be loosely based on Melville's *Mardi* although that work receives no credit. It recounts the adventures in the South Seas of an Italian adventurer, switching midway from slapstick and racy comedy to melancholy reflection and retreat from the world, but ending on a positive note.

Unfortunately, it is necessary to give brief mention to the sorry showing of the United States. *A Raisin in the Sun,* though it has no cinematic interest whatsoever, was a clever choice, for the European fascination with the Negro made it a certain popular hit. *Aimez-vous Brahms?* an invited entry, was superbly dismissed by one French critic in a two-word review: *"Brahms, oui." Exodus* was the opening-night attraction, and the other official invited film was *The Hoodlum Priest.*

Great interest centered quite justly on Shirley Clarke's excellent adaptation of *The Connection,* which played a number of times, out of competition, to packed audiences in the petite

salle. A group of expatriate beatniks of some international repute, who descended like locusts from St. Tropez, contributed their bit to the cinema by making loud interruptions during the screenings, and an unfortunate idea became established in the minds of many that they had something to do with Mrs. Clarke's film.

A notable impression was made by the two new films of Jean Rouch, *La Pyramide Humaine* and *Chronique d'un Eté,* though Rouch's work has yet to get general circulation anywhere outside of France.

It did not seem to matter much that the best male performance prize went to Tony Perkins (the US had to win a prize of some sort), the best direction award to Julia Solntseva (the USSR has to win a prize, too), the "best national selection" prize to Italy (for entering four films). A specially created Gary Cooper Prize was given to *Raisin in the Sun.* As the tired critics left Cannes, surfeited with films and disappointed in the quality of all save two official entries, there was still hope that something might turn up at Berlin, Moscow, or Venice.

Berlin

CYNTHIA GRENIER

The XI International Berlin Filmfestspiele took place against the background of intense political pressure, and insufferable humidity. Regrettably, the films shown during the ten days did nothing to take visitors' minds off either the heat or the international crisis.

The jury, which included Satyajit Ray, Nicholas Ray, James Quinn (director of the British Film Institute), and France Roche (leading French lady film critic), ended up awarding the Golden Bear to Michaelangeleo Antonioni's *La Notte,* thanks largely to the coercive powers of Madame Roche, a very strong-willed young woman.

The two films which produced about the only enthusiasm the Berlin festival crowd could muster were *Une Femme est une Femme* of Jean-Luc Godard and Bernard Wicki's *Das Wunder des Malachias.* The Godard, featuring his charming Danish bride, Anna Karina, who won a Silver Bear for her performance, recounts the same story as *Games of Love,* but in a much more flippant style. Godard, like many a former critic of France's assertive organ of film views, *Cahiers du Cinéma,* has a deep passion for American musical comedies, and here in his film pays a long, detailed, and sometimes quite entertaining tribute to the likes of Stanley Donen and Vincente Minnelli.

Italy's *L'Assassino,* by newcomer Elio Petri, revealed an intelligent, imaginative film talent, well worth watching, despite the many flaws in the picture.

Vancouver

ERNEST CALLENBACH

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Berlin

CYNTHIA GRENIER

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Judging by Vancouver, in English Canada the doctrine of commitment reigns supreme; *Fires on the Plain* was liked primarily for its antiwar aspects, though nobody could make much of a defense for the feeble sociologizing of *The Kitchen*. In French Canada *Cahierisme* seems to be viewed with some sympathy, and the Canadians may thus get into the critical debate with a special interest.

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The XXII Venice Film Festival this August earned itself a proper spot in cinema history by awarding the Golden Lion of Saint Mark to what is probably the most remarkable motion picture made in the last thirty years: *Last Year at Marienbad.*

Were this in itself not admirable enough, the Festival under the new and highly commendable direction of Domenico Meccoli, former top Rome film critic, also awarded Toshiro Mifune the prize for the best male acting performance in another remarkable, if more conventional, film of Akira Kurosawa.

True, apart from these two veritable giants the pickings were rather lean. The Italians, who've been riding on the crest of a much-vaunted "new Renaissance," made a poor, if not downright pathetic showing for themselves. Silence is the kindest way to treat De Sica's *Last Judgment* and Rossellini's *Vanina Vanini*—even an all too willing Venetian public could find nothing to applaud in either of these two works. The remaining Italian entries, De Seta's *Banditi a Orgosolo* and Castellani's *Il Brigante*, were sad, pale harkenings-back to the greatness of the peasant drama of *La Terra Trema.*

The United States offered an old-fashioned soap opera, *Bridge to the Sun*, so dated that it seemed hard to believe a young Frenchman had directed it; and *Summer and Smoke*, a drab filming of a drab Tennessee Williams.

The Soviets, still faithful to their favorite period, World War II, offered a laugh-a-little-cry-a-little number that should go like a house on fire in the States. It even has a clever take-off on a Texan American (played by a Russian). It may not have art, but it's got plenty of "heart" as it's understood in Hollywood. It picked up the special jury prize, largely as a concession to those on the jury who couldn't take *Marienbad.*

The in-fighting on the jury was tough, with the members split between those, led by strong-minded Leopoldo Torre Nilsson of Argentina, who found *Marienbad* one of the most important films ever made, and the others who simply couldn't make heads or tails of it. After an eight-hour talkathon by Torre Nilsson, the Lion was ceded to Alain Resnais.

If director Meccoli won the admiration of film buffs, he seemed also to have won the hostility of the big companies—he flatly turned down an offer of *Guns of Navarone* to open or close the festival as "too commercial"—and earned the resentment of Italian and French newspapers by his refusal to bring in big-name stars just for show. No one other than the photographers and a few producers really complained. Meccoli's festival reminded everyone that a film festival is something more than a market place or a girly show—it's a place where rare and exceptional film works get a chance to be shown and to earn the reputation that is

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San Francisco

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In observing the operations of the San Francisco festival, critics resident in the area have been able to arrive, little by little, at an understanding of what an American festival really should do. It does not appear that this one is going to do it. Irving Levin's festival, which is now in its fifth year, has fared reasonably well in the dogfighting over films; this year's list included *Viridiana* and *Summer Skin*. But the festival is still a San Francisco uppercrust event, which seems to prevent it from being a film event, though this year it did include a couple of discussions by film people in attendance, who included Torre Nilsson, Fred Zinnemann, John Hubley, George Stoney, and (on the jury) von Sternberg, John Halas, Arthur Mayer, Tapan Sinha (Indian director), and Kara Paramanouva (Russian critic). Its brochure is inexcusably less knowledgeable than Vancouver's. It occupies its guests' time with Junior League parties. It talks International Understanding but not Art. And as a consequence its promotion does not reach the thousands of film enthusiasts who make the Bay Area one of the world's movie-mad places. The theater is filled for its showings; but it is filled with people who normally only go to a film when they can wear their minks.

It appears, therefore, that the people who do care about movies must be otherwise served; and we hope for 1962 to organize an adjunct to the festival—perhaps a seminar weekend just prior to the festival itself.

Hollywood continues its infantile if understandable policy of ignoring the festival since it cannot control it and knows it could not win prizes in honest competition. (What could stand up, this year, to the two films mentioned above?) And the reasonably serious directors in Hollywood, the men who should be the leaders of our art and who should be the focus of an American film festival, prudently keep to the southland and their swimming pools. The San Francisco festival, though it has had difficulty outgrowing its beginnings as a society bash, is a beachhead for the cinema in occupied territory. It is to be hoped that next year a much more sizable contingent of film-makers, critics, and dedicated film buffs can be persuaded to attend, even if they have to camp in the *FQ* editor's back yard. As Torre Nilsson put it, in the past five years we have learned who are on the different sides—who are the men that take films seriously, and who are the men that take them for a business like any other. The San Francisco festival, as we said in our editorial on it last year, ought to be the director's festival; it ought to be a rallying point in America for all those who care and want to do something about the art. It is difficult for people from great distances, and with the commitments we all have to keeping bread in our mouths, to attend a festival for a full two-week period. However, those interested in helping to organize schemes to make possible a greater attendance of film people, at least for a short period, should write *FQ*.

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ELIZABETH SUTHERLAND

Cinema of Revolution— 90 Miles from Home

In its three short years of existence, revolutionary Cuba has built up—almost from scratch —a film industry which is turning out work of striking quality. Like the revolution itself, it is a unique phenomenon: the first nationalized film industry on the American continent. Like the revolution, the new industry is filled with youth, excitement and self-confidence. This spirit dominates the atmosphere at the national film institute, known as ICAIC (Instituto Cubano del arte e industria cinematográficos) which controls production and distribution of all films in Cuba. At the entrance to its headquarters, a miliciano sits behind sandbags and, if you're a woman carrying a pocketbook, he checks it for explosives. Upstairs, I found the receptionist as hard to get by as her American sisters, but any resemblance to Hollywood was offset by the constant stream of men in uniform passing by. They carry cans of film and Czech rifles (which look like submachine guns) with equal frequency and equal casualness. There is little "mañana" spirit to be found at ICAIC; everyone runs around in a whirl of activity that contrasts sharply with the past.

Film production in Cuba dates back to around 1900 with a picture about firemen. *El Parque de Palatino,* 1906, showed a promising sense of the medium's possibilities; its director, Díaz Quesada, went on to make the first Cuban feature and other films in a semidocumentary style. The next landmark is 1920: *La Virgen de Caridad,* a melodramatic but well-filmed story of poor-boy-wins-girl-against-rich-landowner. In the late 1930's, musical comedies began to dominate, but the all-time low came in the 1940's, when directors slavishly imitated the enormously successful Mexican movies and some of the nation's best technicians were lured to Mexico by higher salaries. The influence of Hollywood—whose best Latin-American market was Cuba – also discouraged the development of an indigenous industry. Some notable pornographic ("blue") films were made, but only in the private ciné-clubs was any serious work attempted.

While Batista was still in power, two young club members—Tomas Gutiérrez Alea and Julio García Espinosa—made a short documentary called *El Mégano.* Both had studied at the Centro Sperimentale in Rome and been influenced by Italian neorealism. *El Mégano* depicted the miserable existence of the *carboneros,* men who make a living pulling up tree trunks for charcoal from the swamp on Cuba's southern coast known as Ciénaga de Zapata. In contrast, to their poverty, a party of wealthy hunters dressed by Abercrombie & Fitch rides by in a flat-boat; one of them waves patronizingly to the workers as jazzy, American-style music comes over the sound track. Batista's regime suppressed *El Mégano,* but the next year brought Castro into power and three months later (March, 1959) ICAIC was established, with Gutiérrez Alea and García Espinosa as its top directors. Its prime purposes were, and still are, to instill revolutionary ideals in the Cuban people and to tell the world at large about the revolution.

The first film made under Castro—Gutiérrez

Alea's *Esta Tierra Nuestra (This Land of Ours)* —exploded with violence and victory. Its opening shots show a *guajiro's* hut being torn down as he and his family are evicted from the land they have farmed; then come scenes of the bearded rebels battling Batista's army, their triumph, and the first stages of land reform. *Esta Tierra Nuestra* achieves tremendous excitement with powerful close-ups, swift cutting, and the subject matter itself. Though uneven, it set a high standard for ICAIC documentary. Since then, the institute has acquired excellent equipment plus several more talented young directors (a number of technicians from prerevolutionary production were also absorbed in the new industry) and turned out a stream of documentary shorts, four features, cartoons.

The best work so far has been done by thin, sensitive, blue-eyed Gutiérrez Alea. In addition to *Esta Tierra Nuestra,* he has to his credit *Asamblea General* and *Muerte al Invasor,* as well as the feature, *Historias de la Revolución. Asamblea General* represents an ICAIC specialty—the use of newsreel footage to produce an ideologically effective film. In *Asamblea General,* we see Fidel Castro delivering his "Declaration of Havana" to over a million people in the Plaza Cívica on September 2, 1960. The gathering, which began in afternoon and lasted until dark, was known as the "General Assembly of the Cuban People," and Castro's address proclaimed the ideals and goals of the Revolution. He spoke just after Cuba had walked out of the Costa Rican meeting of the Organization of American States when it adopted an implicitly anti-Cuban resolution. Footage of the OAS meeting is cut into the film of Castro speaking, so that the scene shifts back and forth from the formal, well-dressed delegates in their comfortable surroundings to a gigantic sea of Cubans listening, eating, laughing, sweating, as Castro talks.

Muerte al Invasor (Death to the Invader) was mostly shot during thirty hours of actual fighting in last April's invasion, and edited in two days. Being real, the battle scenes are inevitably confused but exciting as a document.

The films of Gutiérrez Alea have a subtler propaganda quality than some of the other directors' work. *El Negro,* done by Eduardo Manet, is a messy but powerful mélange of newsreel footage, still photographs, and drawings, on the theme of racial discrimination. The images pile up: black men against brilliantly white city buildings, shots of Queen Elizabeth and Philip, Prince Rainier and Grace Kelly, contrasted to Little Rock and South African beatings. In Cuba, the revolution has done away with discrimination, and this achievement is rather heavily underlined at the end by a smiling Negro boy. *La Guerra,* directed by Pastor Vega, closely resembles *El Negro* in content and tone. It combines shots of Chrysler factories, of riots in Japan, Bolivia, Algeria, of Kenyatta going to prison, of the English royal family (again) intercut with H-bomb explosions, in a hectic, shattering panorama of "imperialist" sins. Another anticolonial documentary is *El Congo 1961,* Fausto Canel's film about Patrice Lumumba. Also made entirely from archive material, it tells a grim story: Lumumba appointed the first premier of the newly independent Congo, Lumumba received with honors in the United States, Lumumba suddenly tied up like an animal and pushed around by his captors, Lumumba's murdered body. In all three of these documentaries, jazzy sound is used as a motif for the rich, the Americans, the colonial powers, but without the accompanying visual strength that Gutiérrez Alea provides. This musical nose-thumbing

ESTA TIERRA NUESTRA

belongs to a strong Cuban tradition of satire—here, it's the small country gleeful in its victory over the big Northern bully. A little heavy-handed perhaps; not vicious.

In a very different vein is *Carnaval,* made by Fausto Canel and Joe Massot, and aimed at attracting tourists. The first ICAIC color film, it strings shots of floats rolling by, crowds dancing in the street, on a feeble story line of boy-meets-girl, loses-girl, finds-girl. It's a very unrevolutionary picture and doesn't prove much except that the Cubans can put together a film with Hollywood slickness when they want to. ICAIC also demonstrates its technical proficiency in cartoons such as *El Tiburón y la Sardinia (The Shark and the Sardine),* which is based on a popular Latin-American parable about the shark (U.S.A.) and—in this case—the one sardine (Cuba) which didn't get eaten. Neatly done and amusing enough, but not as imaginative or witty as the recent crop of Yugoslav cartoons, for example.

By the end of 1961, ICAIC will have completed four feature films, of which I saw three. None of them was as strong, as new, as the best of the documentary shorts. This isn't surprising; Lenin said, in a 1922 interview with the Education Commissar, that the production of new films permeated with Communist ideas, reflecting Soviet actuality, must begin with newsreels—the time to *make* such films had not yet arrived. Unlike most of the documentaries, Cuba's new features show a hangover of bad aesthetics from the past. *Cuba Baila (Cuba Dances),* directed by Julio García Espinosa, was conceived back in 1954 as a four-part social satire with its punches pulled to get by Batista's censors. Eventually, one of the four episodes was expanded and became the entire picture: a lower-middle-class mother wants an elegant party for her daughter's fifteenth birthday which the father, a timid office-worker, cannot afford. One hour of family arguments and frustrated social-climbing later, the party takes place in a public park with free music, beer, and everyone but the mother having a fine time. Scenes of lower-class, authentically Cuban music and dance are contrasted to the American-style jitterbugging of rich, snobbish teen-agers. The best piece of satire is a politician's rally, where a local band is hired to bring out an "enthusiastic" crowd; the dancing mob gets out of hand, police come with hoses and the politician finds himself alone, wet and bedraggled. *Cuba Baila* was edited and released after Batista's overthrow, and shown at the 1961 Locarno festival, the first Cuban film ever in competition at an "A" Western film festival. Its satire seems fuzzy today, as García Espinosa is the first to admit. In terms of filmmaking, *Cuba Baila* is also half-baked: its satirical elements are expressed through the stilted dialogue and unimaginative camerawork of prerevolutionary work. But it has interest as a transition piece, and the swiftly paced rally scene together with some lively dance sequences showed what the new directors could do.

Historias de la Revolución, directed by Gutiérrez Alea, was actually premiered before *Cuba Baila*—at the end of 1960—but it follows that film in terms of ICAIC's development. Divided into three parts, the first episode, "The Wounded One," deals with events following the March, 1957, attack on Batista at the presidential palace. A wounded underground fighter takes refuge in the home of a middle-class couple. Through the husband's fear, his wife together with the rebel are trapped and shot,

CUBA BAILA

while he himself escapes. The second sequence, "Rebels—Sierra Maestra 1958," moves to the mountains where a group of bearded revolutionaries is under attack; one falls wounded and the others react in various ways to being caught there by his immobility. He finally dies conveniently and—after a moment of respectful silence—the rebels march on as guns blast around them. It is only in the third part, "The Battle of Santa Clara" (which ended the revolution), that *Historias* swings. The attack on a tank, street fighting with Molotov cocktails, and the rebels' successful assault on a train full of Batista's soldiers are superbly filmed. Unfortunately, there's a second half to this part: a sniper suddenly appears and kills one of the rebels; then comes a very conventional pursuit scene, with a sentimental ending as the rebel's sweetheart finds him dead. All in all, *Historias* —which won a special prize at the 1961 Moscow festival—is decently done but certainly not the great film of the revolution. Part I moves slowly and stiffly, with actors who seem to have one expression each. Part II has some great faces among the rebels and could have been quietly moving but instead it's just tepid—too predictable, too many clichés. A number of difficulties plagued *Historias:* of the five episodes originally shot, two had to be eliminated; also, four cameramen of varying skill were used, including Otelo Martelli (Fellini's photographer) whose participation apparently did not work out well.

Summer, 1961, saw the release of *Realengo 18* (the title refers to a certain tract of land in Oriente province). Its director, Oscar Torres—working in collaboration with Eduardo Manet—had previously made one of the few documentaries with a story line: *Tierra Olvidada (Forgotten Land),* another film about the Ciénaga de Zapata *carboneros.* It had a dramatic opening, some beautiful photography and good cutting, but the story—of a man taking his wife, who is in labor, to a midwife—got lost amidst flashbacks. *Realengo 18* tells about an uprising of *guajiros* against an American-run company's attempt to seize their land. Tete Vergara, a dynamic Negro actress, plays the mother of a young man who tires of their hard life on the land, joins the army and later returns as a soldier to throw out his own people. Small, dark, cheerful, talkative, the mother Dominga cannot be shaken—neither by the arrogant American drinking his Hiram Walker whiskey (a predictable stereotype) nor the Cuban soldiers who come on horseback to evict her. This climax scene is an exciting and untypical bit of Eisenstein: the soldiers ride toward the ridge of a hill where the now-armed farmers stand in a long, unwavering line. They walk their horses forward slowly as the *guajiros* begin to move down the hillside, making beautiful patterns of mass movement. The soldiers lose their nerve; the son remains with them despite his mother's plea, but she finds consolation in her love of the land and the film closes as she stands in the sunlight fingering a coffee plant.

Realengo 18 has a lack of studio artificiality, a convincing naturalness that make it the best feature released as of this fall. Tete Vergara's performance is appealing and truthful, the first notable acting in an ICAIC picture. On the other hand, there is a very Hollywoodish opening in which "the *Realengo 18* song" (it could have been *Exodus,* or maybe the unwritten *Mila 18* song) booms over the sound track. The Cuban landscape photography is stunning in itself, but sometimes too lush for the picture as a whole. Basically, these faults exist because the conflict of mother and son doesn't mesh with the epic struggle of farmers and soldiers. *Realengo 18* bumps its head against the problem of expressing social drama through character relationships, a problem that may hound ICAIC's directors in their future work.

The fourth feature completed in Cuba, *El Joven Rebelde (The Young Rebel)* was directed by Julio García Espinosa, with screenplay by Cesare Zavattini. It tells the story of a youth who goes to the mountains with the military organization known as *Jovenes Rebeldes* as an adventurer rather than in a spirit of service.

The film traces his change of attitude, including his growth of affection for a Negro soldier whom he first regards with prejudice. García Espinosa emphasized that this film tells a personal story, of individual character evolution. Without having seen the film (it was still being edited when I was there in September) I suspect it will confirm a trend towards films which aim to combine revolutionary content and popular appeal. Whether it resolves the problem of *Realengo 18* mentioned above remains to be seen.

A number of foreign directors have been drawn to Cuba by the revolution and have made films dealing with it. The best-known of these are two 40-minute pictures by the Dutch documentary-maker, Joris Ivens. His *Pueblo Armado,* about militia training and counter-revolutionary fighting in the Escambray Mountains, has fine photography and excitement in the battle sequences. Unfortunately, it falls into two repetitive parts. *Carnet de Viaje* is a sort of travelogue of revolutionary Cuba, with no special interest outside of its subject matter. The French director Chris Marker also made a one-hour documentary about the revolution (which has, incidentally, been banned in France). Zavattini has worked in Cuba several times and other European directors such as Antonioni and Resnais have been asked to come.

If and when they do, they will find remarkable facilities at their disposal. A huge new "film city" is being completed, worthy of Cecil B. DeMille: 600,000 square meters in size, with three shooting studios, sound studios, two lab buildings (one for color, one for black-and-white), office buildings for ICAIC personnel, employee housing, cafeteria, guest cottages for visiting foreign artists, library, artificial lakes, and so forth. It will be the largest film production center in Latin America. In 1962, ICAIC plans to make 10 feature films and about 50 documentaries; they will also do films for children, including marionette films, and continue with the *Enciclopedia Popular*—a series of educational films for commercial showing on any subject from fishing to the Sacco Vanzetti case.

With only four features completed to date—and each unlike the other—it is too early to see any clear trends or to predict the future direction of Cuban film-making. But I'll venture a few generalizations. In the first place, the new pictures reflect a fact which holds true for everything about revolutionary Cuba: this is a socialist state, but it is also (1) a Latin country and (2) much influenced by the United States. *Cuba Baila* and *Historias* contain some typical weaknesses of Latin-American production: hackneyed plots, stilted dialogue, static camerawork (not in the Cuban fighting scenes, of course)—all adding up to a deadening style that might be called "Mexico City Bourgeois." Anyone who remembers the stiffly polite parlor talk in Buñuel's *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz* will know what I mean. The vitality and realism of *Realengo 18* indicate that the Cubans are aware of this, intend to move away from it. Cuba's films could be a shot in the arm to Spanish-language production elsewhere in this hemisphere; their distribution will obviously be governed by political considerations, however.

The Latin-American orientation of Cuba is also a reason why film-making there does not seem likely to resemble work from the early postrevolutionary years in Russia. While watching *Realengo 18,* I kept thinking what a great (and very different) film Eisenstein or Dov-

EL JOVEN REBELDE

zhenko would have made out of the farmers' uprising. Only that hilltop scene shows any Eisenstein influence—in fact this was the only sign of it in all the Cuban films I saw. Their scale is the single human being or small group rather than the masses; Russian-style grandeur is not for the Cubans. But then this is not Russia. Of the various Communist nationalities with whom the Cubans have had most contact, it is the sociable, Western-oriented Czechs rather than the Russians whom they seem to find most *simpático*. If anything, production under Castro promises to be closest in content and style to the films of East European countries such as Yugoslavia. Recent Yugoslav work, like Cuba's, derives its strength from subject matter: partisan fighting, the concentration camps of World War II. In both, action sequences are handled better than character relationships, battles better than dialogue. Both are stylistically conservative and both tend toward plot clichés. However, at least one Yugoslav film has been made under New Wave influence by a director who worked with Claude Chabrol in Paris; there seems to be an openmindedness toward Western movements which exists in Cuba too, although it has not yet shown in any of their films. The propaganda element in Yugoslavia's features (at least those exported) is unobtrusive; Cuba's films also seem likely to move toward more subtle ideological content.

In the years following the Russian revolution, film was the only art form on which Lenin asserted his views. He said, "of all the arts, for us the cinema is the most important." Fidel Castro made a similar statement last June when affirming the government's right to control film production and distribution, including the right of censorship. "Among the forms of artistic expression," he said, "some have greater importance than others with regard to the ideological education of the people. No one can deny that one of the most important is film, together with television." In all the arts except film, there has been a remarkable lack of bureaucracy and control under the Cuban revolution. At the Congress of Writers and Artists held last August, a nondogmatic policy was set; no one demanded social realism or condemned jazz. In Russia also, during the early postrevolution years, art was wide open. But whereas this tolerance included film in Russia, production in Cuba has always been under tight control because the revolution itself created the industry.

ICAIC's magazine, *Cine Cubano*, reveals the principles underlying this control. In several articles, Alfredo Guevara, director of ICAIC, takes this position: "We work for the people. They inspire us. They are our critics . . . the snobs, the aesthetes of the 'little magazines,' the Greenwich Village generation—they used to be the public. They are not our public." But films must not only aim to be understood by the people, Guevara adds, they should also raise the people's level of appreciation. "In making or analyzing a work of art, we cannot ignore its historical, economic, social, and ideological context; our work is closely tied to the defense of the Revolution. We cannot be neutral. But if we reject neutralism, neither do we advocate an official culture . . . the Revolution as a theme in films is not propagandistic nor superficial; it is life itself. That is why it is our theme—varied, complex, rich . . . the best artist will be the most poetic; the best will be he who expresses himself best and most profoundly, who uses film in the least explicit and most artistic way." Julio García Espinosa, a tough-minded, cigar-smoking extrovert, echoes Guevara in *Cine Cubano* when he rejects the "decadent bourgeois approach to film in which form and content are separated." Critic, artist, and public should form an interrelationship from which all three will evolve, always keeping in mind that the people form the foundation.

Despite Guevara's demand for artistry, ICAIC's policy inevitably places politics first and aesthetics second. In a *Cine Cubano* article entitled "The New Wave of Non-Conformist American Films" (covering *Shadows, Pull My Daisy*, Morris Engel, Lionel Rogosin, Jonas

Mekas, and so forth), Rogosin was considered "the most interesting" director of this group, certainly because of his social content. Guevara has also stated that the French New Wave, English "Free Cinema" and the New York group are advanced in some ways and always interesting in terms of method, but "less progressive and not as dogmatically acceptable" in Cuba. Gutiérrez Alea, discussing "Free Cinema and Objectivity," acknowledges that this school is important as an anticonformist, liberating force; that when used well, its techniques can provide a closer approach to reality. But he affirms that there is no such thing as pure objectivity because the artist is always making choices in what he selects to use from "reality." He has a responsibility not to "falsify" reality by representing only certain aspects of it. For Gutiérrez Alea, Free Cinema is not *the* new cinema; movies will continue to be produced using studios, sets, scripts. "Free Cinema is only a new step, in one particular direction, with its great merits and its great dangers." Although ICAIC people have ideological reservations about these movements, they don't cultivate the fanaticism of one magazine writer who said *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* "could have been a hymn to peaceful coexistence but was transformed into an unconscious justification of fascism and the exaltation of a nymphomaniac collaborationist . . . the New Wave is full of decadent ideas and its directors are no more than a group of young middle-class Frenchmen." There is no curtain on Western movies, and the island's 500 theaters show a wide variety of work from France and Italy as well as the East European countries and Russia. *L'Avventura, 400 Blows,* and *Moderato Cantabile* were playing in Havana when I was there, along with Brigitte Bardot, *Private Property,* and an old Rock Hudson picture. New American films are not being shown commercially; there is no way the Cubans can pay for them at present. However, García Espinosa said in a *Variety* interview that they would still like to get "Yank pix." He also expressed interest in seeing recent New York work, particularly Robert Frank's *Sin of Jesus* and Jonas Mekas' *Guns of the Trees.* ICAIC people have seen and been impressed by Ricky Leacock's documentary *Primary;* according to García Espinosa, ICAIC is trying to obtain from Switzerland the same kind of portable, synchronized sound equipment which gave that film its unusual immediacy and naturalness.

Some experiments in "free cinema" have been made in Cuba, outside of the ICAIC. One, shown only on TV, which ICAIC did not control at the time, is an 18-minute, 35mm documentary of lower-class Cuban night life, shot on a couple of Saturday nights last winter by two young directors (Saba Cabrera Infante and Orlando Jimenez) for less than $150. Entitled *P.M.,* the film goes on a tour of Havana bars where women dance in tight skirts, men get drunk, old ladies watch—nothing revolutionary here. The mood is not one of degradation, however, largely because of the vitality in the people and the music to which they move. *P.M.* was highly praised by critic Nestor Almendros, who has written in *Film Culture* (No. 20), made several experimental, apolitical films himself—two of them in New York in the late 1950's—and leads the "free cinema" group. These directors have not worked within the ICAIC set-up; *P.M.,* in fact, was denied approval for a commercial booking. As the revolution grows more secure and mature, I hope that ICAIC will take a more liberal attitude toward such experiments.

Cuba's film industry should, in the near future, become one of her main riches. With the new "film city," ICAIC need not rely so much on archive material and can spread its wings technically. This won't necessarily mean better pictures; it was the post-victory enthusiasm of 1959-1960 which made those first documentaries so exciting and fresh. When a Cuban magazine article describes proudly how the film city will have a barrier of trees around it to keep out all sound, I begin to wonder if the need to improvise in the early days may not seem an asset in retrospect. Besides the curse of bigness, there is another potential danger.

To propagate the revolution and its values will continue to be ICAIC's prime function. This means government control, the rejection of ideologically unacceptable work, by men who are often not artists but politicians. For those who reject all censorship, this is a disagreeable fact of life about Cuban production. It need not prevent the making of good films, as has been proven in Poland and other Communist countries. Film-making everywhere demands compromises, under capitalist as well as socialist regimes. Whether a man is working in Hollywood or Havana, whether he must placate the cash register or the bureaucrats, his art is under pressure. It is the degree of pressure, the severity of government control, which will matter in Cuba. If the atmosphere becomes too rigid, the best men will stop working or go elsewhere, and only the hacks remain. It is no accident that in the Soviet Union, the most fruitful years of production have coincided with periods of relatively mild censorship. Internal politics together with Cuba's external security—as I write, everyone there expects a second invasion this winter — will determine how much latitude ICAIC allows its directors.

Cuban cultural leaders, and Castro himself, have repeatedly emphasized that there is no question of the artist having complete freedom of form; only content must be controlled. As any artist knows (and the Marxists themselves maintain), form and content cannot really be separated. But the fact that ICAIC is apparently receptive to new techniques from abroad, that recent Western films are shown at the big theaters and discussed in ICAIC-sponsored meetings, are encouraging signs. As long as this door remains open, it seems unlikely that Cuba is headed for the Zhdanovism which stultified Russian production.

Beyond the problem of creative freedom is the question of whether any first-class artists exist in Cuba. At present, there are no giants visible on the scene but a number of talented film-makers. Their accomplishment in a few hectic years is one of the most exciting developments on the international film scene.

Film Reviews

IN GENERAL RELEASE

TOO LATE BLUES

Director: John Cassavetes. Producer: Martin Rackin. Paramount. Photography: Lionel Lindon. Music: David Raksin. With Bobby Darin, Stella Stevens, Everett Chambers.

Ever since the success of Dorothy Baker's novel, *Young Man with a Horn*, when jazz musicians became acceptable heroes in modern literature, the American cinema has occasionally tried to move into the nocturnal world of jazzmen, but with extremely limited success. The Warner Brothers studios has provided the most interesting experiments in jazz films from Hollywood, most notably Litvak's *Blues In The Night* (1941), Curtiz' *Young Man With a Horn* (1950), and Webb's *Pete Kelly's Blues* (1955). In each of these films, white musicians formed the center of the dramas, and the styles have run toward picaresque gangster melodrama, including such familiar stereotypes as the seductive *femme fatale;* the jazz-impelled, neurotic hero; and the Negro jazz-philosopher, imparting the spirit of his music to an eager white youth. A further study of these three films reveals that the standard pattern of approach to the problems of jazz musicians has always been on a purely mythological level. The very fact that Negroes figure very minimally in these works indicates the limited awarenesses of the directors, writers, and actors concerning the milieu in which they were supposed to be involved.

It is therefore, quite interesting to discover in John Cassavetes' new film, *Too Late Blues*, a truly challenging Hollywood film, giving an unusual interpretation of a group of white jazz musicians in Los Angeles. It is still not *the* jazz film for which we have all been waiting, but

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more than its predecessors it reveals with authenticity the awkward, nonintellectual passions and weaknesses of people who make a living out of playing jazz music. It explores character with more depth and sincerity than any of the preceding films, and in the screenplay Cassavetes and his collaborator, Richard Carr, have managed to capture the argot—swift, hardboiled, and sometimes poetic—of music-making hipsters without a cause. It is a very strange and exciting film to come from a major Hollywood studio.

Cassavetes' cast is an odd one, too. The teen-age idol and singer Bobby Darin was "impressed" aboard the production as part of a studio deal and Stella Stevens, a contract player, with only a comedy role in *Li'l Abner* as experience, was forced into the film. Cassavetes was permitted to choose the rest of the players, and what results is one of those miracles that is part of the tradition of the cinema.

In the role of a jazz pianist, "Ghost" Wakefield, Darin loses his more obnoxious mannerisms and *becomes* the personification of the hipster-in-search-of-himself. His youthful appearance and self-confident manner are the perfect instruments for convincing the audience of the tragedy within the story, for these are just the correct emblems of self-delusion and contagious reassurance which affect and entrap those who live around and depend upon such a person. Ghost inspires the members of his quintet to such a high degree that they never suspect that he is a moral and physical coward. The pianist's love affair with a beautiful and helpless singer, Jess Polanski (Stella Stevens) temporarily molds the group into a tightly knit, affectionate combination, but the mood of the film changes abruptly after a fight sequence in which a menacing bully, Tommy Sheehan (Vince Edwards), publicly exposes Ghost's tragic flaw. Ashamed, Ghost flees from Jess and his group and becomes the kept man of a wealthy woman. A year later, he returns to find Jess a prostitute and his group working in a cheap dance club. Although he prevents Jess from committing suicide, one is left wondering if Ghost can rebuild the hopes and artistic dreams of the people he loved and deserted.

In *Too Late Blues,* Cassavetes worked with a specific shooting script, but he still managed to endow his film with an unobstrusive air of improvisation, especially in two sequences. First, a baseball game is played with some youngsters in the park, a daytime exploit in which the musicians, all agrumble and anti-Nature, suddenly find themselves. Cassavetes turns this sunny episode into a light-hearted, unsquare fantasy, exemplifying more than anything else, the incongrous impulses of Ghost and the childlike loyalty of Jess and the rest of the group toward his desires. Secondly, there is the long, brilliant sequence in the poolroom, when Sheehan is goaded toward provoking a fight with the musicians. The interaction of performers, fluidly moving, subtle camerawork (by Lionel Lindón) and interweaving sound of cue balls, clinking glasses, and conversation, the sudden whisperings and close-ups of Sheehan and his provocant, Benny (Everett Chambers)—these create a stunning visual progress from euphoria to gloom. It is the single sequence in *Too Late Blues* that most exhibits Cassavetes' flashbulb imagination and feeling for cinematic drama, and from this moment on, the film's tone shifts toward tragedy. The image of Ghost completely yielding to Sheehan's hammerlock hold is a painful shock to the characters in the film as well as to the spectator; the tradition of the screen hero-as-coward has heretofore been much too Conradian for Hollywood producers, making his appearance in this film totally unexpected.

Fortunately, despite the early perplexities of the film (one is not really certain about Ghost's motivations or personality from the outset, yet this is deliberately part of the scriptwriters' intentions), *Too Late Blues* holds one with its contrasting atmospheres of footloose jazz characters, playing in such disparate places as Negro orphanages, blind people's homes, and municipal parks. The contrast between the musical reactions of the children

and the blind is particularly effective: the former's sensory, unabashed responses to rhythm, snapping their fingers in unison, bodies swaying, and then, a calm, blues-serenity enveloping the sightless people, responding with self-contained joy from their listening dark.

There are several strong performances from supporting players, notably Everett Chambers as Benny, the misanthropic publicity agent. His portrayal of an ex-musician who has only contempt for musicians is subtly cruel and filled with nuances of disillusionment that go beyond the demands of the script. Chambers is a *visual* performer and seldom has an actor managed to delineate in such detail the fearful workings of jealousy and moralistic outrage over immoral behavior. He defines the man who has never "made it" sexually without acting like a cad, and every sequence in which Chambers appears touches the film with dark genius.

Marilyn Clark as the "Countess," a wealthy but bored patroness of physically comforting jazzmen, also manages to round out Ghost Wakefield's downfall in a backstage episode of stinging insults and recriminations, while Val Avery and Mario Gallo are superbly satirical and true as a recording executive and his engineer. As for the men in Ghost's group, each actor succeeds in stamping his role with a specific personality: Cliff Carnel's shampoo-ad handsomeness is dominated by an aggressively philosophical ability to play the role of jazz-humanist ("These cats don't understand tough scenes," as he puts it) and Seymour Cassel, Richard Chambers, and Bill Stafford exhibit hip, good-natured responses to disappointments, their youthful, cynical faces reflecting apprehensive hope.

Too Late Blues is a tightly intimate film. One feels closed in with these people, so that the baseball sequence is like a breakthrough into light and fresh air. The relationship between Ghost and Jess is flawed in a seduction sequence, when (and perhaps the studio or censors are responsible) Ghost refuses Jess' proposition with some excuse and leaves her apartment, a totally incredible act and out-of-keeping with Ghost's character. Also, the final sequence, following Jess' unsuccessful suicide-attempt, leaves the story on an oddly ambiguous level of meaning which *can* be figured out by less sluggish (and rarer) audiences.

This is, of course, Cassavetes' first Hollywood film, and one occasionally senses his tense handling of difficult moments, like the ending, but excitements dominate the work. It is a very good beginning, and finally, through Stella Stevens' poignant performance as Jess, and the blues-mood score by David Raksin, Cassavetes succeeds in presenting a moving love-story of life among the jazz people, full of crowded, interracial parties and artistic insecurity. Perhaps, too, here and there throughout the film, the director, seeking to uncover the hearts of his characters, has partially exposed their agonized souls.

—ALBERT JOHNSON

JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG

Produced and directed by Stanley Kramer. Script: Abby Mann, from his original television script. Music: Ernest Gold. With Spencer Tracy, Burt Lancaster, Montgomery Clift, Marlene Dietrich, Judy Garland.

It all depends what level of reality (or unreality) you're prepared to accept. Apparently Stanley Kramer can accept an All-Star Concentration Camp Drama, with Special Guest Victim Appearances. He doesn't seem to feel, either, that a glimpse of the real thing might lessen whatever fictional illusion he's created, because in the middle of a stellar courtroom scene he shows those famous, hideous documentary shots of Belsen and Dachau—army bulldozers plowing their way through misshapen corpses that look like human driftwood —and then cuts to Richard Widmark, who plays the American officer prosecuting a group of German judges on trial as legal accomplices to Nazi Germany's "crimes against humanity."

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In *On the Beach*, the idea of Ava Gardner as the last survivor of a nuclear war was perhaps no more than improbable. In *Judgment at*

Nuremberg, though, the method approaches a crime against humanity. No doubt Kramer's intentions are "good." As a producer he was responsible for some adventurous and interesting films, and as a producer-director he has invariably tackled "important" subjects. Socially and politically, he has an admirable kind of courage, because he never shirks issues. Unfortunately, the human terms in which he dramatizes these issues are so inadequate that one can't help wishing the films had never been made.

Abby Mann's original *Judgment at Nuremberg* was a television drama shown on Playhouse 90 about two years ago. It was a sober, compressed, at times gripping piece of work with some brilliant acting—Claude Rains in the part now played by Spencer Tracy, Paul Lukas as the German judge here impersonated by Burt Lancaster, and Maximilien Schell as the young German defense lawyer, the only actor retained for the film. It was also a split-level show. One story was of the American judge and his interior struggle to come to a just decision in the face of various pressures. Another tried to create suspense out of whether a few individual witnesses (the young man who had been sterilized, the girl imprisoned for sleeping with a middle-aged Jew) were telling the whole truth. A third explored the irony of the trials themselves, starting as they did on a note of high moral outrage which had later to be soft-pedaled, as the first Berlin crisis dictated a softer Allied policy toward Germany. Not surprisingly, in a program of less than ninety minutes, some of the characterizations seemed a little thin; but for much of the time the show worked as dramatic journalism.

The film, adapted by Mann himself, runs nearly twice as long—it's intermission length. Unfortunately this extra time has not been used to advantage. It inflates without deepening what was already there, and introduces a near-ludicrous new character, the widow of a German general, played by Marlene Dietrich. She tries to convince the American judge that there are good Germans as well as brutal ones, and takes him to a piano recital she's sponsored to prove it. (If a capacity audience was what she was after, presumably she succeeds.) She also drifts through the ruins of Nuremberg in Jean Louis gowns, sings a snatch of *Lili Marlene*, and makes an unexpected courtroom appearance when the verdicts are announced, in a stylized costume worthy of a classic von Sternberg picture. Dietrich, like Judy Garland —who plays the girl accused of race-pollution by sleeping with a Jew—is a marvelous show-business personality, but both these great talents are sadly misplaced here. Not only are they nonrealistic performers in a supposedly realistic drama, but as a German and an American each required to play a German, they symbolize the mish-mashed casting. The only Germans, or Swiss-Germans, who play Germans, are Dietrich and Maximilien Schell; otherwise there is Burt Lancaster as the chief German judge, Montgomery Clift and Garland as victims, which leaves only Widmark and Spencer Tracy as Americans playing Americans. Clift gives an extraordinary, almost nakedly painful performance which suffers only from the vaudeville atmosphere in which it's presented. Widmark is competent and Tracy is expert in his way, more that of an elderly homespun Capra hero than the intellectual presented by Rains. Schell, though he occasionally goes out of control, makes the most dynamic impact of all. Fanatical yet ambiguous, he is the film's most consistently interesting character.

The extended length, though, results in long stretches of boredom or lack of conviction. The dialogue seems endless. After the documentary shots of concentration camps are shown in court, Widmark is allowed a long harangue. He says all the right things about these horrors —the only trouble being that at such a moment there's nothing to say, and silence would have been far more eloquent than theatrical denunciation. And the footage devoted to establishing whether the sterilized young man was really mentally retarded, and whether the girl

really slept with the Jew, seems completely irrelevant. We all know that Nazi Germany imprisoned thousands of people on trumped-up charges and let them live or die under appalling conditions. Whether in these two cases there was a mite of justification or not, is beside the point.

The film is directed in a style one would call old-fashioned – "symbolic" links between scenes, like the cut from Germans banging down their beer mugs on a barroom table to the judge banging his gavel in court, elaborate and meaningless camera movements in the courtroom scenes in the doomed attempt to infuse "movement" into a static subject–were it not for the use of a fairly new invention, a ghastly zoom lens which allows camera movement to be done optically instead of on a dolly. Rossellini used it in *General Della Rovere*. It is recognizable by the disconcertingly sudden and lurching effect it produces. The camera seems to rush up to a face and stop only just in time–like an automobile accident narrowly avoided. Or it reels back and pulls up so suddenly, one finds oneself mentally listening for a screech of brakes.

Questions of technique and casting apart, when all the words are done–what is this film really about? The end title, a sardonically factual note superimposed over a shot of the American judge leaving the court, reminds us that none of the accused sentenced to life imprisonment at Nuremberg are still serving their terms. An irony of history, then? But if this irony is to emerge as more than a blank piece of information, if it's to make an impact in human terms, it has to be dramatized. Set against the dogged refusal of the American judge to compromise his own sense of justice, it could have made its bitter point. Oddly enough, at a moment when a bit of talk would be justified–when the judge is formally asked to lighten his sentences – the scene abruptly fades. There is no hint of the struggle that must have followed, of how he imposed his point of view. The other and more complex issue is, what sort of men were these four German judges who *did* compromise their own sense of justice? Throughout the trial they remain in a state of frozen melodramatic impassivity. Only at the end, in the confrontation scene between Tracy and Lancaster, when the latter has had his moment of guilt, do we get a hint. No more than a hint. The real exploration isn't there.

Faced with this large confusing monument, this cinematic Ozymandias, it would be agreeable to wish that some piece of it might be left standing. Alas. The more you look on it, the more you despair of doing so.

–Gavin Lambert

ODD OBSESSION

(Kagi) Directed by Kon Ichikawa. Screenplay: Natto Wada, Kenji Hasebe, and Ichikawa, from Junchiro Tanizaki's novel *Kagi (The Key)*. Photography: Kazuo Miyagawa. With Machiko Kyo (as the wife), Ganjiro Nakamura (the husband), Junko Kano (the daughter), and Tatsuya Nakadi (the intern). A Daiei film produced by Masaichi Nagata.

The *comédie noire* may be going out of fashion. When Ichikawa's film was shown at Cannes in 1960 only the Japanese visitors thought it funny, and their laughter was written off as being eccentric, or at best ill-mannered. Only later did the grudging admission appear that perhaps it was a comedy after all, of a very stylish sort, and the jury gave it a prize. Unfortunately for the American distributor (Ed Harrison), American audiences are proving as dense as the fashionable group at Cannes. They simply do not know that, or when, they are to laugh. This is puzzling, because it is not only an exceedingly well-made film, but also vastly entertaining, in a grisly sort of way.

The protagonist is an art fancier, past his prime, married to a beautiful woman many years his junior, for whom he still, ineffectively, lusts. His search for sustained potency has led him into a rather perilous series of injections which, his doctor warns him, are bad for his heart. He is encouraged to try some other, safer method, or simply to give in to his age. Rather than retire from the struggle, he encourages a rival, hoping that jealousy will give

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him increased ardor. For this honor he chooses his doctor's young intern, a handsome and rather stupid young man who is meanwhile having an affair with his daughter. The plan appears at first to work. The old man's virility is restored, although his daughter becomes increasingly displeased. Plainer than her mother, but no less passionate, she resents an arrangement which, in its way, pleases both her parents, but displaces her. After a time, her father overextends himself (he is, perhaps, encouraged to do so?) and dies. This seems to leave the field clear for the young intern to enjoy both his women, but that is not the way it is to be.

In outline this necessarily remains dubious as comic material. In the hands of any of a dozen Hollywood screenwriters and directors, with George Hamilton (or George Peppard) as the young intern, Sandra Dee as the girl, Ava Gardner (or Susan Hayward) as the wife and any of a dozen of the older character actors as the father, we can imagine the gloss and the vulgarity which would exclude all genuine character and humor. It is quite possible that the film's publicity will conceal from its potential audiences that it is not simply a Japanese film of the type of *Where The Boys Are*. When it was shown recently in Los Angeles it was announced in such a way as to promise titillation and perhaps perversion of a sensational sort. Mild perversion there is, of course. But the film is not at all sensational or salacious. It is concerned to show but not to "deal in" the prurience of the old man who is a bit of a *voyeur*—even with his own wife (he takes pictures of her asleep in the nude). It does not try to encourage *voyeurism* in its audience.

Drama sometimes deals with special cases. This is a special case. The sensualities of its characters are shown blandly, with humor rather than with any pornographic intention. Of course these sensualities are bizarre and exist in a hot-house atmosphere where there seems none of our usual concern with scruple.

This leads to some extremely well-written scenes—as for example when the daughter confronts her father with her determination to protect her own pleasure; and again when the intern, at their weekly rendezvous, shows her the pictures of her mother (which he had been given to develop). In both these scenes we see beneath the well-mannered restraint of the characters to the savagery, in the first case of anger and in the second of sexual pleasure, which lies not very far beneath the veneer. It must have been this skill to reveal feeling as much as Ichikawa's unusual choice of subject which encouraged the Cannes critics to divide a prize between *Kagi* and *L'Avventura*. Ichikawa never plays for obvious laughs, and is apparently content to draw us into his characters so that we can discover their absurdity. There are some quite outrageous visual gags, however, as in the old man's death scene. He has been lying in a coma for days but recovers enough to order his wife to undress before him. She does so and the camera begins to tilt slowly up from the floor. At what might be termed the critical moment Ichikawa cuts to a slow panning shot of flowing, rolling, mammalian hills, and then returns to Machiko Kyo's face. The old man dies content.

Tanizaki's novel has been published in the United States in an English version with the original title *The Key*. This is a reference to the key with which the old man, in the novel, locks away the diary in which he is recording these strange events. His wife also keeps a diary and he begins to suspect that she is reading his. At this point his entries become less reliable and a cat-and-mouse game develops between the two which gives the novel much of its structure and tone. In the film, not surprisingly, these diaries have been dropped. As a result, I suspect, the film is much less obvious than the novel. The film does not replace the literary device with a visual one; it uses its time to concentrate on the extremely bizarre situations which it develops. If it does this so subtly as to confuse, this is a pity, because it is finally as comedy that this film should be judged and enjoyed.—COLIN YOUNG

NOT YET IN RELEASE

VIRIDIANA

Director: Luis Bunuel. Production: Gustavo Alatriste. Script: Bunuel. Camera: Jose F. Aguayo. With Francisco Rabal, Silvia Pinal, Fernando Rey, Margarita Lozano, Victoria Zinny, Teresa Rabal.

It is curious that this extraordinary film was shown at Cannes as the official Spanish entry. Supposedly the Spanish government had agreed to let the great anarchist-blasphemist genius Luis Buñuel back home after thirty years of exile, to make a film proving that Franco is not all bad. Word has it that director-turned-producer Juan Bardem had shown the Spanish Film Office a very rough treatment, mild in tone, to get official approval for the project. Two days after the Cannes awards were announced, the government discharged the director of the Film Office, who had approved the treatment, and ordered a complete press blackout on the film. It is now a film without a country.

Viridiana might be called a black "musical" comedy. The titles come on over triumphant Handel. But as Buñuel is fond of saying, "This is not the best of all possible worlds." Viridiana, full of sweetness and light but intelligent and therefore very vulnerable, runs the gantlet of Buñuel's personal, powerful vision; and the vicious, cynical, corrupt world ruins her, to the tune of some of the loveliest music ever composed.

Viridiana is a young novice who leaves her convent to visit her widowed uncle for the last time before taking vows. He sees Viridiana as the reincarnation of his first wife, who died on their wedding night. He persuades her to put on his wife's wedding dress, drugs her coffee, and plans to rape her, but at the last minute restrains himself. The next day the uncle hangs himself.

In the next part of the film, Viridiana decides to atone for her uncle's life by turning part of his home into a hostel for beggars. In this she manages to irritate Jorge, the bastard son of her uncle, who has returned to manage the estate. The beggars are shown as particularly foul both in body and mind, and their disgusting behavior is recorded in great detail. One day both Viridiana and Jorge must go to the city, and the beggars break into the manor house to stage an orgy that has never been duplicated anywhere on the screen.

To the accompaniment of bits of the Mozart *Requiem* and the "Halleluia Chorus," they stuff themselves, loot and vandalize the house, finally turning on one another in a coda of sexual violence. The high point of this passage is reached in one of the most daring shots ever attempted on the screen. One of the beggars runs out in front of the dining table and asks the others to pose for a picture. The camera cuts to a shot of one beggar as the apostle Peter, while a cock crows twice in the background. With the crescendo opening of the Handel chorus, the camera jumps back to regard the entire table of drunken beggars, who have arranged themselves in exactly the same position as the disciples in Leonardo's "Last Supper." Buñuel freezes the shot just long enough to leave the viewer stunned and then returns to his orgy. The effect has to be experienced to be believed; no amount of description can recreate the sensation.

The orgy is ended by the sudden return of Jorge and Viridiana, and the rape of the heroine is prevented only by Jorge offering a large bribe to a beggar and the timely arrival of the police. The final section of the film begins with a card game between Jorge, the servant woman now his mistress, and Viridiana. Disillusioned and confused, she has at last come back to the real world. Jorge invites her to sit down, and the camera fades out on the three-handed card game. The stunning implications of this episode remind one of the best of Stroheim and Lubitsch.

No matter what one's reaction to the story, *Viridiana* is a major film. It is highly doubtful

that it will ever be shown again anywhere in its complete form. — DAVID STEWART HULL

SUMMER SKIN

(Piel de Verano) Director: Leopoldo Torre Nilsson. Script: Beatriz Guido, Torre Nilsson. Camera: Oscar Melli. Angel Film. With Alfredo Alcon, Graciela Borges, Franca Boni, Luciana Possamay, Juan Jones.

Summer Skin has something of the visual lucidity and grace of *L'Avventura,* though it lacks its immense assurance. It is visually a much more "open" work than *End of Innocence*; and it opens up, too, from the somewhat claustrophobic sexuality of that film, and others by Torre Nilsson, to the wider area explored by Antonioni: moral ambiguity, deception, the dark underside of pleasure and pain, the death of love.

Marcela, an upper-class Argentine girl, is introduced through a scene in which she wakes up, roams around her room, runs a bath which she forgets to take, and generally establishes herself as sensual, narcissistic, and somewhat hollow. (She is in the Monica Vitti line, but without Vitti's touching impulsiveness and soul.) She is asked by her grandmother to take care of the grandmother's lover's son during his dying days. He is a poetic young man who has been mad about Marcela since he was an obnoxious boy. The reward is to be a year in Paris and a Dior wardrobe. Marcela accepts—it will be better than studying.

Upon the young man's arrival, it appears that she develops a certain fondness for him. He is handsome in a nineteenth-century way, sensitive, extremely needy; her habitual coldness seems to soften; he asks her to make love on the beach, and she accepts; they return home with a hangdog air that appears to be the inevitable aftermath of sex in the Torre Nilsson —Beatriz Guido world. The affair continues, interrupted by occasional phone calls to the grandmother in Buenos Aires. The young man, going for a check-up with his doctors, finds that instead of the death to which he had resigned himself, he faces life; he says joyfully that now they can get married.

Marcela goes blank at this and turns on him. If she had borne some genuine affection toward him (since he was dying, it was safe) it now turns to rage; she tells him that she has only pretended to love him, that in reality she loathes him; she explains the Paris "deal." He goes into the house and shoots himself. In a final ironic scene, Marcela sits at dinner with grandmother and lover, who tell her how pleased they are with her. This is finally too much, and she rushes out to the elevator, in which she descends—as in a womb with iron bars, or like Don Giovanni through the trapdoor to hell.

The film thus depends heavily upon the acting of Graciela Borges, who plays Marcela. And she is not quite up to the challenge of the basically very exciting idea. The rich ambiguities introduced by the fact that the young man and the audience react to her behavior on the basis of different knowledge demand very highly controlled orchestration; for what is needed is "Ambiguity, yes; obscurity, no." Partly this may be a matter of cultural differences; it is not easy for us really to feel the Argentine Catholic pressures, which are doubtless an implicit butt of *Summer Skin*; the girl *seems* to have escaped them, but only into an emotional wasteland. The beach seduction scene thus verges on the grotesque (there is a lot of business with her hand, like Hedy's in *Ecstasy*, but it is not clear what is happening; in a previous encounter with his housekeeper, the young man proved impotent). The girl describes herself as a person of easy ways; but we do not learn whether this is, so to speak, warm promiscuity or hostile. Hence her appearance of affection for the young man is inscrutable—though one may certainly agree that, even if it was somewhat genuine, her outburst at the end is perfectly understandable.

In his next film Torre Nilsson says he will go back to a style visually more intricate and closed; it is the story of a prostitute who becomes fascinated with a small hole in the

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ceiling of her room. It appears that his exploration of sexuality thus may now take a somewhat sardonic turn.—ERNEST CALLENBACH

FILMS BY JEAN ROUCH

CHRONIQUE D'UN ETE: Produced by Argos Films. Directed by Jean Rouch, with the collaboration of Edgar Morin. Scenario, adaptation, and dialogue: Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin. Photography: A. Vignier, Raoul Coutard, M. Brault.
LA PYRAMIDE HUMAINE: Produced by Films de la Pleiade. Directed by Jean Rouch. Scenario and adaptation: Jean Rouch. Photography: Louis Miaille, Roger Morilliére.

Men hoeing the earth, pouring iron, gyrating in the dust of tribal dances are simply pictured. What goes on in their minds is not, and unless he has unique rapport and listens tirelessly to their talk it is hard for the social documentarian to report on the private values, attitudes, and beliefs of his farmers and foundry workers and primitive men.

This rapport, and a happy willingness to listen, has marked each of Jean Rouch's three major documentary films, *Moi, un Noir, La Pyramide Humaine,* and *Chronique d'un Été.*

Victims of chronic unemployment in a port on the Ivory Coast, the semi-urbanized Africans of *Moi, un Noir* sustained themselves by identifying with various heroes of the screen, and to report their world from the inside Rouch accepted "Edward G. Robinson" and "Dorothy Lamour" on their own terms, indulged their self-images, acquiesced in their private mythologies. Such permissiveness had obvious shortcomings. Like autobiography, it biased and concealed. (See *FQ,* Winter, 1959, "Going out to the Subject.") But it did win the hearty coöperation of people inclined to be suspicious and aloof, and the sort of unselfconscious performances which are offered when wretchedness is dignified by a compassionate concern. *Sight and Sound* suggested that *Moi, un Noir* was probably the first feature in which the African Negro had been allowed to speak for himself. It was. No one had thought him worth listening to before.

Listening comes naturally to Rouch, a social scientist trained to take notes. So does experiment. Arriving at the Ivory Coast capital to make a sociological study of race-relations in a mixed high school class, he found the two groups socially estranged, decided to use his camera as "a means of enquiry" and eventually produced *La Pyramide Humaine.*

The enquiry begins with Rouch outlining his plans to his students. He explains that they are to act out a story dramatizing what could happen if white and black students were to begin mixing socially. Each student will play himself; dialogue will be improvised. Before the watchful eye of the camera a party is organized, and a series of gatherings follow, highlighted by an evening of robustly erotic African dancing, at which the whites are predictably inept, and concluding with a trip to an abandoned wreck, a quarrel over a girl, and the partial alienation of the two groups once again.

Though spasmodically colorful, the action is unimportant. Parties, dances, excursions all serve as settings for what is mainly a psychological enquiry. It is less what his students do than what they think and feel that interests Rouch. And less what they do feel than what they might be encouraged to feel and to think in new circumstances. As the old estrangement weakens, tentative affections lead to various interracial pairings-off, the aloof Nadine, daughter of white officials, being drawn to the African Raymond. Rivalries set off arguments, arguments lead to group discussions, and each student is forced to examine, defend, and modify his racial ideas. The mutual understanding this brings about is partial, but genuine.

Thus the act of dramatic play changes the players. Make-believe remakes belief. One is reminded of Moreno's psychodrama, both by the method, and the wider social goal. Where Moreno seeks to break down the barriers isolating individuals, Rouch seeks to break down the barriers of race, and for both, the experimental injunction, "Let's assume," and the dramatic invitation, "Let's pretend," are synonymous.

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The enquiry begins with Rouch outlining his plans to his students. He explains that they are to act out a story dramatizing what could happen if white and black students were to begin mixing socially. Each student will play himself; dialogue will be improvised. Before the watchful eye of the camera a party is organized, and a series of gatherings follow, highlighted by an evening of robustly erotic African dancing, at which the whites are predictably inept, and concluding with a trip to an abandoned wreck, a quarrel over a girl, and the partial alienation of the two groups once again.

Though spasmodically colorful, the action is unimportant. Parties, dances, excursions all serve as settings for what is mainly a psychological enquiry. It is less what his students do than what they think and feel that interests Rouch. And less what they do feel than what they might be encouraged to feel and to think in new circumstances. As the old estrangement weakens, tentative affections lead to various interracial pairings-off, the aloof Nadine, daughter of white officials, being drawn to the African Raymond. Rivalries set off arguments, arguments lead to group discussions, and each student is forced to examine, defend, and modify his racial ideas. The mutual understanding this brings about is partial, but genuine.

Thus the act of dramatic play changes the players. Make-believe remakes belief. One is reminded of Moreno's psychodrama, both by the method, and the wider social goal. Where Moreno seeks to break down the barriers isolating individuals, Rouch seeks to break down the barriers of race, and for both, the experimental injunction, "Let's assume," and the dramatic invitation, "Let's pretend," are synonymous.

The foundations of *La Pyramide Humaine* consist of dialogues and discussion—artistically, an awkward base. Static talk was ever the failing of *drame à thèse*, and in *La Pyramide Humaine*, a kind of *drame à hypothèse*, this is not helped by the technical difficulty of photographing improvised dialogue, fresh and vital though it is. In *Moi, un Noir* this problem never arose. Shot silent, it was later given a spontaneous commentary by "Edward G. Robinson" as he watched himself performing on the screen. Sometimes the same method is tried in *La Pyramide Humaine*, but most of the time a sound camera was used, the talk is by people sitting still, and for minutes on end the camera listens and looks with a dogged, unbudging patience few audiences will share. For all its insight and revelation, after seeing the film one felt that if the unique intimacy of Rouch's material was not to be artistically nullified, and of little interest to the general public, something had to be done, either by way of camera work or editing, to assimilate his unwieldly lumps of talk.

Chronique d'un Été makes a largely successful attempt to do just this. With a mobile camera we follow a sociology student as she wanders through Paris asking passers-by, "Are you happy?" In themselves, the clutch of opinions offered might add up to nothing more than any TV report which samples the "public mind." As usual, it is the submerged, voiceless continent of private experience which interests Rouch; to explore it more deeply he charts the lives of a half dozen contrasting Parisians. The dramatic structure of day by day incident is relieved by sharp switches from one personality to the next; from a factory worker's cheerfully articulate contempt for his daily routine to the injured reticence of a refugee from the bohemian demi-monde; from the well-fed vapidity of a blonde in a bikini to the harrowed introspection of the sociology student herself, a leading figure in the film and still gauntly beautiful, ten years after escaping the death camps.

There's another sense in which the title mildly misleads. Rather more than a summer is chronicled. Remembered winters continually obtrude, and the meaning of present events derives from what we learn of each character's personal history. A quarrel between the sociology student and a friend is found to have roots in her own self-pitying immersion in the past. In this scene the girl and her friend perform with a naturalness beyond naturalism, the unforced expression of real anxieties. In another, reminiscent of *La Pyramide Humaine*, differing ages, races and cultures sit face to face at a table presided over by Rouch himself —on the one hand the sociology student, a Nazi cipher scarring her arm; on the other, a student from French West Africa.

Rouch asks the boy if he knows what the tattoed numbers mean. He does not. In a playfully innocent reply he pretends to mistake the number used to deny the girl's humanity for the number men use to express common human needs. It's her phone number, he suggests.

This is one of the few times when *Chronique d'un Été*, committed to the world of private experience, makes an explicitly political disclosure. Rouch's role in asking the question was here crucial. If much of what the film has to say is more private and limited it is because fertilizing contributions from outside are somewhat rare. The subjective point of view is the one consistently preferred.

Most of the revelatory talk occurs, not in group discussion, as in *La Pyramide Humaine*, but in private interviews held by Rouch's collaborator on *Chronique d'un Été*, Edgar Morin. Morin makes a congenial confessor, but hidden cameras are at least partly responsible for the confessional intimacy of these scenes. When the free-living bohémienne falters agonizingly through the memory of her past she presents one of the most complete and moving self-exposures ever seen. The long interrupted close-up which holds the screen is exactly right; a tight frame and sharp focus are all her halting eloquence requires.

Unlike the aching stasis of *La Pyramide Humaine*, motionless interviews are balanced by

CHRONIQUE D'UN ÉTE

an agile camera so smoothly handled it's not always easy to tell when, as is often the case, the equipment is hand-held. And if Rouch's way of animating soliloquy is orthodox (set the speaker walking, follow beside as she talks) the route for these perambulations has been chosen with care. Recalling a dark past, the sociology student walks alone at night through the empty streets of the city; then the camera slowly draws ahead, finally abandoning her amidst acres of chill, gleaming cobblestones, shadowed walls, and blackness.

Typically, Rouch brings his film to a close by inviting opinions once again—this time those of the people who took part in his chronicle just after they have seen it, for the first time, projected on the screen. Some charge him with abusing confidences. Others feel they have seen and heard "the truth." One woman declares, with scandalized propriety, that the promiscuous bohémienne is not a person she'd care to know. They are all of them, however, people Rouch cares to know; and if the Musée de l'Homme, which sponsored *Chronique d'un Été*, finds its assortment of opinions and characters valuable as scientific data, for Rouch they have other values, too. Science is not an end in itself. "We have tried, Morin and I, to find a new form of humanism," he has said. To men and women whom most documentary is content to display, to comment on, to interpret, he gives articulate self-expression; and as they testify we rediscover what "being human" means. — ROGER SANDALL

DAS WUNDER DES MALACHIAS

(The Miracle of Father Malachias) Directed by Bernard Wicki. Script: Heinz Pauck and Bernhard Wicki, from a novel by Bruce Marshall. Camera: Klaus von Rautenfeld. Music: Hans-Martin Majewski. Produced by Horst Lockau, UFA Filmhansa. With Horst Bollmann, Richard Muench, Guenter Pfitzmann, Brigitte Grothum, Karin Heubner.

Bernhard Wicki, a Swiss whose first film was *The Bridge*, won the Berlin Festival's Director's Prize for this picture; it is playing all over Germany to large and presumably uncomprehending audiences.

Uncomprehending, because it is one of those rare films which is directed against its audience. Father Malachias sucessfully performs his miracle (he has God move an offending nightclub, clientele intact, to a bare rock in the North Sea). Instantly, the smaller merchants set up their hot-dog stands on the hole where the nightclub was, then real estate value goes up as big money pours in to create a second Lourdes. Press and advertising get interested, and we are shown the resulting commercial carnival, a complete travesty of "the German way of life," yet with a horribly documented air, rather like *Ace in the Hole* or *A Face in the Crowd*.

There are Father Malachias dolls; the hand of God (holding the nightclub) in "guaranteed, pure 100% lard"; praying priests made out of *küchen*; "holy water" from the broken pipe, ripped when the nightclub was moved; the completely worthless heroine claims she saw angels and becomes a famous model, seen all

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over Germany on enormous posters reading: "Das Mädchen das das Wunder sah, fliegt in der Welt mit PAA."

Wicki used the novel simply as a pretext for an occasionally devastating and always brilliant exposé of national character after the "economic miracle," for his miracle is really the Wirstschaftswunder scaled down. He is simply not interested in the story (the film ends with studied irresolution) but rather in what the story allows him to show.

Postwar Germany is tragic, a divided country: one half starving, the other overfed to the point of bursting. One's sympathies are with the prosperous West—but it has become a bastion of smugness, a country almost completely corrupted by the highest standard of living in the world. And postwar German cinema has accurately portrayed these people: Romy Schneider and Liselotte Pulver, whipped cream romances, full color nonsense, as indigestable as Bavarian pastry and much worse for you.

Wicki's triumph, and it is considerable, is that like a few other directors he has turned satire upon this land of no values except monetary ones. His method of filming indicates his approach. He managed to get permission to film in the new skyscraper at Düsseldorf (the smuggest city since Chicago) and then stayed weeks later than he had agreed, simply to catch the resentment on people's faces; in Hamburg he had an enormous and elegant cocktail party given overlooking the docks, then shot in and around real people: the silly countess is actually played by a very silly countess, etc. For the finale (the nightclub reopens on its rock and all of fashionable Germany is there) he gave an enormous party and then filmed the details: sweating society ladies; the waitresses dressed as nuns, with slit skirts, in honor of the miracle; enormous robber barons with their cigars; sweet kept young things of both sexes threading the crowds; and he created an orgy which makes that of *La Dolce Vita* look prim indeed.

The film is made with such malevolent intent, and is so absolutely ruthless, that in the end it falls into propaganda and caricature. At the same time, however, the film is, naturally, fascinating, and disturbing (the Berlin Festival audience was most disturbed—made up as it was of the very people Wicki was pilloring), and this from Germany is news indeed. It is easily the best German film in the last decade.

—Donald Richie

Entertainments

R. M. HODGENS

Ada. Politics as a personal, romantic affair again, with a lethargic and confused Southern singing governor (Dean Martin) and a reformed prostitute (Susan Hayward) marrying, foiling a boss, and reforming a system. Reform candidates in one-party systems are always amusing, of course, and inadvertently the film almost suggests that amusing Northern refinement, the reformer who is actually the incumbent. But the attempt to make the incredible if well-matched couple likable has doomed the effort. Wilfred Hyde White as the boss, with a wonderfully wicked, barely audible chuckle for every other occasion, turns out to be far more likable, and his downfall seems lamentable. Daniel Mann directed.

Angel Baby. An evangelist (George Hamilton, who would not make a good preacher) cures a mute girl (Salome Jens, who wouldn't, either), and she joins his touring company until his viciously virtuous wife (Mercedes McCambridge, who preaches all the time) cries, "Lust! Lust!" and kicks her out. Angel Baby becomes innocently involved with a promoter who tricks her into faith healing; when the hero shows up to straighten her out, his wife appears to expose her, and all hell breaks loose. The jealous woman's accidental death makes room for the proper romantic match, which is suggested just after the disillusioned Angel Baby actually does heal a crippled boy. This last scene is unjustifiable, but until this point director Paul Wend-

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Blast of Silence. A murderer by contract follows his death-wish to its happy end. This film is ingenious enough to overcome its general familiarity and its insufficient budget, though there are a few scenes of static emptiness where the inexperience of the cast is painfully obvious. Unfortunately, a score that is too varied and too loud and a narration that strives for a few too many effects all its own prove more distracting than illuminating, and if the images win out over this soundtrack, the success is more often due to the excellence of Erich Kollmar's photography than to what has been photographed or how it has been edited. The narration, almost redeemed by its first and last comments, is addressed to the criminal hero, but he doesn't talk back. Allen Baron wrote and directed and plays the murderer, and deserves praise in all three capacities.

Blood and Roses is the most elegant and intelligent vampire film in decades, despite a few lines such as, "What do you make of those marks on her throat, Doctor?" This may not be saying much, but there is scarcely a shot of Claude Renoir's color photography that is not beautiful, and the story, framed and accompanied by that rarity, essential narration, has enough ambiguity to make the fantastic compelling by suggesting the psychological reasons for it. Director Roger Vadim has contrived some effects that are too effective for the point they carry, the psychology is not deep enough to make the final twist of plot a complete success, and some portions of the film have a very tentative air; but perhaps these characteristics were necessary to intensify the vague, dream-like disquiet, which finally turns into a climactic nightmare-sequence filmed in shocking black and white.

Claudelle Inglish. More of what Hollywood likes about the South. In this instance, there is no race question and the decadent rich are unaccountably ignored, but the sex question and the decadent poor make up the lack. The only aspect of the film that is easy to appreciate is director Gordon Douglass' like of close-ups.

The Hustler. A young pool shark (Paul Newman) challenges the champion (Jackie Gleason) and, in the course of about two and a quarter hours, is generally punished and specifically rewarded for his *hubris*. Under the straightforward direction of Robert Rossen, who produced and collaborated on the script with Sidney Carroll, a good cast creates a number of good characterizations that fail to develop as intended when the film approaches its conclusion. That failure, and a tendency to overexplain things in dialogue, and the length, and the CinemaScope, create that impression of great ponderosity that characterizes most serious films these days. It isn't in color, though.

Splendor in the Grass is a long film that treats familiar material as thoughly as possible. William Inge's novelistic screenplay concerns a nice girl and a good boy (Natalie Wood and Warren Beatty) who are dominated by Neanderthalish parents, fear, and ideals, and cannot manage to get together despite their inclination to do so. When he wants to, she protests; when she is ready, he says she's too "nice." She cracks up, he fails to apply himself at Yale, and the stock market crashes, but both manage to pull through. Meanwhile, balancing their example, his sister (Barbara Loden) goes to another extreme and meets her doom offscreen. Elia Kazan's direction heavily stresses the humiliation of it all; the cynic relief occasionally turns to cruel farce; the routine lack of communication is convincing only because the language of the cast sometimes resembles Greek and everything eventually begins to look a little dirty, an effect probably opposite the intention. The result of this highly subjective treatment of subjective, disorganized material, wherein the more extreme the hysteria and indignity of the young couple, the more expressionistically inhuman everyone else appears to be, is that one's reaction is liable to depend on one's age. An expensive none-under-16 advertising campaign has of course resulted in predominantly under-16 audiences; but even they laugh at unintended places.

King of Kings. An excruciating experience, partly because producer Samuel Bronston and writer Philip Yordan have just about ruined the story, partly because Nicholas Ray has directed some of the remaining bits of it so well that they leap out of context — scattered quotations from a great work in a wretched commentary. If one makes the usual allowances, Ray's spectacle is above average elsewhere, too; but spectacle is difficult to appreciate in this curious abortion. Next to Jesus, the most important character is Barab-

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The Secret Ways. The ways of this melodrama of espionage behind the Iron Curtain are fairly obvious, but it has been some time since we have had such an alarming score, such grotesque sets, such extraordinary faces, or so much running down dark, cobblestone streets toward such an astounding *deus ex machina.* Richard Widmark behaves uncomfortably like a Sinatra character at times, however, and this detracts from the total effect. Phil Karlson directed.

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Correspondence & Controversy

Spare a Thought for the Entertainers

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The ideas these articles present are, in summary:

(1) The cinema has to chose between being "an industry, a mass art," an entertainment *or* a means of "individual expression, a real art."

(2) Art is better than entertainment.

(3) Commercial films are "classic," clear, slow, big screen, Technicolor, dull.

(4) The cinema is in the hands of the entertainers. This is bad.

(5) "Experimental" films, unlike entertainments, are creative. (The word "experimental" in this context deserves always to be in derisive quotes.) They are art.

(6) The cinema should be more closely related to modern painting than to literature or the theater.

The most dangerous of these ideas is the presentation of art and entertainment or commerce as absolute antitheses. This persists in the subdivision of the reviews at the back of the magazine. Apart from the humor implicit in classing the woeful *Ferry to Hongkong* as an entertainment, the distinction is obviously undesirable. *Picnic on the Grass,* for example is above all magnificent entertainment – yet happily *FQ* deals with it seriously as "art," presumably because of Renoir's reputation. But the approach can easily lead to the dismissal of such obviously commercial efforts as *The Alamo, Exodus,* and *Psycho*—the latter perhaps intellectually the most complex and sophisticated film of the sixties. Certainly commercial

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The ideas these articles present are, in summary:

(1) The cinema has to chose between being "an industry, a mass art," an entertainment *or* a means of "individual expression, a real art."

(2) Art is better than entertainment.

(3) Commercial films are "classic," clear, slow, big screen, Technicolor, dull.

(4) The cinema is in the hands of the entertainers. This is bad.

(5) "Experimental" films, unlike entertainments, are creative. (The word "experimental" in this context deserves always to be in derisive quotes.) They are art.

(6) The cinema should be more closely related to modern painting than to literature or the theater.

The most dangerous of these ideas is the presentation of art and entertainment or commerce as absolute antitheses. This persists in the subdivision of the reviews at the back of the magazine. Apart from the humor implicit in classing the woeful *Ferry to Hongkong* as an entertainment, the distinction is obviously undesirable. *Picnic on the Grass,* for example is above all magnificent entertainment – yet happily *FQ* deals with it seriously as "art," presumably because of Renoir's reputation. But the approach can easily lead to the dismissal of such obviously commercial efforts as *The Alamo, Exodus,* and *Psycho*—the latter perhaps intellectually the most complex and sophisticated film of the sixties. Certainly commercial

considerations have resulted in the mutilation of work by Welles, Ray, and Aldrich—but this interference only matters when the director is talented. It is difficult to imagine that *The Connection* would have been worse if it had been made as an American-International B-feature. What *FQ* writers seem incapable of realizing is that pop-art and minority-art are not different in kind, but are at the ends of a continuum which includes *Sexpot Goes to College* as well as *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*. Both ends are important to the cinema and each can or should contribute to the other.

This is never likely to occur while the experimental film-makers equate good with "any kind of experimental, abstract, etc." In both articles it is implied that experimental films which search for new forms are better than those which work within accepted forms. If one pursued this argument for other media, one would be forced to insist that Joyce was a greater writer than Fitzgerald, or that Schoenberg was a better composer than Mahler, simply because they have pioneered new forms. In the cinema, this is even more ridiculous, because there do not seem to be any Joyces or Schoenbergs among the experimentalists. We know, too, that Resnais admires Samuel Fuller's *Run of the Arrow*. And Jean-Luc Godard has said, "The great film-makers always tie themselves down by complying with the rules of the game. I have not done so because I am just a minor film maker. Take, for example, the films of Howard Hawks, and in particular *Rio Bravo*. That is a work of extraordinary psychological insight and aesthetic perception, but Hawks has made his film so that the insight can pass unnoticed without disturbing an audience which has come to see a Western like all others. Hawks is the greater because he has succeeded in fitting all that he holds most dear into a well-worn subject."

But let us look at the commercial cinema from the experimental viewpoint—for its contributions toward the development of the medium. The final justification for the commercial cinema can come only from a consideration of the work of its best directors—Hitchcock, Ray, Sirk, Fuller, Cukor, etc., which would be outside the scope of this article. But a list of technical developments will at least indicate the indebtedness of the "creative boys" to the entertainers.

(1) Méliès and Griffith—I don't think I need to recapitulate what they did for the cinema. One was an illusionist using the cinema at first as a new gimmick for his trick show. And Griffith developed his techniques on the very commercial Biograph films.

(2) Sound – against great opposition from the avant-garde. Like most important technical developments, it was not an obstacle, but essential to the evolution of the medium. It filled a need—Dreyer would have preferred to make *The Passion of Joan of Arc* with sound.

(3) Color

(4) Deep Focus—Toland worked completely within the system.

(5) CinemaScope and wide screen. The arrival of CinemaScope, too, produced jeers from the intellectuals. But it represented a rejection of the ideas of static composition derived from painting. The techniques for handling it antedated its arrival—deep focus and movement within the frame had been used extensively by Wyler, Welles, Cukor and others in the 'forties. 'Scope now seems the obvious screen shape, particularly for intimate scenes where the relationships between the characters can be depicted more clearly than on a small screen where close-ups are necessary. With 'Scope it is possible to get close to more than one character at a time and so retain a greater awareness of their relative positions. It has greatly increased the possibilities of cinematic analysis of actions (Ray, Kazan, Vadim, and, on a 1.85-ratio wide screen, Antonioni).

All the advances made in the commercial cinema eventually reach the primitives who call themselves experimentalists. CinemaScope does not yet seem to have penetrated to experimental movies—but perhaps it is too

much to hope that film-makers who think in terms of painting with movement would realize the possibilities of 'Scope. (Incidentally, there is surely no reason why the cinema should have more to learn from painting than from narrative forms.)

As the commercial cinema has provided them with most of their tools, the experimental boys are hardly in a position to knock it, even less so when one looks at their own work. Of the films that have reached Britain, only *Geography of the Body, Third Avenue El,* and *Highway* have enough interest to keep even the most devoted viewer in his seat. *Highway* is in parts tremendously exciting. But the American experimentalists can hardly claim McLaren as one of their own (nor, for that matter Eames or William Klein, one of whose collaborators was Resnais). So the experimental manifesto is less propaganda for a worthwhile movement than callow self-advertisement. In attacking Hollywood, it is aiming at a target that has largely disappeared. The rest is compounded of platitude ("Consider what the film experimenter is about. He is dealing with the substance of our visual reality."), pomposity ("We are the true professionals,"), naïveté ("There is virtually no art of the film to be found in any formalised motion picture producing system,"), comedy (Carmen D'Avino on how to make an experimental film sounds like a sequel to a British comic movie, *The Rebel,* which tried to satirize modern art) and feelings of persecution ("Those who today are discovering what that art of the film to be found in any formalized accept inattention and even abuse"). This last I find particularly offensive. The whole tone of "The Cinema Delimina" is: "Look at us, we're martyrs." If they have to offer their own hardships as evidence of the importance of what they are doing, one can expect very little from them. And that is more than we seem to be getting. — IAN CAMERON

Interested readers are invited to peruse the articles in question, and to draw up their own distinctions that can be usefully applied in discussing the output of what is indeed an "entertainment industry." (The way this industry operates in practice will be explored in depth in our Spring issue, which will be almost entirely devoted to Hollywood.) Many terms grievously need clarification through intelligent use. Is "better" a word that should be banished from criticism? (Is an astonishingly bold, yet in some ways confused film like *Hiroshima* "better" than a film using conventional syntax with great polish, or is it more "interesting," more "suggestive," and what does *that* mean?) How do we really assess novelty? (Joyce is not a greater writer than Fitzgerald because he pioneered new forms, and *Gatsby* is to me a more moving work than *Ulysses*; but are not the artistic tasks he set himself more significant?) How do we deal with the comparative weight and scope of various genres—*Listen to Britain* versus *The Passion of Joan of Arc,* say? (Is "A sweet disorder in the dress," with its minute perfections, comparable in any way to *Paradise Lost,* with its elephantine ones?)

Besides these aesthetic categories, there are related social and economic ones. The business of an entertainment industry is to sell entertainment—or, to be vague enough to be realistic, anything that will get people past the box-office. Yet, within such an industry and on its periphery, there are always a few people who take the manufacture of entertainment relatively seriously, in one way or another—and no doubt they do lie on a continuum of some sort. And these men operate in a general cultural and social context inviting political distinctions of many kinds. (Is Fellini a Catholic artist? Is *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* a capitulation? How definably different is the "art-house" audience from the general film audience? What is the cultural significance of "the cinema of appearance"?)

We invite articles that explore such categories, in critical or biographical modes — analyzing and evaluating the works of directors in Hollywood or anywhere else. — ED.

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