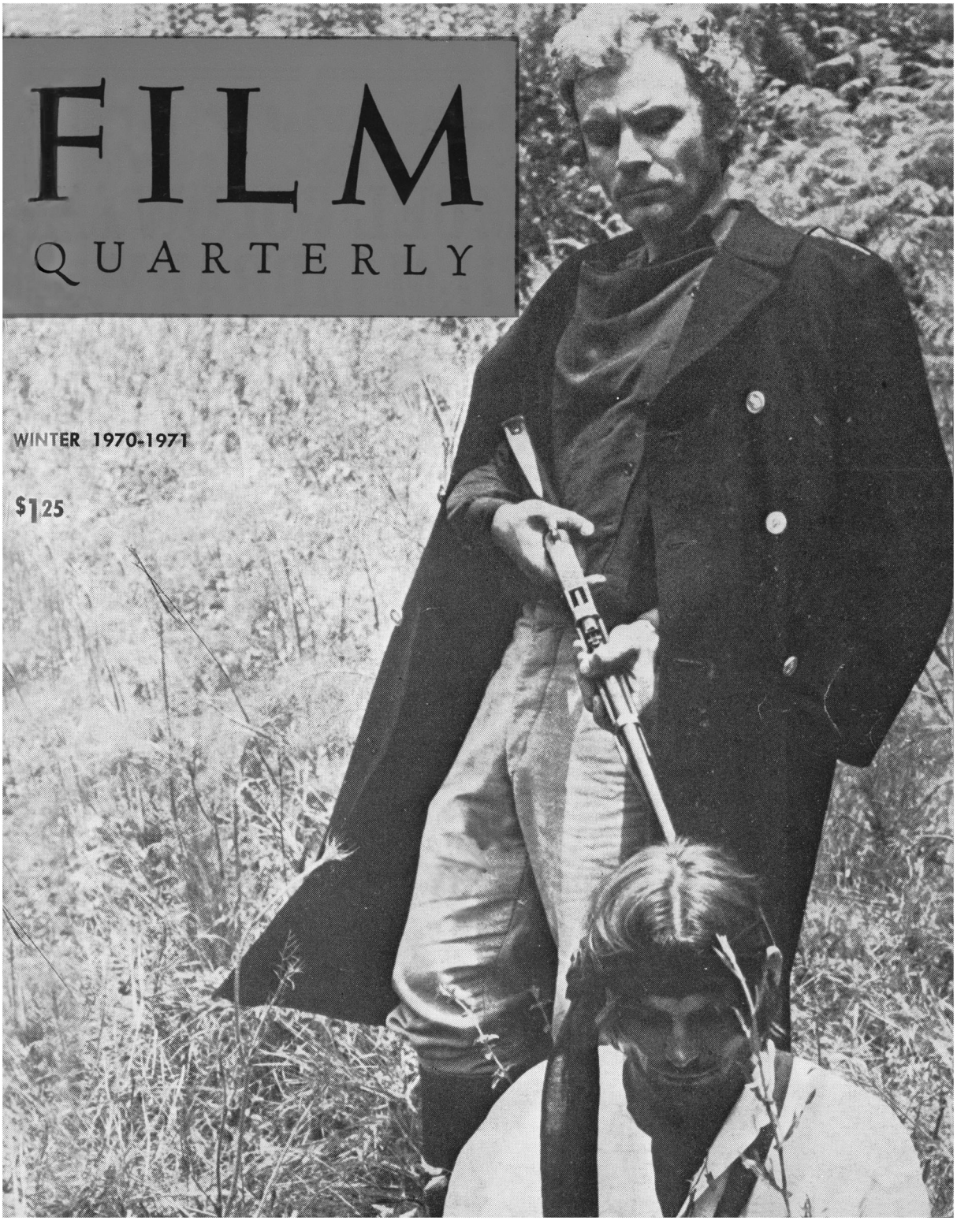
FILM QUARTERLY



WINTER 1970-1971

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Sidney Kingsley
Sinclair Lewis
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COVER: From Godard's *WIND FROM THE EAST*: the "ideological Western."

Editor's Notebook

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BRIAN HENDERSON

Toward a Non-Bourgeois Camera Style

Godard has developed a new camera style in his later period. Its prime element is a long, slow tracking shot that moves purely laterally—usually in one direction only (left to right or right to left), sometimes doubling back (left to right then right to left, right to left then left to right)—over a scene that does not itself move, or strictly speaking, that does not move in any relation to the camera's movement. Examples of this shot are the automobile trilogy or triptych: the backed-up highway of cars in *Weekend,* the wrecked cars piled up in *One Plus One,* and the auto assembly line in *British Sounds;* most of the studio scenes with the Stones in *One Plus One;* several of the guerilla scenes in *Weekend* ("I salute you, old ocean"); and the shot of the University of Nanterre and environs in *La Chinoise.* Before we consider this shot as part of a stylistic complex and in the various contexts in which it appears, we must consider the shot in itself—its structure and implications as shot.

First we must distinguish Godard's tracking shot from other such shots in the history of cinema. It is not, first of all, forward camera movement, proving the depth of space, as in Murnau. Godard's tracking shot moves neither forward nor backward in space, nor in any diagonal or arc, nor at any angle but 90° to the scene it is shooting. That is, Godard's track lies exactly along the 0°/180° line. The scenes or subjects which these shots address lie also along a 0°/180° line, which, furthermore, is exactly parallel to the camera line. This extreme stylization, wherein a plane or planes of subject are paralleled exactly by the plane of art, is unusual in cinema and gives the shot very much the form of a planimetric painting. A partial exception to the rule is the camera's sinuosity in the traffic jam shot in *Weekend,* its slight "angling" to left and right as it moves laterally, getting slightly behind or ahead of the scene it is filming, a kind of warp in the shot's even, continuous space-time. The base line of the camera's movement remains exactly straight, however, and exactly parallel to the scene. More fundamental departures from the lateral track are the Action Musicale sequence-shot in *Weekend,* in which the camera remains in the center of the scene and *turns* 360°, and the shot in *One Plus One,* in which the camera *tracks* 360° around the studio in which the Stones are playing. In the first the camera is at the center of a circle, in the second at the periphery, but in both there is the sense of a circular subject rendered flat and linear: these shots look like the lateral tracking shot and fit easily into formats which align them end-to-end with such shots.

The shot, secondly, is not like Ophuls's tracking shots which—though often lateral and hence formally like Godard's—are essentially following shots. Ophuls tracks in order to follow his characters, to give them movement or to attend their movement. His tracks center on, are filled with, derive life and motion from his characters, that is, from individuals. Godard, like Eisenstein, repudiates "the individualist conception of the bourgeois hero" and his tracking shots reflect this. His camera serves no individual and prefers none to another. It never initiates movement to follow a character and if it picks one up as it moves it leaves him behind as haphazardly (the workers and Wiazemsky in

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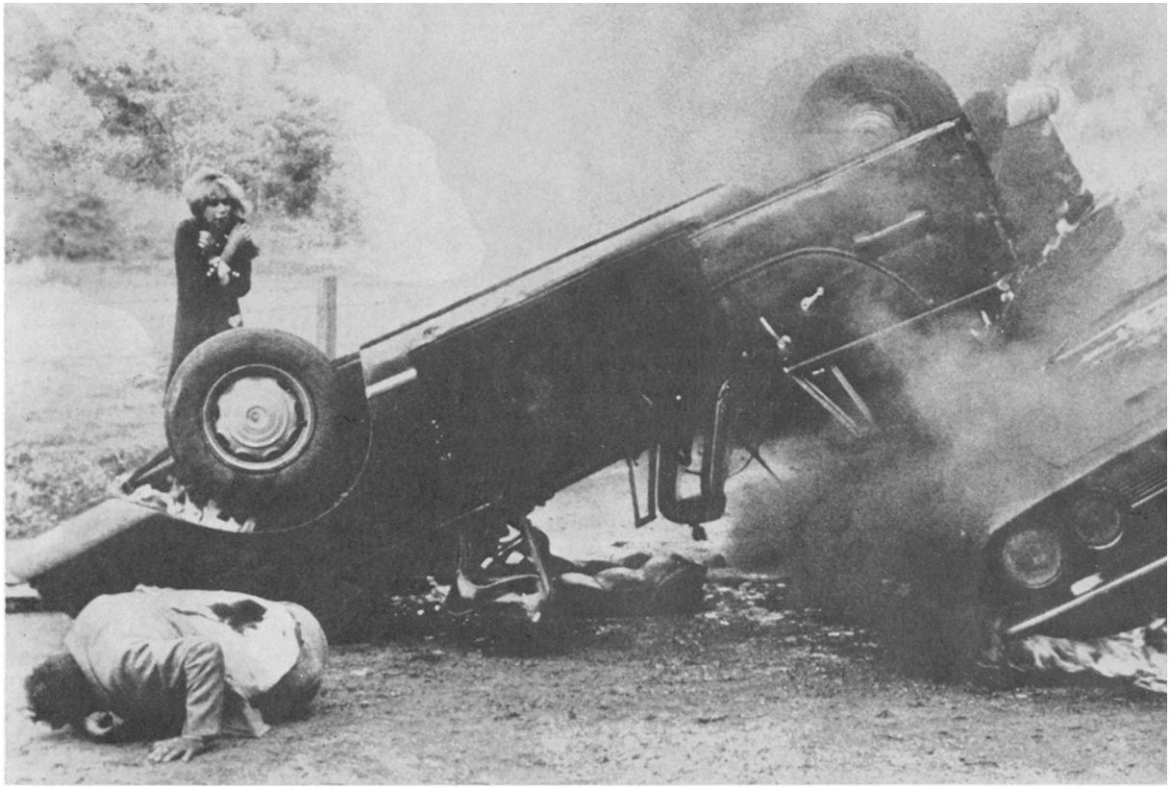
This article is part of a longer critical study, "*Weekend* and History," which considers that film in its various historical contexts—cinema and dramatic history, history of the bourgeoisie, human history.



Godard's long shot: WEEKEND

the Action Musicale and the shot with Juliet Berto in and out, in *Weekend*). Also—though some may dispute this—Ophuls's tracks are essentially uncritical of their subjects, whereas the essence of Godard's tracking shot is its critical distance from what it surveys. Also, Ophuls frequently uses the composition-in-depth technique of interposing objects in the foreground, between character and camera. Godard never does this.

Thirdly, the shot is not like Fellini's pans and short tracks, though the latter also survey persons fixed in space rather than moving ones, that is, "discover" them in place as the camera moves. There are two chief differences. First, Fellini's camera *affects* his characters, calls them into life or bestows life upon them. Godard's camera does not affect the reality it unfolds and is not affected by it. There is a different camera dialectic in each: Fellini's camera interacts with reality, touches and is touched, causes as well as registers effects; Godard's camera assumes a position over against reality, outside, detached. Secondly, Fellini's tracks are frequently subjective—in the sense that the camera eye is a character's eye. In *8½* the reactions of characters to the camera are their reaction to Guido; the pain we feel when we see them is Guido's pain. Because subjective, Fellini's tracks are most often in medium close or closeup range, sometimes with only faces coming into view; Godard's tracks, which are never subjective, are usually in long shot, taking in as much of an event and its context as possible. Also, Fellini introduces depth by arraying characters and objects in multiple planes, some very close to the camera, others at a distance, making for surprise and variety as the camera moves over them. Godard avoids depth: he arranges his characters in a single plane only—

none is ever closer to the camera than another. The resulting flatness of Godard's shots, particularly in *Weekend*, is discussed below.

Godard's tracking shot is a species of long take*, very often of sequence shot†, but it has few or none of the characteristics in terms of which André Bazin discussed and defended the shot and cinematic styles based upon it. In Godard's shot there is continuity of dramatic space and time, the irreducibles of the long take (indeed its very definition); but there is strict avoidance of composition-in-depth, for Bazin the essence of the shot—or that of greatest value in its use. As mentioned, Godard's frames are flat, composed in relation to the plane occupied by his characters. Other planes, where present, are used merely as backdrop to this one. Not only composition-in-depth but the *values* which Bazin found in composition-in-depth are missing in Godard's version of the long take (and in late Godard generally): greater realism, greater participation on the part of the viewer, and a reintroduction of ambiguity into the structure of the film image. It is clear that Godard is no realist; in *La Chinoise* he specifically repudiates the realist aesthetic (of Bazin and others): "Art is not the reflection of a reality; it is the reality of that reflection." Godard's later style does require the active participation of the viewer, but not in Bazin's sense of choosing what to see within a multi-layered image and, presumably, making his own moral connections within it also. Godard presents instead an admittedly synthetic, single-layered construct, which the viewer must examine critically, accept or reject. The viewer is not drawn *into* the image, nor does he make choices within it; he stands outside the image and judges it *as a whole*. It is clear also that Godard of the later films is not interested in ambiguity—through flatness of frame and transparency of action, he seeks to eliminate ambiguity. Thus Godard uses the long take for none of the traditional reasons; in fact he reinvents the long take, and the tracking shot, for his own purposes.

A camera moves slowly, sideways to the scene it is filming. It tracks. But what is the result when its contents are projected on a screen? It is a band or ribbon of reality that slowly unfolds itself. It is a mural or scroll that unrolls before the viewer and rolls up after him. To understand the nature of this visual band we must go beyond the tracking shot itself. We encounter here the aesthetic problem of parts and wholes: Godard's tracking shot is but one element in a remarkably rich and complete stylistic complex or repertoire. It appears not in isolation, but in formal combinations with other kinds of shots, and with sounds. In short, the tracking shot cannot be understood apart from the varying contexts in which it appears—it has a different meaning and formal function in *La Chinoise*, in *Weekend*, in *One Plus One*, and in *British Sounds*, and even at different places within the same film. Moreover, the matter of "context" is not as simple as it might appear. Each of the latter films is built upon a complex camera/sound conception or donnée, and no two of these are alike. Our principal concern is the formal construction of *Weekend* and the specific role of the tracking shot in that con-

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* A single piece of unedited film; of course "long" is relative to "short"—the cut-off would seem to be a shot used for wholly independent effect rather than as part of a montage pattern. None of Eisenstein's early films contains a single long take—such was the theoretical purity of his practice; no Godard film is without several long takes.

† A sequence filmed in one take; a one-shot sequence. A sequence is a series of closely related scenes; a scene is a shot or shots that cover a single and continuous dramatic action. We must bear in mind that Godard's "sequences" are not those of conventional narrative cinema, hence the concepts "sequence" and "sequence shot" lose the reasonably clear meaning they had for Bazin. What meanings will take their place, we do not yet know. See André Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" (tr. by Hugh Gray), in *What Is Cinema?* (Berkeley, 1967), at 23; also contained in *The New Wave*, ed. by Peter Graham (New York, 1968), at 25.

struction; that is, the relation of formal part and whole. We will not understand either aspect of *Weekend,* however, until we see that film's characteristic shot in the alternative contexts of the other late films and understand the formal principles of those works themselves. The use of the tracking shot in the other films clarifies its use in *Weekend* and the formal principles of the other films put into perspective the formal principle of *Weekend* itself.

La Chinoise contains some interesting instances of the tracking shot even though the film is in no sense built upon this shot, as both *Weekend* and *One Plus One* are. (In the latter films, the whole is chiefly a relation among tracking shots; in *La Chinoise* the whole is a relation among many kinds of shots, relatively few of which are tracking shots.) There are, first of all, the remarkable shots from the balcony, in which the action within the apartment is carefully orchestrated in relation to the camera's passage, in various mathematical variations, along the apartment's three windows and two walls, and back. There is, secondly, a usage of the shot as a special kind of documentation. As Véronique describes her awakening to social contradictions at Nanterre, the camera tracks slowly (from right to left) across the shabby, overcrowded dwellings of the Algerian workers who live near the university, coming to rest at last on the modern, efficient buildings of the university complex. The workers' shacks are flat and horizontal, the university buildings high and vertical, but the shot is set up so that the camera does not have to move back to take in the tall, commanding structures—it takes in everything within a single perspective. Eisenstein would have cut from a shot of the one to a shot of the other, making the juxtaposition for the viewer, obliterating time and space relations to make a clearcut social relation. Godard observes the time and space relations and lets the viewer make the social relation. His shot establishes the true proportions of extreme contrast and close proximity. He does this by virtue of the long take's continuity of dramatic space and time, which this usage reveals as itself a form of argumentation or demonstration; the shot has its own internal relations, its own logic. This instance of the shot seems Bazinian but, far from fidelity to the real, Godard rips this bit of footage from its grounding in the real and puts it down in the midst of a highly abstract film essay. Godard impresses the real into his own service—ignoring the form of the real itself, he subjects it firmly to his own formal construct. Besides the tracking shots, *La Chinoise* also includes several static long takes—the two dialogues between Véronique and Guillaume, the assassination scene—as well as montage (or collage) constructions. (It has become a commonplace that modern film-makers fall between Eisenstein and Bazin, that they combine editing techniques and long takes in various, distinctive styles.) The overall formal principle of *La Chinoise* would seem to to be collage, which is also the formal principle of *The Married Woman,* portions of *Le Gai Savoir,* and, in certain senses, of *Pravda.*

The difference between montage and collage is a complex question. Film critics generally use the term collage without elucidating its meaning nor even its difference from montage. There is sometimes the suggestion that the pieces of a collage are shorter or more fragmented than those of a montage, but this does not hold up. Modern film-makers rarely use any shot shorter than Eisenstein's average shot in *Potemkin.* Moreover, collage as practiced by moderns allows long takes and tracking shots; montage as practiced by Eisenstein did not. It seems clear that the difference between montage and collage is to be found in the divergent ways in which they associate and order images, not in the length or nature of the images themselves. Montage fragments reality in order to reconstitute it in highly organized, synthetic emotional and intellectual patterns. Collage does not do this; it collects or sticks its fragments together in a way that does not entirely overcome their fragmentation. It seeks to recover its fragments *as fragments.* In regard to overall form, it seeks to bring out the internal relations of its pieces, whereas montage imposes a set of relations upon them and indeed collects or creates its pieces to fill out a pre-existent plan.

(This point is discussed further in the comparison of the collage principle to the visual organization of *Weekend* and *One Plus One* below).

In *Weekend* the collage principle all but disappears. Intercut titles—showing the day and the hour, the car speedometer, names of sequences such as "Action Musicale," "Scenes from Provincial Life"—serve as breaks within takes and between scenes, but all within the film's single-image continuum. They do not interact with the pictorial images to form montage patterns, as in *La Chinoise*. Conversely: whereas in *La Chinoise* the tracking shot is incidental, in *Weekend* it is the master shot: the entire film aspires to the condition of this shot. The cuts are merely connective; once outside the Paris apartment, the film might as well be a single, fixed-distance travelling shot along the highway and across the provincial landscape. *Weekend* indeed approximates this ideal form by its remarkable adherence to a single camera range—it is filmed almost entirely in long shot. Thus *Weekend* is the film in which the structure of the tracking shot and the formal principle of the whole very nearly coincide. Not just its characteristic shot but the whole of *Weekend* itself is a continuous visual band that unfolds itself along a linear axis. *One Plus One* is an interesting variation on the *Weekend* plan. It consists almost entirely of very long takes, nearly all of them tracking shots of the sort described above—slow, fixed-distance, left-to-right and/or right-to-left. Here, however, Godard cuts among two primary situations (the Stones in the studio and the black revolutionaries at the autoheap) and several subsidiary ones, each of which is conceived and shot strictly in terms of a single-band construction. Thus Godard erects a montage construction upon a series of long takes—in the aggregate a montage is created, though all of its ingredients, all the local areas of the film, are long takes.

Put another way, *One Plus One* is made up of parallel visual bands, which correspond to the bands of the song the Stones are recording, the bands of revolutionary experience that the blacks at the autoheap are assimilating, etc., all of which correspond to the bands of the viewer's consciousness of contemporary experience. Recording the song and rehearsing the revolution and watching Godard's film all involve a project of integration, necessarily unfinished, as the film is unfinished. The function of Godard's montage construction, switching back and forth among these bands, is perhaps an attempt to hold them in simultaneity and is thus central to the film's integration project.*

British Sounds is fundamentally different in form from the bands construction of *Weekend* and *One Plus One*. Aside from the montage of fists punching through the British flag, it consists almost entirely of long takes, including several sequences consisting of a single shot; there are also a few of the tracking shots, notably the long opening track along an assembly line and the later, related shot of workers discussing socialism at a meeting. The film as a whole, however, is organized rather conventionally in terms of sequences, each of which is conceived and shot according to its subject. As the film takes up several subjects (factory conditions, worker organization, women's liberation, right-wing attitudes, etc.) it does not have a single stylistic conception. *British Sounds* is signed not only by Godard but by the Dziga-Vertov group with whom he made the film; this may have made stylistic unity difficult but *Pravda*, also signed by the group, does have overall formal coherence.

Collage and organization by bands are contrasting formal principles. Both are visual organizations, but each is a formal principle of the whole in a different sense. The visual conceptions of *Weekend* and *One Plus One* are prescriptive and proscriptive—they require a certain kind of shot and rule out other kinds. The formal principles of these works not only relate parts, though they do that also, they require and hence create certain kinds of parts,

* It is also possible, however, that Godard's editing here fulfills the classical function of montage—that of contrast or opposition: the commercial protest of the Stones v. the authenticity of black revolt, etc.

in order to realize a pre-existent or overall scheme. As a result, camera style for each scene of these films is determined not by the distinctive content of the scene but by the overall formal principle of the work. Thus many different kinds of scenes receive similar camera treatment, which we see clearly in *Weekend* and *One Plus One* (the highway scene and guerilla camp scenes in the first, the auto junkheap scenes and scenes with the Stones in the second). This is formal principle in the strong sense.

Collage, in film as in the other arts, is by contrast the most heterogeneous and permissive of formal principles. Indeed, it is formal principle only after the fact—it does not require certain kinds of parts nor rule any out. Polycentric or decentralized, it relates parts primarily toward each other and only secondarily toward a whole, or ideal unity. (*Weekend* relates parts directly to the whole and only indirectly to other parts or local area.) Collage works from inside, seemingly with pre-existent parts, and seeks to find within them or in their arrangement some unifying principle; or at least some ground on which they can stand together. The collage principle of *Pravda,* it is true, is far more aggressive than this—it marshals and orders its images in accord with an overall formal principle. This principle, however, is not that of the collage itself but that of the sound track, which criticizes and interprets the images, not only as parts but as an aggregate or totality. The sound track both constitutes a formal totality and criticizes or relates to the image collage as a totality. The formal principle of the whole work is the relation between these totalities, but that relation itself seems to be contained within the sound track and in no sense in the images. Also, the organization of the images is far less intensive and coherent than that of the soundtrack discourse, so the latter easily prevails.

The relation to sound is a touchstone of the difference between collage and bands construction generally. Since collage is a weak or weaker formal principle, it is not surprising that use of sounds has a greater impact on it than on the stronger organization into bands. *A Married Woman, La Chinoise,* and *Pravda* are all visual collages, but the overall formal organization of each is very different, in large part because the uses of sound are different. *A Married Woman* uses sound conventionally, as direct dialogue or voice over; *La Chinoise* is frequently a sound as well as a visual collage; and in *Pravda* the autonomous sound track not visual organization is the most important formal principle. This susceptibility to different uses of sound confirms that collage is not in itself a strong formal principle. In *Weekend* and *One Plus One,* both intensive visual organizations, use of sound is subordinate and supplementary to the visual formal principle.

The difference between collage and bands construction can also be expressed as a difference in relation to subject matter. As we have seen, in collage formal treatment of each part is based upon the subject matter of the part itself. In *Weekend* and *One Plus One* formal treatment of each scene relates to the overall visual conception and *this* in turn relates to the film's subject as a whole. In collage there is an immediate or local relation to subject; in bands construction only an overall or total relation. So also in *Pravda* the sound track critiques not this and this shot, but the totality of the film's images. The sound track is an overall formal principle in the sense that the bands construction is and as collage probably cannot be.

In *Le Gai Savoir, Pravda,* and *Wind from the East,* the relation of sound and image becomes the central subject of inquiry as well as the central formal problem. Sound/image relation is also important, however, in the other late films and, predictably, is different in each. Sound collage and visual collage are sometimes synchronized in *La Chinoise,* sometimes not. Two characters recite a slogan one word at a time as the camera cuts rapidly between them, US comic book images are flashed to the sound of a machine gun, etc. At other times sound elements are arranged independently: a Maoist rock song, passages from Schubert, etc. Sound is important in *One Plus One,* but prin-

cipally as a supplement to image, very much according to the conventions of screen realism: the sound the Stones are recording, the readings of the black revolutionaries, etc. An important exception are the readings from a pornographic-political novel that are cut into the sound track at several points. Sound seems less important in *Weekend* than in any of the other late films; or at least more conventional in usage and straightforward in meaning, as in the orchestration of motor horns in the traffic jam scene. This usage is paralleled in the first shot of *British Sounds,* with its deafening factory noise that, far more than the image itself, establishes the work conditions in question. Both of these scenes make highly expressive use of more or less realistic sound. A later sequence in *British Sounds* prefigures the sound/image constructions of *Pravda* and *Wind from the East.* A spoken analysis of contradictions faced by the female in capitalist society is run over the static shot of a staircase and landing, through which walks a nude woman. We hear an analysis of concrete conditions; we see the subject under discussion. In a filmed interview, Richard Mordaunt's *Voices* (1968), Godard criticizes American Newsreel films for showing political events without commentary and interpretation. Godard's position is clear: events/images do *not* speak for themselves.

Le Gai Savoir, made between *Weekend* and *One Plus One,* is something of a puzzle. Its subject is the relation of sound to image but, aside from some intercut photos with writing on them, the style and formal organization of the film have nothing to do with this problem. Several factors link the film to *La Chinoise:* its focus on middle-class young people in an enclosed space working out problems of revolutionary theory, its passages of intellectual collage linking its characters to the outside world and to the problems they are studying, its marking their growth through three stages, which are also the movements or parts of the film. In visual style, however, the films are not similar. Most of the character shots in *La Chinoise* are head-on long takes and each of the film's long conversations—two between Véronique and Guillaume, one between Véronique and Jean-son—is done in a single long take. *Le Gai Savoir,* devoted almost entirely to conversations about image/sound, consists of dozens of close-ups of Jean-Pierre Léaud and of Juliet Berto and of both of them. As the two converse, the camera cuts around them: from one to the other, from one to both or both to one, from both to a different angle of both, often a reverse-angle. This is something like conventional dialogue cutting (which Godard has almost never used), except that the cuts have nothing to do with the dialogue itself. Perhaps parody is the intention. Or, since the action takes place in a TV studio and the film was made for television, perhaps it is TV style that is parodied. Godard's cutting establishes the pair in 360° depth and in multiple angles and viewpoints, but to what purpose? This is formal variation without evident coherence.* Godard also varies plastic elements, particularly the shadows on his characters' faces, again seemingly without principle.

In *Pravda* and *Wind from the East,* the problem of sound/image relation is realized in the formal principle itself. Whereas the sound track of *Le Gai Savoir* consists mainly of the speech of the characters before us (or just off-camera), in *Pravda* and *Wind* realistic or synchronized sound disappears altogether. Sound track and image track are absolutely separate and independent. It now becomes a struggle, and specifically a struggle of sound or voice, to make a connection between them. In both films the images are those of the imperialist world (in which Godard includes western-contaminated Czechoslovakia) and the sounds are those of dialectical theory seeking to understand and transform that world. Sounds criticize and negate images, and frequently themselves also. The autonomy of sound vis-à-vis image is

* An interesting variation Godard introduces is to cut away from the person who is about to speak, then to hold on the person who is listening. One character says: "In movies you see people talking but never listening."

never questioned but previous sounds are criticized and corrected by later sounds: "We have made many mistakes. We must go back and correct mistakes." In *Pravda* footage of Prague is run over a dialogue in which two Marxist-Leninists analyze the sickness of revisionism which infects these images and the proper cure for the sickness. The shots seem hurriedly taken and even their arrangement somewhat haphazard; it is the sounds of dialectical theory which must provide coherence and order, even in an aesthetic sense. This they do, as mentioned, by developing a comprehensive analysis, not of this or that shot, but of the image-track as a totality.

In *Wind from the East,* it is the film's theatrical action—an ideological Western—which is questioned again and again (seemingly every five minutes) by the sound-track voice. Here it is not images of the imperialist world directly but the film's own conceit for that world that is addressed and questioned. Thus self-criticism is taken a step further. Arguably, the divorce between images and sounds is even more extreme in *Wind* than in *Pravda* in that the sound track does not really discuss the images themselves but the imperialist world which the images symbolize. Thus sounds and images are two sets of symbols dealing with, trying to get at, the imperialist world. In *Pravda* the sounds are tied to the images, in *Wind*—aside from the passages of self-criticism—this is not so. It is possible however, to turn the question inside out and to see the images of *Wind* as tied to, as an illustration of, the sound track discourse. If so, this is not a part-by-part, shot-by-shot illustration but a relation of totalities. In either case—sound and image separation or image as illustration—sounds and images are locally independent totalities or symbol-structures, dealing with each other only as totalities.

We may draw two tentative conclusions regarding the formal principles of the late films. One is that intensive visual organization and intensive sound organization are probably not possible within the same films. That is, either one or the other must be the dominant formal principle; one will tend to organize and dominate not only itself but the other also. It may be argued that not either sounds or images but precisely their relation is the formal principle of some or all of the late films. Such a balance as this suggests may be possible, but it has not yet been achieved. Perhaps when we understand *Wind from the East* better it will be seen to come closest. Secondly, visual and sound organizations represent important ideological differences as well as aesthetic ones. Visual organization is as fully an interpretation and critique as sound organization, though it stands on different ground and has certain different emphases. Indeed, regarding *Pravda* and *Wind,* some dialecticians would question the disembodied critical autonomy assumed by the sound-track voices. Others would demand that these anonymous voices identify themselves and place themselves within the socio-historical totality they are analyzing. Such questions concern the nature, scope, and autonomy of revolutionary theory and other dialectical problems which cannot be pursued here. These questions, however, are central to the understanding and analysis of the later films.

We have found that *Weekend* is the one film among the later works in which the structure of the tracking shot and the formal principle of the whole are nearly identical. Because the shots of *Weekend* deal with a single situation

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(rather than two or more), they are not juxtaposed (as in *One Plus One),* but merely linked —as though to form one long composite tracking shot. This continuity is emphasized by the near-constant camera range of long shot, which renders the entire film, even static shots, into a single band of reality. In our discussion of the tracking shot as long take we distinguished it from composition-in-depth shots and thereby characterized the tracking shot in terms of a certain kind of flatness. If the overall structure of *Weekend* parallels that of the tracking shot, then the film as a whole must exhibit flatness also. In light of our distinction between parts and wholes, it must also be that flatness of the whole is something different from flatness of the part; and in *Weekend* this is found to be true. Nevertheless—flatness seems an odd category in which to discuss the formal organization of a work, partly because it seems a negative concept, partly because "flatness" has no meaning except in relation to "depth." In fact, however, *Weekend* itself is negative—regarding its subject, the bourgeoisie—in several important respects. And, as we shall see also, the "flatness" of *Weekend* has specific relation to a previous "depth"—composition-in-depth, the principal mode of bourgeois self-presentment in cinema.

If we now propose to discuss the formal organization of *Weekend,* part and whole, in terms of flatness, the effect may well be one of anti-climax and disappointment. If this is so, it is due in large measure to the imprecision that such terms, and especially this term, carry in film analysis. What this means, since the category of flatness comes up inescapably here and elsewhere, is that some theoretical clarification needs to be done. This task cannot be undertaken here but minimal clarification must be done to permit our analysis of *Weekend.* There is no single sense of flatness in cinema but in fact several senses, not only in regard to different films but often in regard to the same film. A single work may be flat in several senses, or now in one sense and now in another; so we must ask not simply which films and scenes are "more flat" than others but in precisely which senses they are flat. An equally great problem area is how critics use the judgment of flatness —the correlations they make between flatness and other matters, particularly those of subject and meaning. Clearly an undifferentiated judgment of flatness cannot be the basis for an adequate interpretation or discussion of subject. A correlation between the "flatness" of *Made in USA* or *Weekend* and Herbert Marcuse's theory of a One Dimensional society is too general—in regard to both elements—to be of much use. Criticism must cut finer than this or it is not helpful. Rather we must ask in each case which of several kinds of flatness has/have been achieved and what is its/their specific relation to the subject of the part and/or whole to which it relates.

Cinema, like painting, is a two-dimensional art which creates the illusion of a third dimension. Painting is limited to its two dimensions; cinema is not. Cinema escapes the limits of two dimensions through its own third dimension, time. It does this by varying its range and perspective, by taking different views of its subject (through montage and/or camera movement). Cinema overcomes two-dimensionality through its "walk-around" capability, which is also a prime feature of ordinary human perception. E. H. Gombrich says: "While (one) turns, in other words, he is aware of a succession of aspects which swing round with him. What we call 'appearance' is always composed of such a succession of aspects, a melody, as it were, which allows us to estimate distance and size; it is obvious that this melody can be imitated by the movie camera but not by the painter with his easel." (*Art and Illusion,* pp. 256–7). Cinema can take several views of a subject, go from one camera angle to a reverse angle or other angle, from long shot to close-up, etc. It can take the measure of a character or object from many sides, in short, in three dimensions. Both montage and composition-in-depth accomplish this walk-around project, both create and explore three dimensions, though in two-dimensional steps or segments, so to speak. It is obvious how montage accomplishes this—through a succession of shots from

different angles and at different ranges. It is equally clear that a moving camera can accomplish the same succession of aspects within a single shot. Even in those long takes which do not involve a moving camera, the actors themselves may move with respect to the camera; that is, they walk back-and-forth, or at diagonals, changing in relative size, etc. In short, the actors *turn themselves* around for us, creating different angles and perspectives on themselves. Instead of the camera's walking around, they walk around in relation to the camera. This also is well beyond the two dimensions of painting, whereby we see only one side of a figure, which must stand for and suggest his entirety.

It is precisely cinema's capacity for depth which Godard excludes in *Weekend.* His moving camera, by adhering rigidly to the single-perspective, one-sided view of painting, eliminates the succession of aspects. The tracking shot's lateral motion *extends* this single perspective rather than alters it, very much as a mural does. The movement of Godard's camera creates not a succession of aspects, but a single aspect upon an unfolding subject matter. Both montage and the usual moving camera multiply aspects or perspectives *in regard to a single subject.* To borrow a term from music, the succession of aspects is a kind of *elaboration.* The subject in question is put through multiple variations (or views), toward some *exhaustion* of its nature, meaning, or appearance. Godard's tracking shot does not elaborate in this sense. Its variations through time open up ever new subject matter; they do not elaborate or take multiple views of the same subject, as both montage and composition-in-depth (nearly) always do. Throughout the duration of a tracking shot, a one-to-one relation is maintained: a single perspective per stretch or segment of subject matter, with never a doubling or curving of perspective on a single subject.

It should be emphasized that this flatness of the single aspect is a formal quality of the whole, not of the part. We cannot judge aspect succession or constancy on the basis of the part alone since the succession of aspects is often a succession *of shots.* It is true that each tracking shot in *Weekend* is flat in this sense of singleness of perspective, but what is done in one shot may be undone, or complemented, by another. This is the method of montage, whereby the angle and range of one shot give way to those of another and another, until a totality of aspects is accumulated. Even with lateral long takes, a subsequent tracking shot may provide a different view of the subject of a previous tracking shot. Thus we do not know until a film is over whether a given subject is elaborated multiply or not. We must look at *all* the shots of a sequence or film before we can say whether they present a succession of aspects on a single subject or, as in *Weekend,* a single aspect on a single, unfolding subject. Thus the flatness of the mural effect is an attribute or quality of the whole.

We have argued that *Weekend* is flat in an overall or structural sense in that it eliminates the succession of aspects, by which cinema approximates the third dimension. This is an absolute flatness—a sequence, a film either varies aspects or it does not. Generally speaking, the frames of *Weekend* are also relatively flat in several painterly respects, and this is always a relative flatness, a question of more or less. The clearest case of this kind of flatness is achieved by posing a character or characters against a short wall or background, as Godard does in *Masculin Feminin, Made in USA,* and other films, and as Skolimowski does in all his films. *Weekend* has certain of these shots, but it also has others with considerable depth—

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the camera follows its subject, the bourgeois couple, across a continuous background/landscape that is sometimes flat (thick foliage behind the pair), sometimes deep (the highway back-up).

But there are other kinds of flatness. The shallow wall shot achieves flatness simply by eliminating the long shot range, and perhaps also the medium-shot range. Godard's tracking shot achieves a converse flatness by eliminating the close-up, medium-close, and often medium shot ranges—by arranging his subjects(s) and background all within the long shot range. The point may be clarified by a comparison with composition-in-depth, which aims for maximum visual and expressive use of depth, in that both a close-up and a long shot can be included within the same shot. Composition-in-depth achieves its illusion of great depth by arranging its subject through all possible ranges of the deep-focus shot and, of course, by making dramatic relations among these subject ranges. Godard achieves flatness using only a portion of the depth which deep-focus lenses permit—he uses the long-shot range and leaves the shorter ranges "blank," so to speak. Thus, even where there are several planes in a *Weekend* shot—highway, countryside, tree-line, etc.—they are all relatively flattened together, because all lie within the long-shot range. (Moreover, Godard does not achieve this flattening by using telephoto lenses, as Kurosawa did in *Red Beard.)*

Secondly, Godard's planes, even where multiple, are strictly parallel—they do not intersect or interrelate. Consequently the eye is not led back into the depth of the frame nor forward to its surfaces. How we have to "read" a painting or frame is one aspect of its depth; to read the frames of *Weekend,* the eye moves strictly from left to right (sometimes from right to left), never from front to back or back to front. What is true in a compositional sense is also true of the subject of these frames: the film's action. The characters, their movements and activities, never take us into or out of the frame but always from side to side. Neither in a compositional sense nor a narrative sense are we ever required to relate foreground and background in *Weekend.* Strictly speaking, there is no foreground and background, only background, just as in the shallow wall shot there is only foreground. In another sense, foreground and background are here merged into a single plane. Again, composition-in-depth provides a definitive contrast. Like the baroque in painting, composition-in-depth makes a great deal of foreground/background relations, of foreshortening, of huge objects in the foreground, etc. It is not too much to say that foreground/background relation is the axis of composition-in-depth expressivity. As we have seen, it is its moral base also.

Thirdly, the non-intersection of planes in *Weekend* is the result not only of their strict parallelism but also of the fixed, 90° camera angle, which arranges all planes in parallel to the borders of the frame itself. Of these planes, all are inert or non-operative in both a narrative and a compositional sense, except that occupied by the characters. All interest and movement reside in the characters and they occupy (or constitute) always the same plane; they do not move between planes. *Weekend* is single-planed in the sense that the camera and the viewer's eye fix upon only one plane, that occupied by the characters, and follow it out, in one direction only, at infinite length. The frame may contain several planes, but the film as a whole is constructed in relation to only one of these.

Weekend's single-plane construction sets it apart from either school of film aesthetics, montage or composition-in-depth; comparing *Weekend* to them will help us understand the various senses of the film's flatness historically. It is clear that montage editing (and overall film construction) involves or results in a series of planes or planar perspectives. Cutting among close-ups, medium close-ups, medium shots, and long shots, in any order or combination, is obviously an alternation of the planes of a scene, and the result when assembled a sequence of planes.* The scene or event is broken

*As it happens, this phrase also appears in Stuart Gilbert's translation of André Malraux's *Museum*

into its component parts or planes, then these are reconstructed in various patterns, in accord with a structural montage principle—rhythmic, emotional, or intellectual. Besides changes of camera range, there are also changes of angle, which can alternate planar perspectives rather than particular planes. Cutting to a different angle on the same scene, however, is also a rearrangement or reordering of the planes bearing upon the action. This ordering or sequence of planes is the very texture of Eisenstein's art. Composition-in-depth is not fundamentally different in principle and overall purpose. Composition-in-depth internalizes the sequence of planes within the shot; its ideal, as Bazin presents it, is the inclusion of all planes bearing upon an action within a single camera set-up. With all the planes of a situation before or available to the camera, the entire action of the scene may be worked out within a single shot. As with montage cinema, dramatic action is advanced by way of the alternation and interaction of planes, but now this is done by camera movement and/or by the movement of actors, themselves planes or parts of planes, through or in relation to the planes of the scene. At the same time the camera must organize these planes in terms of importance, dramatic interest, etc. By composition-in-depth the succession of planes is greatly fluidized, proceeding in a smooth flow rather than in jumps, but the right solution to a given scene becomes more difficult and complex. Implicit in the shot's first image, or accessible to it, must be all the scene's action and the full exploitability of its planes. Shots must be worked out carefully and carefully rehearsed. An example of the way that composition-in-depth orders planes within the frame is given by Bazin—the scene in *The Little Foxes* in which the steel box sought by several characters occupies the extreme foreground of the frame while its seekers are arrayed in multiple planes behind it. A more extreme case is the scene in *Citizen Kane* in which Mrs. Kane learns about her son's inheritance. Shot with a static camera, the shot is very narrow and very deep, virtually a visual corridor. Within the squeezed cabin room we see the mother huge in the foreground, the banker from the East behind her, the window in the wall of the cabin behind them, and in the far distance, young Kane playing with his sled. Not only the composition of the shot but its dramatic action requires the eye to move continually back and forth. It is clear that Godard's treatment of planes in *Weekend* is directly opposite to that of this shot, an extreme in the opposite direction. Godard's visual field has little or no depth and has—or aspires to—infinite length; that is, it exists in a single lateral plane.

Consideration of *Weekend* points up underlying similarities between montage and composition-in-depth and serves to set Godard's film apart from either school of film aesthetics: both montage and composition-in-depth define cinema in terms of a multiplicity of planes and both see the problem of form or technique as the inclusion or relation of planes in a meaningful format. Godard in *Weekend* renounces the multiplicity of planes as a project of cinema and hence rejects both schools.

What are the implications of these shifts from three dimensions to two, from depth to flatness? An ideological interpretation suggests itself—composition-in-depth projects a bourgeois world infinitely deep, rich, complex, ambiguous, mysterious. Godard's flat frames collapse this world into two-dimensional actuality; thus reversion to a cinema of one plane is a demystification, an assault on the bourgeois

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Without Walls (Garden City, 1967, page 75): "The means of reproduction in the cinema is the moving photograph, but its means of expression is the sequence of planes. (The planes change when the camera is moved; it is their sequence that constitutes cutting.)" A similar mistranslation of the French *plan* (shot) as plane occurs in Gilbert's translations of Malraux's variants of this passage in *The Psychology of Art: I: Museum Without Walls* (New York, 1949–51, page 112) and in *The Voices of Silence* (New York, 1953, page 122), in which Malraux is made to assert that "the average duration of each [plane] is ten seconds." But Malraux was simply expounding the classical view that cutting, the sequence of shots, is the source of expressivity in cinema.

world-view and self-image.* *Weekend's* bourgeois figures scurry along without mystery toward mundane goals of money and pornographic fulfillment. There is no ambiguity and no moral complexity. That space in which the viewer could lose himself, make distinctions and alliances, comparisons and judgments, has been abrogated—the viewer is presented with a single flat picture of the world that he must examine, criticize, accept or reject. Thus the flatness of *Weekend* must not be analyzed only in itself but in regard to the previous modes of bourgeois self-presentment, particularly of composition-in-depth. The subject of *Weekend* is the historical bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie in history; the film's flatness must not be seen statistically, as a single moment, but dialectically, as a *flattening*. Given this overall correlation, the specific correlations of the several senses of flatness fall into place. The succession of aspects not only multiplies viewpoints on the bourgeois world so that final judgment and any kind of certainty become impossible, it projects a bourgeois world infinitely inexhaustible and elaborable. Godard's tracking shot format insists on a single perspective and on the sufficiency of a single comprehensive survey for understanding of the transparent, easy-to-understand bourgeois world. Whereas in montage and composition-in-depth, complex form works on simple material, working it up as complex also, in Godard simple form works on simple material. The tracking shot and single-plane construction suggest an infinitely thin, absolutely flat bourgeois substance that cannot be elaborated but only surveyed. Finally, the single camera range represents not only a refusal to participate in bourgeois space, through forward camera movement, intercutting camera ranges, etc., it also has to do with the maintenance of critical perspective. Given that the film's subject is the historical bourgeoisie, Godard keeps his subject before him at all times. He refuses to pick and choose within the bourgeois world or to prefer any part of it to any other—even for a moment—because that involves partial eclipse of the whole. The nature of the bourgeois totality and the project of criticizing it require that it never be lost from view, or broken up into parts and aspects, but always be kept before the viewer as single and whole. Obviously the long-shot range is the range of the totality and the tracking shot the instrument of its critical survey. For this reason also Godard does not allow the close-up and medium-close ranges to be filled, for a face or figure huge in the foreground literally obstructs the whole and distracts attention from it in an emotional and intellectual sense also. Flatness in *Weekend,* in its various senses, is in fact the result of a formal totality that refuses to relinquish total perspective on the socio-historical totality that is its subject.

* This transition is more than a formal one. The practitioners and advocates of composition-in-depth genuinely believed in this moral depth and ambiguity. Bazin points out that the conception and interpretation of *Citizen Kane* depend on the composition of the image. It could hardly be otherwise in a great masterpiece. William Wyler's composition-in-depth films, which (as Bazin says) have little or no ambiguity, are not masterpieces. In such a case composition-in-depth becomes merely an imposed format, a style without internal correlates. (Wyler's better films, such as *The Letter,* are not structured around composition-in-depth). Welles, the greatest composition-in-depth director, is also the director who has made the most of the theme of inexhaustible mystery. Not only *Kane* but many or most of Welles's other films center on impenetrable mystery and several, also like *Kane,* proceed through a multiplicity of viewpoints and perspectives which nevertheless fail to yield certainty concerning the underlying questions.

JAMES ROY MACBEAN

"See You at Mao"

GODARD'S REVOLUTIONARY BRITISH SOUNDS*

Introduction: Ideology

A fist punches through a paper Union Jack. Smashing through from behind, the fist seems to smash right through the screen as well. A voice declares: "The bourgeoisie created a world in its image. Comrades, let us destroy that image."

From its opening shot, Godard's *British Sounds* aims its critical thrust at *ideology*—at the worldview secreted by the mass media purveyors of images and sounds that reflect and serve to perpetuate the bourgeois capitalist mode of production and its concomitant exploitation.

Louis Althusser has recently reminded us (in a penetrating essay entitled "Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'état," *La Pensée* no. 151, June 1970, pp. 3–38) that although Marx's conception of the structure of society placed ideology at the uppermost floor, so to speak, of the cultural superstructure, nevertheless, in Marx's own terms, ideology (like all social phenomena) was determined in the final analysis by the infrastructure or economic foundations on which society was based. And Althusser points out as well the extremely important *economic function of ideology* in assuring the re-production of the labor force. Just as factory owners must constantly maintain and replenish their supply of raw materials, machinery, and the physical plants, so must they also maintain and replenish the supply of workers willing and qualified to carry out the work expected of them. The terms "willing" and "qualified" are key ones, for in order to ensure that the potential labor force actually continues to render itself at the factory gates, ready to work, each morning from now till eternity, the ruling class must carry out a pervasive, permanent propaganda campaign aimed not only—or even primarily—at rational persuasion, but rather at *unquestioned, unconscious* acceptance and reinforcement of the existing social system and the values which are useful to that system. In other words, people must be trained to know what "society" [the ruling class] expects them to do and to be willing to do it. And this is where ideology comes in.

Cinema and television are of course by no means the only or even the most important vehicles of ideology. (Althusser lists, in addition to these, the schools, churches, courts, political parties, labor unions, the press, and—perhaps most important of all—the family.) But cinema and television have proved particularly useful ideological weapons in the past few decades, both because of the vast audiences they reach and because, as photographic media, they lend themselves so well to the ruling class's need to present the status quo as if it were *reality* itself. Photography, after all, is said to reflect reality. There's an old adage that 'the camera doesn't lie'; and whatever shows upon the photographic image—barring obvious tampering—is automatically raised to the stature of 'reality.'

As Godard states the problem of ideology in cinema and television, "the bourgeoisie creates a world in its image, but it also creates an im-

British Sounds was the original title—and as far as I can ascertain still is the "official" title—of the film which Godard showed on several university campuses in America last spring billed as *See You at Mao.*

age of its world that it calls a 'reflection of reality'."* What he is pointing out here is the insidious confusion of terms perpetrated by the bourgeois image-makers. The image they create is an image of their own bourgeois capitalist society, but they seek to pass off this image as a "reflection of reality." Why? What is gained in this switch of terms?

If the bourgeois image-makers admitted that the image they present was merely a reflection of their own bourgeois capitalist ideology, this would be to admit the subjective, partisan, arbitrary, and mutable aspects of that image—and, by extension, of that *society*. Instead, they seek to inculcate a belief that the image they present is an objective one, that it is not partisan, that it is not arbitrary; that, in fact, it could be no other image precisely because "that's the way things are in reality." The ideological slight of hand that substitutes "reflection of reality" for "reflection of bourgeois capitalism" not only seeks to make bourgeois capitalism disappear as an *issue*, but also to ensure that bourgeois capitalism will perpetually reappear *in the guise of reality*.

And in the guise of reality, it is far less vulnerable: we can ask questions about how best to accommodate ourselves to reality; but we certainly can't ask 'reality' to go away. Reality, after all, is considered a *given*. We are told to confront reality, to look reality in the face—and we are left only the choice of coping with the given as best we can. Ideology, then, in a class society, is a weapon used by the ruling class to inculcate in the masses the acceptance as a given of the existing social system which privileges one class at the expense of another. Ideology serves to suppress the asking of questions about the social system and to assure that what few questions do get asked are questions of *how* rather than *why*, of *reform* rather than *revolution*, of how to accommodate ourselves to 'reality' rather than why this particular social system should exist at all, much less be elevated to the status of 'reality' and accepted as a given.

The aesthetics of the photographic media also serve to reinforce this attitude of respect—almost of religious veneration—for 'reality.' The clear, untampered-with photographic image is considered 'sacrosanct': and using the myriad possibilities of the photographic process for anything other than a straightforward "reflection of reality" is invariably denigrated by our aestheticians, if not actually proscribed.

In cinema, the aesthetics of André Bazin effectively codifies (for whose benefit we shall see in a moment) all the realist rationale of photography [see, for example, Bazin's opening essay, which purports to be an "Ontology of the Cinematic Image"] and sets forth a whole series of 'thou shalt nots' in which such devices as superimposition, multiple exposures, slow motion, fast motion, expressionistic sets or décor, theatrically stylized action—and even most types of *montage*—are rendered suspect under any conditions and are downright *forbidden* under most. Their 'sin'—tampering with 'reality,' interfering with the 'clean,' 'pure,' 'virgin,' *reflection of reality*.

The religious terminology in Bazin's writings is by no means coincidental or even merely metaphorical. Bazin's entire aesthetic system is rooted in a mystical-religious (Catholic) framework of transcendance. The faithful 'reflection of reality,' for Bazin, is a prerequisite—and ultimately merely a *pretext*—for finding a 'transcendental truth' which supposedly exists in reality and is 'miraculously' revealed by the camera. Reality, if one reads Bazin carefully, sheds very quickly its *material* shell and is 'elevated' to a purely metaphysical (one could justifiably call it a *theological)* sphere.

For Bazin, all roads lead to the heavens. Even when writing on a film like Buñuel's *Las Hurdes* (Land Without Bread), which is a scathing documentation of the *material* condition of

*Quoted from a text called "Premiers 'sons anglais' " (signed "on behalf of the Dziga Vertov Group: Jean-Luc Godard") published in *Cinéthique* no. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 1969), Paris, p. 14. [English translations of this and other Godard texts are available by writing to *Kinopraxis*, 2533 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley, Calif.]

a specific people (the inhabitants of the Valley of Las Hurdes) in a specific country (Spain) under a specific economic system (capitalism) with a specific ruling-class coalition (between the bourgoisie and the Catholic Church)—all of which is pointed out with bitter emphasis in the film itself—nonetheless, Bazin manages to sweep the *material* dust under the table so fast you can hardly see it and immediately takes off for the stellar dust of the heavens.

Not once, it has been pointed out,* does Bazin—in his article on *Las Hurdes*—even mention the words 'class,' 'exploited,' 'rich,' 'capitalism,' 'property,' 'proletariat,' 'bourgeoisie,' 'order,' 'money,' 'profit,' etc. And what words do we find in their place? Large ones; broad generous concepts that are the staple of a long tradition of bourgeois humanist idealism—words like 'conscience,' 'salvation,' 'sadness,' 'purity,' 'integrity,' 'objective cruelty of the world,' 'transcendental truth,' 'cruelty of the human condition,' 'unhappiness,' 'the cruelty in the Creation,' 'destiny,' 'horror,' 'pity,' 'madonna,' 'human misery,' 'surgical obscenity,' 'love,' 'admiration,' *'dialectique pascalienne,'* [it would have to be *pascalienne!]* 'all the beauty of a Spanish *Pieta,'* 'nobility and harmony,' 'presence of the beautiful in the atrocious,' 'eternal human nobility in adversity,' 'an infernal earthly paradise,' etc., etc., etc.

And this is no unique case, either in Bazin's aesthetics or in bourgeois ideology in general. The broader, more general and generous the concepts, the easier it is to cover up the *absence* of a materialist, process-oriented analysis of human society that, if undertaken, would reveal some hard, unpleasant facts that could cause people to start rocking the boat. (As I indicated earlier, ideology functions at least as much in what it does *not* say—in what it *keeps quiet*—as in what it does say.†)

With this background, let us turn now to *British Sounds,* Godard's first serious attempt to break bourgeois ideology's stranglehold on the cinema, to free the cinema from a misguided and mystifying aesthetics, and to construct a *cinematic dialectical materialism* that will unveil those hard, unpleasant facts the ruling class seeks to conceal.

As Godard defines the basic premise of this new, analytical approach to images and sounds: TELEVISION AND CINEMA DO NOT RECORD MOMENTS OF REALITY BUT SIMPLY MOMENTS IN THE DIALECTICAL PROCESS. AREAS/ERAS OF CONTRADICTION THAT HAVE TO BE EXAMINED IN THE LIGHT OF CLASS STRUGGLE.

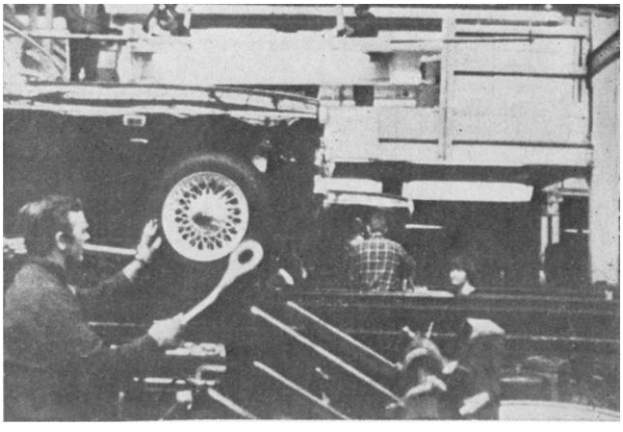
Let us do this with *British Sounds.*

Analysis: The Dialectics of Image and Sound

In the first sequence—roughly ten minutes in length—the camera tracks slowly down the assembly line of a British Motor Corporation "model" factory where MG sportscars are being assembled. Meanwhile, on the sound track, there are at least three distinct elements: a man's voice-over reading of various passages from the *Communist Manifesto* fulminating against the alienation and exploitation of workers under the capitalist wage system; a little girls' voice-over memorizing of a Marxist catechism of important dates in the history of working-class struggle in England; and factory noise, which itself seems to consist of two distinct elements—a low-volume, nearly drowned-out base of synchronous sound that records the actual hammerings and machine noises of the assembly-line activity we see in the image, and very loud, harsh, and grating machine noise that seems to be overlaid on the sound track. The voice-over text is only intermittently audible even without the high-intensity machine noise; and, of course, when the latter is on, its shrieking metallic whine is all we hear.

*See Gérard Gozlan's critical reading of Bazin in *Positif* nos. 46 and 47, June and July 1962.

† The same conclusion is reached—specifically in regard to the way literature is studied (and taught) in America—by Frederick Crews. See his article "Do Literary Studies Have an Ideology?", in *PMLA,* May 1970, vol. 85, no. 3, pp. 423–428.



BRITISH SOUNDS

We can begin to understand Godard's method in this film by asking why he might resort to sound-mixing for the high-intensity machine noise. After all, if one of the points he is trying to make in this sequence is that factory workers labor under excruciating conditions of noise, wouldn't this point be made more effectively if Godard simply documented the noise of an assembly line instead of making the point intellectually by manipulating the sound track? Well, perhaps, but only if you subscribe to the realist canons of those who insist that cinema must be a reflection of reality. It is, I think, precisely because this aesthetic attitude has proved so useful to the capitalist ruling class in disseminating bourgeois ideology that Godard, who wishes to unveil and combat that ideology, rejects its realist aesthetics and openly flaunts its rules.

Moreover, by playing with the relations among different elements of the sound track in this sequence, Godard makes a much more subtle and telling point. The physical alienation through harsh, intensive noise gets in the way of our understanding, in the film, the Marxian explanation of the economic alienation and exploitation of the worker under capitalism. Analogously, we can appreciate how, for the worker in the factory, the physical alienation through noise (combined with other factors, such as repetitious, mechanical gestures, fatigue, constant danger of injury, etc.) can be so brutalizing and benumbing that the worker (during working hours, at least) has no opportunity—or, for that matter, inclination—to ponder anything so seemingly abstract and complex as Marxist theory. If he's going to complain about anything, it's not capitalism; it's noise. He's going to demand better working conditions, or shorter hours, or higher wages, or medical plans, or all of these; but with all these immediate evils to lessen or eliminate, his attention will not be drawn to the greater evil—capitalism itself—which is the root of the problem.

And precisely because Godard imposes that machine-noise on the sound track and calls attention to the way it serves to block out or impede Marxian political awareness, we are better able to understand not only the effects of that factory noise but also what may well be one of its causes. Factory workers today may be laboring under alienating conditions of noise, among other things, *not* because technology is incapable of reducing machine-noise, but because (A) noise-reduction is expensive and would cut into the ruling class's profit-margin, and (B) because, in any case, noise in the factory is useful to the ruling class in maintaining the alienation of the workers as a means of preventing them from focusing their critical attention on the capitalist system as a whole, and, instead, deflecting their attention to petty grievances which the ruling class can handle.

And unlike a straightforward, synch-sound documentary sound track of factory noise (in which the noise would simply be a 'given' for us to experience), Godard's manipulating of the relations among various sound blocks and levels of intensity enables us both to *experience* just how excruciating machine noise can be, and, more important, to *analyze* some of the more subtle effects—as well as a possible cause—of that noise by analyzing the relations among factory-noise, the worker, and the worker's ability to gain an awareness of his own alienation.

In the second sequence, unlike the first, issues are raised not so much by the relations among the different elements of the sound track as by the relations between image and sound.

What we see in the image is a nude young woman; what we hear on the sound track is an impassioned voice-over reading of a text on Women's Liberation. The nude is not shown doing anything interesting—just walking back and forth from one room to another, standing idly, talking on the telephone, or—in a visual pun on Marcel Duchamp's famous painting—descending (as well as ascending) a staircase.

The shots of her walking up and down the stairs are fairly long-range shots; those of her sitting on a chair and talking on the phone are middle-range shots; and the visual *pièce de résistance* of this sequence is a two-minute frontal close-up, as she stands idly, that frames from just above the navel to mid-thighs, with pubic hair up front and center in what has to be the boldest—and some would say most boring—"beaver" shot in the brief history of that budding genre of cinematic experience. But what Godard is exploring in this entire sequence is not the ways of sexually titillating the film-goer, nor the beauty of the unadorned female body, but rather the complex and ambiguous relations among nudity, sex, and liberation—especially as these concern women. And, as always, Godard's exploration is on "two fronts" simultaneously, for while he explores certain issues (in this case, nudity, sex, and liberation) he is also exploring different cinematic possibilities for dealing with these issues.

Take nudity and sex, for instance: they are hardly new to the movie-screen. Movies have always toyed with suggestions of nudity, if not nudity itself—giving us fleeting, peekaboo glimpses of starlets in bubble-baths, or, as sexual mores became less rigid, of starlets popping in and out of bed, but popping so fast that one hardly saw a thing. Slower, longer looks at nudity (almost invariably female nudity) were carefully contrived through elaborate camera angles and framing to avoid full frontal shots. Until roughly five years ago, the unwritten law in most European as well as American productions was "you can't show pubic hair." Lately, however, coming in the wake, I suppose, of nudity onstage, the movies have, for the moment at least, relaxed their vigilance on pubic hair—and on a lot of other things as well—with the result that there is now a rash of 'erotic' films that show anything and (preferably) everything, and there is also a freer, franker acceptance now of frontal nudity in the traditional 'art-film' and 'mature adult-film.'

But to Godard, it is clear, the question of what, or how much is shown, is only part of the issue where nudity is concerned—and the question of *how* is really far more important. If nudity is simply used as a come-on, then it serves to exploit both the audience and the actors and actresses concerned. Moreover, if the undraped female body is simply offered up as a sex-object for male-chauvinist consumption, then the exploitation of women is perpetuated and reinforced.

Here again, seeking to combat the reigning ideology, Godard rejects its conventions and flaunts its rules. He systematically excludes from this sequence all the usual appurtenances of sex-on-the-screen. Instead of showing the woman undressing (the old strip-tease routine), Godard has the woman appear in the nude from start to finish. And she is alone throughout the entire sequence: her nudity is casually, unself-consciously, for herself, for her own free-and-easy feeling of liberation; it is not, as movies invariably have it, female nudity for a man's waiting lust or for any form of sexual activity whatsoever—be it hetero, homo, or auto. In fact, at no point are we, the audience, given the voyeuristic titillation of watching even the old "frustrated longing" bit (heavy sighing, restless tossing, etc.) of the woman-at-home-alone scene (like the one that awkwardly opens *Bonnie and Clyde*)—a scene which always functions as the cinematic correlative of that archetypal male-chauvinist cliché, "All she needs is a good fuck!"

Godard's nude young woman may assert that fucking can help some of her problems, but she's talking of taking the initiative, liberating herself from dependency relationships, of "fucking around" whenever and with whomever she feels like it. Not letting herself get in the situa-

tion where "all she needs is a good fuck" might mean doing just what males have always done or had the right to do, and that is "fucking around"—an activity which the double standard (another male-chauvinist ploy) has always declared off-bounds for women.

And as for cinema's hypocritical attitudes toward pubic hair, Godard not only shows us pubic hair, one could almost say that he rubs our noses in it—in the two-minute close-up—if it weren't for the fact, however, that he simultaneously distances us from this shot by the dialectical interplay he sets up between image and sound. Throughout this sequence, image and sound serve to call each other into question and to raise questions in our minds concerning the relations between the nudity and potential sex-content that we see in the image and, on the other hand, the struggle to eliminate exploitation of one sex by another that we hear advocated on the sound track. Ultimately, of course, this dialectical interplay transcends the immediate issue of Women's Liberation and raises questions concerning the relations between sexual behavior and political behavior in general—with cryptic interjections (both aural and visual—male voice over and hand-written placards) that suggest parallels between "sex-perversion and Stalinism," or "concealing one's sex and keeping secret the decisions of workers' councils," or, finally—to sum up what this particular sequence is all about, "Freudian revolution and Marxist sexuality."

As usual, Godard doesn't spell out what might be meant by these terms; but within the context of this sequence in the film it is not difficult to grasp the point that political liberation must also be conceived in the light of psycho-sexual liberation, and vice versa. And as for the way these issues are presented to the public, it is clear that sex and nudity on stage and screen, while promoted as vehicles of liberation (and undoubtedly helping to liberate our society from old puritanical attitudes towards sex), are nonetheless very likely to be working counter to the much-needed liberation of women from the male-chauvinist attitudes that tend to limit women's free development and to maintain them in a situation of exploitation. Moreover, with sex being used to sell us everything from a toothbrush to an automobile, there is every reason to fear that the much-touted "sexual revolution," in spite of its positive aspects, is actually the trump card of the reactionary ruling class which seeks to develop a hedonistic, pleasure-seeking society that will buy ever greater quantities of the sexual status-symbols which so many consumer products have become. Taking the complexity of the situation into account, unveiling the female body is only an infinitesimally small part of the struggle for liberation—and it is only truly liberating if it helps to unveil the ideology which exploits even women's nudity.

Before moving on to the next sequence, it should be pointed out that although the issues in this "Women's Lib" sequence are raised primarily through the relations between image and sound, nonetheless, some important questions are raised through the relations among the various elements on the sound track. In fact, a number of questions are raised through the use of what might be called *unheard sound.* I am thinking here of the telephone conversation, of which we hear only the half spoken by the nude young woman we see in the image. We wonder not only what the voice on the other end of the line is saying (and perhaps whose voice it is), but also what is the relation between the words we do hear and those we don't hear. Partly because of the way the nude young woman speaks, and partly because of our past experience of the way people in recent Godard films repeat words that are fed to them by someone else (especially through an electronic communications medium—in this case, the telephone); we are strangely suspicious (and meant to be so, I am sure) that the nude is repeating or improvising on words that are being fed to her by the voice (Godard's perhaps?) at the other end of the line.

And if this is the case, what is the relation of the words the woman is saying to her own

thoughts on the subject of Women's Liberation?* And, finally—to be ultra-skeptical (as again I am sure we are meant to be in watching Godard's latest films)—what is the relation of the words the nude young woman is saying not just to her own *thoughts* on the advisability of "fucking around," but also to her *actions*? In short, synch-sound may be used to record the nude young woman's voice, but it's at least a possibility that the words might be "out of synch" with either her own thoughts or actions, or both. And this possibility creates a certain healthy distance from the very simplistic "fucking around" solution which the girl so blithely advocates.

In the next sequence as well, the notion of "synch-sound" is somewhat problematic, for while there is no manipulation of the sound track during the crude, ranting, ultra-right-wing speech of the TV news-commentator we see in the image, nevertheless, questions arise. "Whose words are these?" . . . "Who is speaking?" . . . and "For whom?" There is a strange incongruency between the words that are spoken and the young man who speaks them. Not that he doesn't look like the type to assert such racist and fascist opinions (on the contrary, with his football-player shoulders, large close-cropped head, the narrow gap between his eyes and the wide gap between his front teeth, he seems all-too-perfectly type-cast for the role)—but simply that the words seem too strong and too overtly fascist to come from an ordinary (supposedly 'objective') TV news-commentator.

As we watch and listen to his ravings, we wonder if perhaps he's a politician making a campaign speech on television, but throughout the entire sequence there is no indication that he is anything other than your usual friendly TV news-commentator. So, because this film is 'set' in England, we wonder if perhaps to the English this guy is a well-known, easily identifiable newscaster notorious for his right-wing views—sort of an English Fulton Lewis, Jr. But nothing ever gives us any clues to his identity or indicates what interest he has personally in expounding these views. So we start to wonder just who is 'behind' him, whose words he is speaking, whose interests he is serving?

And these, of course, are questions Godard wants us to ask, not just about the 'information' provided in this sequence of *British Sounds*, but about all the 'information' fed us by television and cinema all the time. A newscaster's voice may be in synch, but Godard wants us to realize just what his words are 'in synch' with—the ruling class ideology. Granted the views expressed by the newscaster in this sequence are a bit more extremist than those we expect,* but the main point of this sequence is that the dissemination of 'information' is not in the service of the people, but in the service of the ruling class which controls the mass media and utilizes these resources to impose bourgeois ideology on the masses as a means of perpetuating control over them. And if the views expressed in the media are not normally so overtly and crudely fascist, it is simply because a cool, calm veneer of objectivity serves far better to lull the audience and to inculcate bourgeois ideology than would an aggressive harangue. But the goals are the same—to perpetuate the power and privilege of the ruling class and the exploitation and fragmentation of the working class.

By occasionally cutting away from the face of the newscaster to intercut shots of isolated workers going about their tasks, Godard graphically suggests the fundamental opposition between the working class and the mass-media lackeys of the ruling class, and suggests as well

*An unsubstantiated rumor has it that the nude girl herself wrote the text delivered "out of synch" (in voice-over); on the other hand, paradoxically, the words she speaks "in synch" on the telephone might be "out of synch" with her own thoughts.

*Program notes prepared by Godard (including his "auto-critique" on the film) indicate that the words spoken by the newscaster in this sequence are excerpted from speeches by "Wilson, Heath, Pompidou, Nixon, etc."

that what little coverage the mass media give to the working class is calculated to depict only the individual worker and to strictly avoid any depiction of the working class *as a class.* As for the sound track in this sequence, it is given over almost entirely to the ranting voice of the ruling class: no dissenting voice can even get a word in edgewise; and even at the very end of the newscaster's harangue, only the barest whisper is heard— as if it were spoken by a gutsy studio technician who nevertheless was afraid of getting caught—asking for the workers to "unite and strike."

And in the very next sequence, it is made clear—*by a worker*—that the workers' interest lies *not* in striking merely to win this or that concession from the capitalist owners and managers, but in using general strikes as a political weapon to help overthrow the capitalist system itself. As a small group of English Ford workers discuss their problem, Godard finds a new way to dramatize what is 'out of synch' and what is 'in synch'—he resolutely keeps the camera aimed away from whoever is speaking, except towards the end, when one worker (who seems to have the most highly developed political awareness of the group) articulates a clear analysis of the situation and formulates a firm proposal for action. The rest of the time, as the workers gropingly discuss some of their general grievances or speak resignedly of their plight, the camera endlessly pans around the room from one silent listener to another, boycotting whoever is speaking at that moment, as if to say "No, we're still groping around in the dark; we're still not speaking to the point; we're not yet in synch with the situation."

But when the camera finally focusses on the young worker who denounces demands for better deals within the capitalist system and calls instead for political organization and united struggle to overthrow capitalism, then, finally, for the first time in the film, everything really comes together in an authentic synchronous unity. There are no aural or visual interjections, no manipulation of the sound track. At this moment, image and sound are completely in synch. Moreover, the words, this time, are clearly in synch with the convictions of the person speaking and with his actions as well. He is involved at this very moment, among his fellow workers, in the very political organization he is talking about. And for once the speaker's words, thoughts, and deeds are all really in synch with his *needs*—not with the ersatz needs inculcated by capitalist ideology, but with his urgent need for creative, non-alienating, non-exploitative work-relations among his fellow men.

Structurally as well as thematically (thematically *because* structurally), this is the moment the film has been building up to—this is the moment which gets it all together, so to speak, and points out the path to be taken towards human wholeness. And, significantly, that way is pointed out to us by what Marx (as well as Lenin) considered to be the real guiding light of humanity—the avant-garde of the proletariat, the worker who matches a concrete experience of the situation with a concrete analysis of the situation.

From this point on—now that we see where the film's basic movement has been leading (as well as where a class-based political movement must lead)—*British Sounds* takes on a more joyful and lyrical tone, as we see in the final two sequences various ways in which students and practitioners of the various arts can contribute to the struggle for a new and more wholesome society. In the next-to-last sequence, a group of Essex University students are seen and heard making radical posters and discussing how to combat the bourgeois ideology of popular songs by rewriting their lyrics in a politically militant spirit. (The Beatles song that goes "You say yes, I say no" is changed to "You say Nixon, I say Mao," then changed again to the more punning line "You say US, I say MAO.") Meanwhile, during the synch-sound presentation of the students' activities, there is also a running voice-over commentary which raises theoretical questions on the ways of creating images and sounds that will oppose the images and sounds of capitalism.

This voice-over commentary—unlike most of the previous overlaid material—does not blot out or let in only a few fragments of the synch-sound material, but rather serves as the theoretical complement to the social *praxis* of the students and artists whose activities are presented in a new, enriched synchronous unity which takes care not to neglect the urgent theoretical considerations which must be dealt with if we are to succeed in building new, non-alienating relations in society.

In this commentary, three types of films are distinguished: imperialist films, revisionist films, and revolutionary films. In an imperialist movie, the speaker tells us, the movie-screen sells the voice of the boss to the viewer: the voice lulls the viewer or it hammers away at him, but in either case it seeks to inculcate bourgeois ideology. In a revisionist movie, the screen is a loudspeaker for a voice that "represents" the people without at all being the actual voice *of* the people, since they still must sit in silence watching a distorted image of themselves. Finally, in a revolutionary film, the screen is merely a blackboard on which is presented a concrete analysis of a concrete situation: it is a learning device for both teacher and pupil and contains a healthy dose of self-criticism.

In the film's final sequence, we see in the image a close-up shot of a hand (Godard's)—covered with red paint, writhing along in a patch of mud and snow until it reaches out to grasp a stick with a red flag attached to it. Getting a firm grip on the stick at last, the hand raises the red flag and waves it triumphantly in the air, while, on the sound track, extracts from revolutionary songs from different countries ring forth. It is a lyrical finale—a piece of cinematic agit-prop theater that gives us the *feel* of revolutionary militancy as a necessary complement to the analytical *rationale* for revolutionary militancy that is provided by the body of the film. Finally, fist after fist is seen punching through a succession of paper Union Jacks, as voices on the sound track assert their solidarity with various British radical movements, and, in a parting shot at ideology, denounce the "Gestapo of the old humanist university."

Conclusions: Pour ne pas conclure

Just as the conclusion of Godard's *British Sounds* does not seek in any way to sum up the film as a whole, but rather to provide us with a "send-off" *(envoi)* which brings us back out of the internal structure of the work of art and into our own everyday realm of social *praxis;* so, too, the conclusion of this essay seems to me to demand not a conclusion in the sense of a summing up, but rather conclusions (plural) to be drawn for future use in that part of our social *praxis* that we carry out as film-goers, film-critics, or film-makers.

And in this sense, I think there are a few striking conclusions to be drawn from *British Sounds* that deserve our attention—and, more important, our *use*. I don't claim that these conclusions are new or that they are uniquely to be drawn from *British Sounds;* but I do consider them grossly neglected in our general practice of cinema. I simply enumerate them here; they are presented, quite literally, for our future use and development:

(1) Relations between image and sound do not by any means have to be 'realistic' to bring us to grips with 'reality.'

(2) Relations among various sound-elements do not by any means have to be 'realistic' to bring us to grips with 'reality.'

(3) 'Reality' itself is a much-abused concept (inside the cinema as well as out) and should give way to a more *dialectical* concept. ["Don't say *nature*," wrote Engels, "say the *dialectics of nature.*"]

(4) Cinema (and television) have a vast potential not merely for "reflecting reality" (which potential has always been tapped) but also for *analyzing* it (which potential has been tapped far too little).

(5) Cinema (and television), like all social *praxis,* are imbedded within class struggle. They must be analyzed in the light of class struggle because, in any case, they are a product of class struggle.

STEPHEN FARBER

Movies from Behind the Barricades

The fickleness of commercial decision-makers in Hollywood has never been more strikingly in evidence, and it must discourage anyone who is concerned about the future of the American film. Just a year ago there was reason to be hopeful. Hollywood had discovered the youth audience. The success of *Midnight Cowboy, Easy Rider, Alice's Restaurant* had convinced the executives that escapism was out of fashion, and, anxious to tap the gigantic new market, they gave unprecedented freedom to filmmakers who wanted to deal with the problems that touched youth and inflamed them. Almost no movies with college settings had been made during the sixties; even *The Graduate,* the most sucessful youth movie of the decade, and set partly in Berkeley, concentrated on sex and romance but curiously avoided any details that would suggest what it was like to be in college two years after FSM. But all at once the men who were trying to predict the future of the business decided that young people wanted to see movies about their own experiences—and what more logical subject for exploitation than campus rebellion and student protest? By late 1969, within a few months of the phenomenal success of *Easy Rider,* several movies about college and revolution were in preparation—*The Strawberry Statement* (based to some extent on James Simon Kunen's book about the Columbia disturbances but relocated in Hayakawa country), *Getting Straight, The Magic Garden of Stanley Sweetheart, The Pursuit of Happiness, The Revolutionary, Up in the Cellar* (a quickie from American International). MGM had Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point* ready for release, and they were counting on the film to save their dying studio. Soon Stanley Kramer, always quick to pick up on a commercial social problem, proposed *RPM* to explore the issue of student rebellion from the other side of the generation gap, with Anthony Quinn scheduled to play Stanley Kramer, the aging, discarded liberal. The campus riot became the stock scene of 1970 films.

Now all these movies are in release. Only *Getting Straight* is a commercial success, and that appears to be more because of Elliott Gould's presence than because of the subject matter. The other movies are not just failures, they are commercial disasters. What went wrong? The question deserves some intensive analysis, because as a result of the failure of these movies, and the huge simultaneous success of *Airport,* the direction of American movie-making looks as if it is about to be reversed. Political films are being cancelled. "The day of the student film-maker and the youth movie is over," I heard an agent say recently. ("It's only *lasted* about a day," I wanted to protest, but to whom?) Studio executives, helplessly trying to understand the audience, and totally bewildered by the box-office receipts, are looking for safe entertainment, for "uplifting" pictures. On a television forum in Los Angeles recently, the head of production at MGM said he thought the audience was tired of "downers." Unfortunately, with the blooming of the Nixon Era, he may be right.

The critics probably did not foresee all of this when they blasted the opportunism of the campus pictures earlier in the year. Certainly few American movies have aroused more critical indignation than *Getting Straight* and *The Strawberry Statement.* Timing worked against the films. Both were released shortly after the student deaths at Kent State and Jackson; people had been shaken by a recognition of the gravity of student-police conflict on campus, and they were not about to tolerate any cynical Holly-

wood profiteers hawking slick, fashionable slogans of dissent and rebellion in the marketplace. *Newsweek* wrote: "While college students are being shot to death and colleges are fighting for their own lives in the real world, the unprincipled fools of the movie business rush in with *Getting Straight,* a violent varsity comedy in which light-hearted kids tear up a university and blow kisses to each other across the embattled campus." When these movies were planned, it was modish to attack the university as an instrument of the military-industrial complex; but by the time they were released ,the university once again seemed a possible haven of reason and sanity in an increasingly repressive society.

Topical movies are clearly a dangerous enterprise, unless they can be produced and released much more quickly than the American studio system presently allows. But there are other reasons why these films have failed to attract the young audience. For one thing, they are probably *too* close to the experience of young people. Especially to young people committed to radical university reform or full-scale social revolution, the very *idea* of a Hollywood movie on the subject is bound to be offensive. And in an even more basic sense, young people have an easier time recognizing false touches in a movie drawn from a world that is familiar to them than they would in a movie about male prostitution in New York or turn-of-the-century Western bandits in South America. These student protest movies are dealing with material in which a large segment of the audience considers itself expert. (One veteran of the Columbia disturbance who was angry at *The Strawberry Statement* told me, "You don't wear your glasses during a bust.")

But these movies are not so much inaccurate as incomplete. Cultural historians in the future, who look to American films for some reflection of larger social attitudes, will find a striking vacuum in the movies of the sixties. No major American movie acknowledges what was taking place from about 1964 to 1968, the period of growing social involvement among the young and the awakening of national consciousness to the moral implications of the war in Vietnam, racism in American society, pollution of the environment, corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency within all major institutions in America—from the Pentagon to the university itself. Movies like *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Graduate, Easy Rider* and *Alice's Restaurant* captured something of the spirit of young people in more indirect and archetypal terms; only *Medium Cool* tried to deal with the real social disturbances of those years within the frame of the fiction film. In the early sixties some talented American movie-makers had turned out a group of interesting political melodramas—*Advise and Consent, The Manchurian Candidate, Dr. Strangelove, Fail Safe, Seven Days in May, The Best Man*—dealing mainly with Cold War tensions and the threat of the Bomb. But throughout the last half of the sixties, our movies determinedly avoided political themes.

Now suddenly, in these student protest movies, all those years in which the conscience of a generation was formed, all those agonized internal struggles and fiery political debates are *taken for granted;* what propels the films of 1970 is the assumption of a youth culture socially and politically alert and dissatisfied, but, in the movies at least, we have no record at all of how young people arrived at this point of concern. And the new movies themselves do not dramatize—sometimes do not even *mention*—the issues that have enraged students and brought them to the point of throwing rocks at cops and at buildings. So there is an eerie sense of dislocation we feel in watching them. Both Richard Rush's *Getting Straight* and Robert Mulligan's *The Pursuit of Happiness* take as their heroes young men who, according to expository dialogue in the films, have already spent several years in active forms of social protest—Selma, anti-war marches, the McCarthy campaign, Chicago 1968—and have grown frustrated and disillusioned with the dream of social involvement. Those political activities of the mid-sixties have never been presented on screen; while we are still waiting to see an

American movie hero who comes to believe in the urgency of social involvement—a SNCC worker, a campus leader, a draft resister—we are already asked to understand characters who are *disillusioned* with the new politics, who *reject* any kind of peaceful political activism, self-consciously withdrawing from society or turning to violence as a last expression of outrage and despair. This bitterness is an accurate enough reflection of the mood of many American youth in 1970, but our movies haven't earned the right to take such a despairing, nihilist stance; their pose of radicalism seems much too glibly asserted.

It may be unfair to score the new movies because of the failures of other movie-makers; but we are so starved for challenging movies about political tensions that we cannot help resenting the intellectual emptiness of the "revolution" films. Even the best of them, *The Strawberry Statement,* is a bad joke if you try to take it as a serious, realistic movie about the issues that pertain to campus rebellion. The level of political thought in the movie can be found in the chants that the protagonist hears (or imagines he hears) at strike rallies: "Strike because you hate cops . . . Strike because you hate war . . . Strike because there is poverty . . . Strike because there's no poetry in your lectures . . . Strike because classes are a drag . . ." I think these slogans are deliberately exaggerated to suggest the nature of a boy's incipient political awareness; they are not meant as a documentary record of the quality of debate on the campuses. But there is no more sophisticated dialogue anywhere in the film. The strike is already on when *The Strawberry Statement* begins, and although we are told that it has something to do with the university taking possession of a playground used by black children and turning it into an ROTC center (based loosely on the situation at Columbia), the issues are never seriously explored or even explained. The meager details provided by the film are meant to clue in the knowing members of the audience; presumably we're all on the right side of the barricades.

The state of siege is also the *donnée* in *RPM.* ("They're occupying the administration building again," someone tells the board of trustees at the very beginning of the film, and their blasé acceptance of the fact is unintentionally amusing.) We have no clear idea why the students are protesting—we can catch a couple of references to Inner City scholarships and university business holdings in South Africa—but the movie-makers don't feel this is a crucial point to establish; they assume we're all hip enough to read the signals and fill in the background for ourselves. The plot of *RPM* turns on three student demands which are supposed to be unreasonable: the students want control over the curriculum, and even over the hiring and firing of faculty and the granting of degrees. To people who don't know anything about the debates that have been taking place on college campuses for most of a decade, these demands may indeed sound ludicrous—proof of the students' childishness and unwillingness to compromise. The young people are portrayed throughout as insensitive, intolerant extremists, and this is certainly one possible interpretation; but I think a movie that comes to this conclusion at least has an obligation to explain *why* the students have grown impatient with the conventional liberal representatives of the university. Those student demands might not seem so presumptuous if the movie allowed us to hear some intelligent student-faculty debates about the role of the university in a troubled world—debates which any student radical has taken part in. At least *Getting Straight* gives a few indications of where orthodox liberal education has lost touch with young people's concerns. *RPM* offers no glimpses of education in progress, no suggestion of the kind of curriculum student radicals would like to see, no fair representation of their ideal of a free, open university; so its anti-student bias seems cheap, insular, irresponsible.

American movies have, of course, never been strong on ideas. But in these films *about* student politics, this characteristic deficiency is particularly damaging. The hero of *RPM* is supposed

to be a brilliant liberal sociologist; but although he drops a few of the right names in conversation, he never articulates any of his own philosophy of nonviolence or his ideas about the function of the university and the inequities in the society, so we have to take his credentials entirely on faith. One of these new movies, Paul Williams's *The Revolutionary,* even tries to define the maturation of a contemporary revolutionary without identifying the social setting in which his ideas develop ("somewhere in the free world," an opening title coyly informs us) or any of the specific social and political injustices he wants to fight. The film tries to build an abstract, generalized portrait that comes across only hollow and vague; the idea of doing a movie about radicalism shorn of a concrete social context for radical acts seems almost perversely evasive.

I believe the absence of genuine political thought in these movies, the failure to dramatize the full nature of involvement and protest, may have alienated many of the young people toward whom these films are ostensibly geared. And yet by ignoring these films, the young are missing some imaginative film-making, some interesting, challenging characterizations, and perhaps most simply, some crude, lively entertainment. I have emphasized the political and intellectual emptiness of these movies because I think that reveals something interesting—and depressing—about mass culture in America, but I do not mean to suggest that the movies are artistically invalidated merely by their political simplifications. In fact, nothing less than the provocative and important question of the relationship of politics to art is raised by this new group of films.

The critics, perhaps anxious to woo the young with a sign of solidarity, have simplified the issue by attacking the films in moral terms. Dotson Rader defined the high moral tone of this criticism in his review of *The Strawberry Statement* for the Sunday *New York Times.* Without bothering to analyze what the film was attempting, he blasted it as "a cheap attempt at the commercial co-option and exploitation of the anguish of a generation," but at least he identified himself as "having been a part of the Columbia Liberation of 1968," so I can understand his outrage, even though I find it largely irrelevant to any reasonable evaluation of the film *as film.* Other critics who did not take part in the Columbia Liberation may have less excuse for denouncing the film as a betrayal of the radical cause. Their objections to the new films, like those of Rader, often sound surprisingly naive: the movies are contemptible because they are not "real" and because they are not "sincere"—and because the studios releasing the films hope to make money from them. But "sincerity"—which may be an admirable quality in a friend or relative—has always been a pretty unreliable criterion for appraising a work of art. Part of the nature of art is to be playful, irresponsible, irreverent, which is not to say that it cannot treat serious themes; but art always serves itself first, the revolution second. *The Strawberry Statement* may have a radical statement to make, but it also exists *for its own sake:* Stuart Hagmann, the director, takes pleasure in *how* he makes his statement, in the beauty of his images, in an inventive structuring of scenes that can suggest an interior point of view; in dramatic confrontation and surprise. Perhaps that concern with technique is a form of self-indulgence, of bourgeois decadence, but no one, not even Godard, has yet explained how art—as opposed to journalism or propaganda—can survive without it.

The difficulty of sorting out aesthetic from ideological, political, and moral responses is most acute in *Getting Straight,* a film which exploits serious issues (the enervation of university bureaucracy, student and police violence) and uses familiar contemporary figures toward whom an audience has very strong, sometimes ambivalent feelings—the black militant, the zonked-out hippie, the reactionary college president, the WASP-coed-turned-radical—to create a galley of eccentrics in a wacky screwball farce. "Ideas and characters are seldom protected from gags, for ideas and characters are expendable and gags aren't," Vincent Canby

wrote of the campus movies. But although Canby's terms are loaded, I'm not sure these are the wrong priorities. The jokes in *Getting Straight* are indeed more important than the political message; so it follows that there can be jokes even on the heroes of the counter-culture—on the hippie who turns super-patriot when confronted with his draft board, on the sheltered liberal girls who are sexually stimulated by rioting, on the humorless, intense students who want to hear about Nat Turner's hemorrhoids in black history class. Are these jokes signs of corruption, Hollywood expediency, lack of true commitment, as Vincent Canby seems to suggest, or are they signs of a genuinely anarchic satire, a refreshing willingness to offend even the young audience toward whom the film is supposedly directed? Probably there is something of both courage and calculation in *Getting Straight*'s wild, erratic, indiscriminately irreverent comedy.

The audience takes *Getting Straight* as a fanciful cartoon. I think they recognize the exaggerations and distortions and enjoy them; they respond to the colorful, amusing caricatures, and to the fantasy of defiance and revolt against the tired, repressive academic tradition. No one who has ever suffered through a pedantic lecture or seminar could possibly resist the outrageous climactic scene of Harry's MA oral exam, in which—goaded by a fanatical professor trying to push his own theory about Fitzgerald's homosexuality—Harry literally freaks out and explodes the polite complacency of his questioners with a barrage of obscenities. Liberal critics have been too solemn about the movie; like crusaders for decency during the thirties, they imagine a simple relationship between art and life—people imitate whatever they see on the screen. Kids do cheer the moment when Harry picks up a rock and heaves it at a university window in *Getting Straight's* final scene, but that doesn't mean they are going to go out and bomb their classrooms, any more than the blacks who cheer the murder of the white policeman at the end of *The Liberation of L. B. Jones* are likely to go out and start shooting at passing cops. These are only movies, after all, and part of their appeal is that they allow audiences to toy with some socially forbidden fantasies within the safety of the darkened theater, where no one can be held responsible for his dreams.

The main trouble with *Getting Straight* is a formal problem; it keeps changing tone—at one moment content to be an up-to-date screwball comedy with a campus setting, at the next straining after Significance. The unreality is set by the outrageously stylized conversations shouted across the quad, by Harry's crazy, broken-down jalopy, which goes through more special-effects contortions than one of those cars invented for James Bond, by the ghoulish free drink of hot water, crushed crackers, and catsup that he prepares for himself. In the slickly fashioned scenes in which Harry debates his girlfriend Jan and her square doctor friend, the university PR man, or the radical activists, we aren't really interested in the content of the debates, we're interested in Harry's flamboyant style and the witty, theatrical repartee. The ideas are subordinated to the effect. And that's perfectly acceptable as long as the film remains comic and fantastic. When it turns serious, it turns sour. In Harry's pompous exchange with the president about the validity of student demands, or in the grossly sentimental scene when he explains how he turned a student on to *Don Quixote*, the crudely oversimplified, pandering "message" cinema is much more offensive than any of the jokes. The first riot sequence, complete with tear gas, police clubbing students and students kicking back, is one of the cheapest pieces of audience exploitation I have ever seen: aesthetically revolting because it is so completely gratuitous. It has nothing to do with the comic character study the film has been sketching; in fact, it goes on for five minutes before Harry, who has been our focus throughout the film, even makes an appearance. In this somber scene the film is crassly titillating its audience, playing with serious issues, and it seems ugly. (On these grounds the film can be contrasted with Ted

Flicker's *Up in the Cellar,* a flip satire on university bureaucracy and repression that never makes the mistake of turning solemn. When Flicker wants to make a strong comment on the direction of American society, he does it *within* the comic frame he has established—as in one brilliant single-shot scene in which the hero and his girlfriend discuss their romance, while in the background a group of agitators are marched off by the police, apparently to a concentration camp. Flicker knows how to keep things in perspective, and his film is all the more mordant as a result.)

Perhaps the reason *Getting Straight* is such a mess is that the writer, Robert Kaufman, has confused two different stories from two different historical periods. The satire on academic insularity and bureaucracy has a genial, lighthearted flavor that places it before the period of extreme student militancy. Similarly, the central theme of a fellow trying to get his teaching certificate, constantly frustrated by the pettiness of the university administrators, simultaneously battling with his girlfriend over her suburban middle-class fantasies, has been reworked in literature several times since the fifties (Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* is probably the archetype). But this slightly nostalgic story is told against a background of student radicalism and violence of the late sixties; the issues and characters don't really belong together. Kaufman and Rush, who are in their thirties, understand Harry Bailey well enough, but they have set him in an environment they seem to know only from second-hand reports.

The major significance and interest of the movie is its success in discovering a protagonist who is at once genuinely contemporary and representative, and absolutely original. Kaufman and Rush focus on an unlikely figure—the pushy Jewish intellectual—and turn him into a new-style hero for comic melodrama. It is a classic star turn, in which all of the qualities that make Elliott Gould so distinctive as a movie personality—his rudeness, his boorishiness, his self-satisfaction, his quick, alert, aggressive mind—are highlighted and glamorized, so that his portrait of Harry takes on an almost-mythical structure. The characterization is conceived in rather grand romantic terms, but it is closely observed too. A former radical, Harry is now contemptuous of the pettiness and naivete of radical demands, committed to the achievement of a limited private goal—the attainment of a teaching certificate—and quite ruthless in his determination to satisfy himself even at the expense of the movement. His cynicism is comprehensive—he is equally skeptical of both the students and administrators. The scenes between him and his girlfriend are especially well-drawn; Philip Roth would understand the mixture of passion and hostility in the relationship of this rough, unwashed Jew to the beautiful, complacent, unattainable WASP goddess, Candice Bergen. The character has roots in recognizable experience; as with the best movie characters, we can imagine a past for him, a life that stretches beyond his screen life. Unfortunately, Rush and Kaufman have had trouble imagining his future. They end the film too early—as Harry and Jan begin to make love on a stairway, while the riot goes on around them. But this facile fantasy conclusion leaves too much unsettled; we want to know where Harry will turn now, how he will use his energy and his intelligence once he has recognized the impossibility of creating a meaningful life within conventional boundaries. In other words, Rush and Kaufman have enough talent to create a valid, exciting, eccentric modern hero, but they have not tested themselves—or Harry—as searchingly as they might have; they lack the vision to foresee how this kind of man will make his way in the world.

A number of these films demonstrate the same ability to create interesting, offbeat characters, and the same inability to place those characters in the challenging dramatic situations that they deserve. Even Kramer's *RPM* has a potentially fascinating hero, a character through whom Kramer has tried to express some of his own doubts and angers and frustrations. F. W. J. Perez is in a classic liberal dilemma—a man who spent his life fighting repression suddenly finds

himself repudiated by the radical young, who are unable to distinguish him from the most reactionary trustee. Anthony Quinn sensitively captures his humiliation at the contemptuous way the radicals treat him, his revulsion from violence and ultimate self-revulsion when he is forced to ally himself with the police; the material is here for a complex moral study. But Erich Segal's script, which delights in glib one-liners, utterly fails to develop or illuminate the theme. Without any incisive confrontation of the liberal and radical sensibility, without any effective visual or dramatic expression of the hero's inner life, all that we *can* respond to is the idea.

In *The Revolutionary* Jon Voight is given a little more to work with, and he brings all of his craft and conviction as an actor to the sketchy, difficult role of "A," the young revolutionary-in-the-making. He fashions an expert, delicate portrait of the awkward, intense student intellectual, in its homely way probably much closer to reality than the gargoyle animated by Elliott Gould in *Getting Straight.* Voight is particularly good at capturing the would-be revolutionary's fussiness and solemnity. He conceives the character in comic terms, but the comedy grows out of affection; and although the movie ignores most of the dramatic possibilities of its subject, the writing and performance of the central role help to give a little texture and humanity to a curiously pale treatise.

The role written (by Sidney Carroll) for Michael Sarrazin in *The Pursuit of Happiness* is even more intriguing; this is one of the first films that seriously tries to examine the background and unspoken motivations of today's rootless, disaffected young. Like other youth films, *The Pursuit of Happiness* emphasizes the repressiveness and dishonesty of respectable society—the bigotry of William's upper class family, the duplicity of his uncle, a successful lawyer, the hypocrisy of the courts, the brutality of our prisons. But this is no simple celebration of youth against the Establishment. William, our sensitive, alienated hero, a weary veteran of the antiwar movement, is clearly limited and inadequate in his own way. The film establishes this immediately by showing his obsession with toy boats, and then goes on to dramatize his helplessness and irresponsibility through a variety of adventures. Again and again, when in a bind, he turns back to his family and relies on their money and professional expertise to extricate him. At the very end William uses his grandmother's money to buy his way out of the country, but he bungles even that. He hopes to go to Canada, but the shifty pilot takes all his money and then tells him he is flying to Mexico on this round. It is too late to back down, and long past the point of caring where he goes or what he does, William accepts the ride; as far as we can tell, his life is over. Trying to justify his lack of commitment, he says the country is having a "nervous breakdown," and although what the film shows us of the American system of justice would bear out his charge of ineradicable corruption, we feel William is only another victim of the society, hardly a victor over its hypocrisies. The film traces his carelessness, his lazy disillusionment, his casual disregard for authority to his easy, spoiled childhood; by asking us to see the relationship between the dull, comfortable upbringing of today's university rebels and the passive, tired style of much of their protest, *The Pursuit of Happiness* provocatively undercuts sentimentalization of the young—without going to the other extreme and trying to whitewash the decadent institutions of American society. This characterization gives the film an unusual point of view, but most everything else about it is undistinguished or simply false: Most of the other characterizations and performances are on a caricature level, and there is a good deal of shoddy contrivance in the plot; the result is that a very believable three-dimensional character is placed in a series of extremely unbelievable situations.

One of the chief difficulties with these socially conscious youth movies is deciding whom they are designed for. Are they propaganda films made to convert older people to the stu-

dent cause? Ar they new mass-audience entertainments simply to exploit the fantasies and fears of the young audience? Or can they be called works of art, created to satisfy the filmmakers themselves? All of these movies have either crassly or confusedly hedged on their intentions, and perhaps that is why they seem to be fully satisfying to no one. *The Strawberry Statement* is the most cogent and unified of all of them, but even it is not entirely clear in its aims. The writer, Israel Horovitz, and the director, Stuart Hagmann, seem to share their critics' insistence on social relevance as the major criterion in evaluating art; they want their movie to be a respectable radical-liberal document as well as a work of cinematic art. But the two aims may be irreconcilable. Hagmann has already made two significant cuts in the film— a comic fellatio scene that wittily mocked some of the young people's fantasies about violence, and a flashback montage at the very end—probably in the mistaken belief that those scenes compromised the seriousness of the political message. Hagmann and Horovitz have both said that they believe the film's main importance lies in what it tells middle America about student dissent: "We've got a very small ambition: to show those who still need showing that every protesting student is not insane . . ." Fortunately, the film is not that easily summarized and dismissed. In spite of its confusions of intention, its political and intellectual inadequacies, *The Strawberry Statement* is one of the finest movies about young people ever made in America, an extraordinary lyric of childhood's end and the agonized awakening of a radical sensibility.

The Strawberry Statement has angered some people because, like *Getting Straight,* it has an impudent, skeptical sense of humor about young people and their movement. Simon joins the strike primarily because he is interested in a girl he meets there. Once inside the occupied administration building, he seems more anxious to use the president's bathroom and to watch *Mutiny on the Bounty* on television than to take part in the radicals' debate about slanted news

THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT

coverage and war research on campus; he even lies about how he received a bloody nose because he wants to impress the hard-core activists with firsthand evidence of police brutality. Does the film's psychological astuteness really demean the radical cause? Only the most self-righteous of young people would deny that part of their reason for joining the movement is the simple thrill of rebellion and the promise of fraternal solidarity—and maybe a few even consider the possibility of sex behind the barricades. But in any case, Simon's initial apathy is what sets the conversion story in motion. *The Strawberry Statement* is told from the perspective of a boy who *isn't* involved, who is confused in his responses to radical rhetoric, who plays at revolution and sneaks into a student strike as if he were embarking on a forbidden adventure in a new kind of wonderland.

Stuart Hagmann's visual style has been generally derided as a mélange of TV commercial

effects, but nonetheless it seems to me remarkably appropriate to capturing the quality of Simon's imagination. For Simon conceives his life in romantic terms, with extravagant flourishes borrowed from "lyrical" TV commercials and other movies. We are seeing the world through Simon's eyes (a simple fact that has somehow eluded almost all of the critics), and he tries to hold life off, see it with aesthetic distance. Reared on the media, he is uncomfortable without his radio or his Super 8 movie camera in his hand. One of the first times he takes note of the movement is when he comes upon a mime troupe enacting the beating of a student—revolution seen as dramatic performance. The original version of the film emphasized the secondhand nature of Simon's perceptions even more strongly: in the fellatio scene, when the girl in the xerox room took off her sweater to initiate Simon after his beating, Hagmann provided flash cuts of her breasts that were very obviously meant as a parody of the seduction scene in *The Graduate*. (Simon even asked the girl, as he gaped at her, "Did you see *The Graduate*?")

Simon's perspective on life is enchanted by movie and TV memories, the flair and beauty of art; but that enchantment is a kind of protective blindness too. (It is no accident that Simon becomes aroused to a sense of social injustice for the first time when a group of blacks accost him in the park and, for no clear reason, smash his movie camera.) Hagmann deliberately calls attention to his visual style, for he means to comment on it: one of the film's most important themes is the magical power and the irresponsibility of art, and the distortions that arise when life begins to imitate art.

Like this scene in the park, most of the film works on a metaphorical, wittily allusive level, not a literal one. Hagmann uses recurring symbolic images—the crew teams rowing in harmony through the beautiful clear water, oblivious to the blighted urban landscape just out of eyeshot—as a kind of poetic refrain. And in the second half of the film he makes some startling experiments in blurring fantasy and reality that have gone virtually unnoticed by the people outraged over the film's commercial gloss. *The Strawberry Statement* takes an important step toward refining cinematic language. Simon's adventures in and out of the administration building, back at crew practice, swinging around the city with his girl, are a free-form fantasy trip, a combination of memory and projection, imagination and reality that is not exactly comparable to anything I have seen in films before.

Most of these scenes are probably part of an imagined drama, not a real one. They are all shot through with a crazy, uninhibited kind of whimsical poetry. Transitions are illogical, unpredictable jumps in time and place disorient us. There are witty, outrageous, absurdist fantasies—the sequence in which Simon is reverently whispered over, introduced to a black militant, and carefully photographed when he comes in boasting that he was attacked by pigs, or the abrupt conversion of Simon's enemy George, the All-American Jock, into a committed revolutionary. Other, more realistic scenes are shaded with subtle, unsettling surrealistic touches—an old man in a café where Simon is daydreaming sits staring at the miniature stuffed animals spread out on the table before him; a Negro woman holding an umbrella on a sunny day rocks back and forth with laughter as students are dragged away from a demonstration; Linda leaves Simon, saying, "I have to get the bus," and a moment later, in the background, we see her rising in a glass elevator. In his imagination Simon can experiment with revoltionary activity, curiously, timidly, roguishly; he and the other students torment the police on a playground, all very genially, and when they are hauled off to jail, Simon tries to see what it would feel like to litter from the back of the paddy wagon. And during all of this, while the strike and the occupation continue, Simon even imagines he has time to live out a full-length romantic melodrama: Linda rejects him for another activist (what he calls an "extrarevolutionary relationship"), he mopes around for a while, and she

finally returns to him (in a scene that I think contains a deliberate parody of the reunion of Audrey Hepburn and Albert Finney in *Two for the Road*). The love scenes, though tender and charming, are not presented quite straight; they seem to be placed in quotation marks. They are meant to be seen as a slightly overripe stylistic convention, capsulizing a way of life that is already corrupt.

What is most poignant is the sense of compression and unreality in these scenes—as if an entire boyhood romance were being squeezed into a few days, an entire dream of growing up absurd accelerated, apprehended only in fragments that seem to shatter before our eyes. This lyrical fantasy, in which "Up against the wall!" is no more than a challenge to masculine bravado—a kaleidoscope of images taken from romantic art and charged with all the passion and imagination that a boy can bring to ordinary experience—is a projection of the youth Simon wants to live, the youth he might have lived if he were only allowed a little more time to grow up. The strongest impulse behind the film is a nostalgia for lost innocence, a lament for a less urgent time when young people still had the leisure to spin dreams in which they might play the romantic hero.

Only at the film's climax—the elaborate, nightmarish sequence of the police bust—are these feelings clearly focused for us; there is a delicate sense of self-irony throughout many of the early sections of the film, but the climax turns a grotesque distorting mirror on the romantic images, makes us reexamine all that had come before from a shocking new perspective. In this vision of the forces of the state turning their weapons against the children of their society, Simon is finally compelled to confront reality firsthand, denied the protection of fantasy. Revolution is no longer part of the game of growing up absurd; Simon has no more time to play or to dream. He is, at last, deeply involved and totally committed.

With this terrifying conclusion, *The Strawberry Statement* unquestionably presents a serious political statement about the inhumanity of our society and the radicalization of a boy scourged and purified by the horror of police brutality. But what makes the film so moving is its genuine affection for the boyhood dreams that the camera lingers over in the early sections. The movie is ironic about Simon's fantasies of romance and revolution, but it is also deeply attracted to his exuberant, playful, uncommitted vision of the world. In the last analysis, the film reminds us of the staggering sacrifice our age demands; we cannot help but mourn Simon's freewheeling imagination, a youthful spirit of abandon that can never be reclaimed. Perhaps the doubts and ambiguities of the film prevent it from being effective as a revolutionary document; but I would put it another way—*The Strawberry Statement* is remarkable because it transcends its "message" to make us *feel* the anguish that accompanies radical political commitment in our world. Yeats's great poem about the Irish rebellion of Easter 1916 sums up the transformation of ordinary men into revolutionaries—"All changed, changed utterly:/ A terrible beauty is born"—showing his awareness of the human costs of a cause he believed in. "A terrible beauty is born": the words would be an appropriate way of describing our feelings at the end of *The Strawberry Statement* too. Dotson Rader, that veteran of the Columbia Liberation, calls the film's attention to the complexities of human feeling "counterrevolutionary." And in a way, he may be right. But it seems the reason many of us regularly turn from politics back to art is that we are still searching for an illumination of the imaginative and emotional truths that any movement necessarily ignores. If the wave of campus rebellion movies has clarified this one crucial matter for film-makers and audiences, it will have served, in the long run, a useful purpose.

R C DALE

René Clair in Hollywood: An Interview

R C Dale is preparing a book on René Clair, to be issued by the University of California Press, and he recently spent some months in Paris—analyzing Clair films, gathering research material, and talking with the director about his films. In the course of their conversations, Clair's thoughts often turned to Hollywood, even when discussing his French films. Dale writes: "This text is a partial summary of those thoughts, gleaned from three months of talk, sometimes translated and sometimes quoted directly, since our conversations lapsed in and out of French and English."

RC: You know, I was rather lucky in Hollywood. I worked with fine writers and pleasant people. In filming, the writing collaboration is very important—the most important one there is, as a matter of fact, since the script is the most important element of the film. If you are working with a really good writer, you can disagree freely between the two of you without any trouble. That's the only way you end up with a good script. Second-raters are dangerous. They only have one idea and they usually aren't willing to change their minds about anything. That can be disastrous. But I worked with some really fine people: Norman Krasna, Dudley Nichols, Preston Sturges, and Robert Pirosh, who was young and just beginning as a writer and who later supervised the American version of *Le Silence est d'or*.

RCD: *Dudley Nichols was quite a bear for work, I understand.*

He had unbelieveable energy. I'd come into his office at 8:30 or 9:00 and he'd be waiting for me. We always started to work immediately. He never talked about anything but the script, never even mentioned the news of the war or anything like that. He'd sit at his typewriter and pound away at it as I paced the floor. At noon they'd send in a glass of milk and a sandwich, but that didn't interrupt the work for a second. Dudley typed everything, and since we kept changing things as we worked out the scripts, he'd tear the sheets out of the typewriter and throw them on the floor. I used to ask him why he didn't write things out by hand instead of taking all that trouble with the typewriter. But he was too busy thinking about the script to give me an answer. It almost killed me, but the script for *It Happened Tomorrow* was the only one I ever saw finished in three weeks. And for *And Then There Were None*, we didn't go at a very leisurely pace, either; that script was finished in four weeks. Dudley and I were both former journalists, you know, which incidentally allowed us to have a lot of fun working details of life in a newspaper office into the script of *It Happened Tomorrow*. Maybe it was his newspaper experience that made Dudley work as if he had been writing for a deadline that was always going to come up in ten minutes.

Was your collaboration on I Married a Witch *with Marc Connelly and Robert Pirosh as happy, if somewhat less frantic?*

Well, to tell the truth, I worked more with Bob

Pirosh than with Marc on that script, Marc collaborated more as an advisor than as an actual writer. When I first went to work on the film, Buddy de Silva, the producer, assigned me a writer and told me that the writer would work on the script and give it to me when he had finished it. As a European director used to writing my own scripts, I couldn't quite believe my ears, so I pretended I didn't understand him. I said, "Well, when can we start?" But he was insistent: "Let him write it. Are you a writer or a director?"

I used to wonder what they paid people for in Hollywood. I even started getting lazy myself while I was shooting. I would arrive on the set in the morning and somebody would push my chair under me and I would ask what we were scheduled to shoot that day. That could never have happened to me in Europe, where most directors had to keep everything organized in their heads. Maybe it's a familiarity with European filmmaking practices that leads some European critics so far astray when they're talking about American directors. In any case, I still have to smile when I read their pronouncements on the ethics and aesthetics of certain directors because everybody who worked in Hollywood knows perfectly well that most of the time one person wrote the script, the director of photography did the framing and composition and lighting, somebody else cut the film from all of the shots they had made—the only thing many of those directors ever did was work with actors. I knew that if I ever let myself fall into that system I could never make my own kind of film again. I once told David Selznick that I could never work for him because his creative personality was too strong; he was too much of a director himself. I wanted to make my own films, not his, and I knew that it would have been very hard to do if he had been my producer. Hollywood usually thinks of directors as stage directors whose job is to take care of the actors. That is certainly a very important part of the job, but not the most important part, to my way of thinking. The writing is much more important.

Bob Pirosh and I worked very well together. We got out what we considered to be a reasonable script for *I Married a Witch*. But the front office didn't like everything we'd done, so we changed the script considerably. After a lot of rewriting, we finally got an approval from them and started shooting. Of course, neither of us intended to shoot the approved script exactly as it had been submitted, so we would sometimes sit up late rewriting the script for the next day's shooting. And every morning Buddy de Silva would go to the screening room to watch the rushes. He had to watch the rushes for six or seven pictures every day, of course, and he certainly couldn't keep every shot of all of those pictures in his head. He liked what he saw of our film so he never bothered checking up on us to see whether we were actually shooting the approved script. It never occurred to him that we were working at night on the real script and then shooting it during the day.

So in a sense you had a free hand, although it involved a bit of legerdemain. But wasn't Preston Sturges assigned as the producer for that picture?

Yes. My agent, Myron Selznick, had sent me a book, *The Passionate Witch*. I read it and thought I could do something with it. I met Preston, who eventually became a good friend of mine—he spoke French as well as I do—and who was then the leading director at Paramount. We talked over the project and he agreed to produce it for me. Paramount had been trying to find something right for Veronica Lake, who had been receiving lots of publicity partly because of her beautiful hair. They didn't want an ordinary role for her, and Preston convinced them that *I Married a Witch* was just what they needed. That's what did it: Veronica Lake got me that job; she was a lot more important to Paramount than I was, believe me. Of course when I went to work on the picture, Preston was busy directing something else, so he didn't know exactly what was happening either.

Poor Preston, he was one of my best friends, but he was really a little too strange for Hollywood. He was raised in France, you know, born in America but raised in France. His moth-

er was quite rich and she was a great admirer of Isadora Duncan and her group of neo-Greeks. She used to wear Greek gowns everywhere, and her friends could be seen walking along the Champs-Elysées dressed in togas and sandals in the middle of winter. Poor Preston had to ride to school on his bicycle wearing a short little toga. Paris is probably the worst city in the world for that sort of thing. You can imagine what he had to go through on his way to school every day. Kids not only shouting insults at him all the time, but also throwing stones and mud and making him suffer all kinds of indignities. It's pretty hard to come out of a childhood like that and still be sane.

He was certainly one of the most talented oddballs who ever worked in Hollywood. I've noticed in our conversations that you tend to minimize the actual job of directing in your mind, and rather to concentrate importance in the fields of writing and cutting. I take it you didn't adopt the Hollywood system of multiple-angle shooting in which the scenes or sequences were actually resolved in the cutting room.

No, I've never done that. For me, after writing, cutting is the most important part of film-making. Or let me put it this way, to clarify what I mean. There are three important areas in film-making: writing the script, shooting, and cutting. If I had to abandon one of them, it would be the shooting. After all, with a bad script and a bad cutter, what can a good director do? But a cutter can often ruin a good film and sometimes even save a bad one. For that reason, I write my scripts so that in a sense I can practically cut with my camera as I am shooting. As a result, the cutting process is very easy and very obvious. I suppose you could say that I cut as I write and then again, of course, as I shoot.

When I was making *I Married a Witch,* Buddy de Silva went to see my cutter, Eda Warren, one day. He had been wondering what had been going on. He was used to seeing several thousands of feet of rushes a day from his directors, and I was only turning in maybe 450 feet a day. He couldn't figure out why I was working so slowly, and he also couldn't imagine how my footage could be cut into coherent sequences, since I didn't make five or six different shots of every scene. So Eda Warren cut a sequence for him to show him that it could indeed be done, and he went away satisfied but surprised, and never mentioned it to me at all. And he was amazed that the picture was shot in five weeks.

It wasn't much of a secret. I simply shot exactly what I knew I would need, whereas some directors at that time were shooting everything they could conceivably turn their lens on. I was told that few of them ever came near a cutting room, and I'm always amused to read about some director's brilliant cutting, when I know for a fact that the man had never set foot in a cutting room. For the most part, supervision of cutting was the producer's business. That wasn't always true, of course; such great directors as Lubitsch and Wyler watched over their own cutting. I think the Hollywood practice of shooting a scene from lots of different angles was initiated by Irving Thalberg. In any case, I call it the Irving Thalberg School of cinema. And, you see, he was very wise, for it enabled him to control the cutting of the film himself, and if you control the cutting of the film, God knows you control the film. Thalberg could take the film out of the director's hands with no trouble at all, and cut it however he liked. That would have been very hard to do with one of my pictures because of the way it was shot.

I Married a Witch

Don't forget that, for the most part, Hollywood was a factory, set up like a bunch of plants with different people in different departments doing different things who often didn't even come into contact with one another. The Europeans who had actually made films in Europe before coming to Hollywood were pretty rare, and our methods of working were equally rare. The Hollywood system, the Irving Thalberg School, got its results in one way, we got ours in an entirely different way. There's certainly room for both methods in film-making, and I have esteem for many of the Hollywood directors who worked in the system.

I suppose the most amusing part of it is seeing critics barking up lots of wrong trees. While you were in Hollywood, did you adopt any other local practices, such as conducting sneak previews?

Well, actually, I had already conducted sneak previews in France, ten years earlier. But let me tell you about the sneak preview for *I Married a Witch,* which was very instructive. The studio maintained complete secrecy about it. Nobody knew where it would be held; the studio wanted a completely natural audience that wouldn't be affected by the presence of actors or studio people. A half-hour before the preview, a studio limousine came to pick me up to take me to the theater. The only other studio people there were Buddy de Silva, Eda Warren, and Marc Connelly.

After the show, Buddy de Silva was very happy. The audience had enjoyed the picture very much, had laughed and even applauded. He said: "It's perfect." But I said, "No, I have to change something." "You're crazy; they loved it." "Listen, Buddy, I'll meet you in your office tomorrow morning and show you what I mean." Then I started looking through the audience reaction cards. I was busily reading them when Buddy said, "Don't read them; count them." He was right, in a way. The fact that people were interested enough to fill out a card was more important than their individual reactions. There were about 200 cards, most of them quite enthusiastic. But then there was the inevitable one that said simply, "It stinks." I didn't feel bad about that because Preston Sturges had told me beforehand that there was one man in town who went to every preview, apparently with the sole purpose of writing that opinion invariably on every card he filled out. Later Preston asked me if Mr. Stinker had been at the preview, and I replied, "Yes, and he brought his family along with him." Another card answered the question, "Did you think anything was too long?" by saying: "Yes, Veronica Lake's hair." As you can see, Buddy de Silva was right; the number of cards did count much more than what was written on them.

The next day I went to Buddy's office. He told me again that the picture was perfect, and that I was crazy to change anything. I got out the transcriptions—the records we had made in the theater the night before during the performance. We put them on his phonograph and started listening. At one point near the end, over the dialogue we could hear someone start to cough, and then somebody else, until for a while it seemed that everybody in the house was coughing. I said: "Whatever is happening there has to be changed." It was easy to figure out the location in the film from the dialogue that was also recorded on the transcription. The coughing occurred during the witch's rather poetic dialogue just before she died. Since we had been showing the workprint in the theater, it was easy to remove that part of the film when we went to cut the negative.

Those coughs were just like the cards—better actually, since Mr. Stinker wasn't thinking about what he was doing when he coughed. Individually the members of that audience could have been each one a genius. The reverse was more likely the case, but that doesn't matter at all. The audience can be a collection of imbeciles, idiots, and cretins. They may not know anything about movies, perhaps they don't know anything about anything. But by bringing them together a sort of collective genius arises from among them, a collective, spontaneous way of reacting to your film. And that genius is right, no matter how wrong each of them might be separately. When they start

coughing, you know you've lost their attention. And when you've lost their attention, it's time to start wondering what you've done wrong. The film was finished, we'd made it, we were all professionals, none of us saw anything wrong with the film. We would never have listened to any single member of that audience if he had tried to tell us that there was something wrong with the picture. But as soon as I heard that outbreak of coughing I knew that we had indeed made a mistake and that I had to correct it.

Another area of working in Hollywood that must have fascinated you was the special effects departments.

Yes, I was really nuts about special effects, and always had been. When I first started out, in films like *Le Fantôme du Moulin Rouge* and *Voyage imaginaire*, we had to do everything, absolutely everything in the camera. But since I was so fascinated by special effects, I used to do all the calculating—you know, backwind eighteen frames here, put in a matte at such and such a frame. I was really crazy about it. I remember seeing Douglas Fairbanks's *Thief of Baghdad* and DeMille's—what was it? *Ten Commandments*, I think. They had me absolutely mystified. All I could think about was the special effects. How in hell did they do that, make Douglas fly about on the magic carpet, for example? I spent weeks trying to figure it out. And when I got to Hollywood, where the special effects departments were by far the best in the world, full of old tricksters from way back, I found it hard to do anything but hang around and watch them creating their miracles. At one time, after I'd been spending too much time in the special effects department, I got a polite note from the front office saying rather euphemistically that I was welcome to supervise the special effects, but asking me not to forget about shooting the rest of my picture. They were right, of course; it wasn't my job.

So you found Hollywood receptive to your own particular variety of fantasy and use of special effects?

Not so much as you might think. I wanted to do a film of *The Flying Yorkshireman* in which the lead character actually flies by moving his arms up and down as we do in dreams, but the whole thing fell through because I couldn't use the script as it had been written. To make it suitable and properly fantastic, I would have had to change everything, and a lot of money had already been put into it. Since the producer would have lost face if he had been obliged to admit that he had wasted a lot of money on something that didn't work out, the whole project fell through.

Nothing is more limited than the fantastic genre. You can count the basic themes on the fingers of your hands. There's the trip into the past or future, bringing the past or future into the present, ghosts, and what have you. And one thing is certain: if you work in the fantastic, you can be sure someone has been there before you. The chances are that some day someone will come up to you and say: "Hey, you stole my idea in such and such a picture."

In Hollywood, they are very cautious about that because of the legal entanglements that can ensue if you get caught copying—or even appearing to have copied. Let me tell you a story to illustrate that point. In the early forties, Frank Capra had bought a screenplay—or the beginnings of one, anyway—from two writers. Before he went any further on the project, he had the legal department research the property. They went over everything they could think of, and finally they came to just the sort of thing they had been looking for. It was in a one-act play by Lord Dunsany that had been put on in London by Ronald Colman in the early twenties. The two scripts had the same basic device: the possibility of reading tomorrow's newspaper today. But in Lord Dunsany's play the lead character reads in a newspaper the news of his own death the next day. That gave us the idea for the last part of the film. Since Capra knew very well that the Dunsany estate could have made trouble for him, he bought the rights from them, even though there wasn't the remotest question of plagiarism involved. He bought the rights to make sure nobody from the estate would sue him over that accidental resemblance. Eventually Capra sold the rights

to Arnold Pressburger, who asked me to take over the project. At first I refused, but then I reconsidered and Dudley Nichols and I redid the whole script from scratch. Even so, those two scriptwriters and Lord Dunsany got their screencredit for the "original material."

So that's how It Happened Tomorrow *came to be? Somewhat the same thing happened with* I Married a Witch, *didn't it?*

Yes, in a sense. We did an adaptation of a Thorne Smith novel, *The Passionate Witch.* But in the first place Thorne Smith died after he'd written not much more than the very first pages of the novel—somebody else finished the whole thing up—and in the second place there's practically nothing left of the novel in the film. Just to show you how little of the novel got into the film, let me tell you a little story. I started off that picture working with a very fine screenwriter in the naturalistic vein, and it soon became apparent that we shouldn't be working on that particular picture together. One day when we were trying to figure out what to do with the witch's father, he said quite seriously: "I've got it; we'll have the old witch go to Germany and kill Hitler." That's all it took to make me realize that no matter how good a writer he was for some subjects, he wasn't my man for this picture.

You've talked with great affection about three of the pictures you made in Hollywood. How about the other two, Forever and a Day *and* And Then There Were None?

Forever and a Day I totally disown. A group of British artists working in Hollywood at the beginning of the war wanted to make a picture as a patriotic gesture. It was a kind of donation to the British Red Cross, and of course nobody was paid. At the last minute, Alfred Hitchcock, who had agreed to do one of the sketches, decided to back out. Since the British considered I was almost one of them after having made two pictures in England, they asked me to direct that short sketch and so I agreed. But the script had already been completed, and I only partially revised it. The way it had been written, the sketch would have lasted half an hour and it would have cost a fortune to shoot. All I really did was trim it down into reasonable proportions and make it viable. After I shot it, it was cut and recut. Don't bother to see it; it's not one of my pictures. As I've told you, all the value of a film is in the script and the cutting. This was a script written by someone else that I had only edited. And by the time the picture was released, the cutting certainly wasn't mine. It's the only film I've ever directed for which I didn't write the script. Completely uninteresting.

It probably won't make you too happy to learn that you are usually given credit for the whole film in the States, when the part you directed isn't more than ten minutes long. But how about And Then There Were None?

Pretty much the same thing. That's Agatha Christie, not me.

Or Agatha Christie told by you, maybe? I see plenty of René Clair in that film, even if it is a rather faithful adaptation. Nobody else could have signed that one.

Perhaps. But I remember seeing Chaplin one day and he said, "I've just seen *I Married a Witch.* There was no need to see the credits. In two minutes I'd have known it was your work." Now there's a real René Clair film, and those are the ones that are interesting. *And Then There Were None* isn't interesting because it isn't personal. The only interesting part of making the film was working on the adaptation with Dudley Nichols. The mystery story is full of little bluffs, little deceits that can't be presented on the screen. It was intriguing to find ways of working around them. And of course we had to change Agatha Christie's tone since we conceived the picture more or less as a comedy. But you realize that every picture I have ever made—*La Proie du vent,* to some extent *Break The News,* which I wrote for someone else, based on another film I'd seen, and then ended up having to direct in England, and the two Hollywood films we've just been talking about—every picture I have made that didn't really come out of my own heart, is a picture I'd like to disown. God knows, everybody makes mistakes. It seems to me that it should be the artist's right to destroy what he has created if

he later realizes that it isn't really his own or his best work or even simply his good work.

If I were speaking as an artist, I'd agree with you entirely, but as a student or critic or fan or whatever you want to call it, I can't agree at all. But let's return to Hollywood. Despite what your biographers, Georges Charensol and Roger Régent, describe as hard times, what with your separation from all your friends and colleagues in France as well as your difficulty in finding suitable pictures to make in America, your recollections of Hollywood seem to fire your enthusiasm and affection a great deal.

It is true that I missed my friends and my country a great deal. I could have been happier in Hollywood if I'd been there under different circumstances, but that wasn't Hollywood's fault. And the times weren't so bad as that. I could have worked if I'd wanted to, but I didn't find good subjects. Well, no, that's not exactly right. After *Flame of New Orleans,* which didn't do well at the box office, it's true that I couldn't find work. For five years, ever since the success of my first English film, *The Ghost Goes West,* I'd been getting telegrams from Hollywood: come and we'll give you anything; we can't get along without you—you know the sort of thing. But after one flop, suddenly nobody had ever heard of me. That's the polite way of putting it in Hollywood. But once *I Married a Witch* was made and well received, the responsibility for not working was entirely mine. I was on a five-year contract at Paramount. After *I Married a Witch* came out, they renewed my option for another year. They could renew my option, but I couldn't renew theirs. Strange system. Well, they gave me all sorts of things to read and nothing pleased me. I just couldn't find anything that was my style. It was wartime, you know, and nothing suited me; it was all wrong, not my sort of thing at all. At one point after Buddy de Silva had offered me a number of subjects that I had to turn down, he said in exasperation: "I didn't know you were such a specialist." He was really surprised that I turned down so many things because they weren't in my line. In those days, you know, they had a list of directors tacked up on a bulletin board. Whoever was free would do the next picture. They proposed, for example, that I do a very dark and sad Graham Greene story. I was horrified, and said, "No, I can't, it's not my sort of picture." The next name on the list was Fritz Lang's, so he did it, and of course he did it well. Once, after several months of inactivity—I'd been reading a lot, that is, but hadn't found anything I liked enough to begin working on—the front office at Paramount reminded me that I was being paid. That amused me, so I said, "OK, don't pay me until I work. Don't give me another check until I start writing again." The big boss was absolutely scandalized at the thought. No pay! It was a religion, that weekly paycheck in Hollywood. I had blasphemed. I don't think I could have said anything that would have shocked him more.

FRANK NULF

Luigi Pirandello and the Cinema

It would be difficult to overestimate the influence of Luigi Pirandello on twentieth-century theater. As the author of such plays as *Each In His Own Way, Henry IV, Tonight We Improvise,* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author,* his contributions to developments in contemporary drama are well known, and it is incontestable that he is one of the most significant of those responsible for innovations in both theatrical form and content in the first decades of the 1900's. His relationship to Anouilh, Sartre, and Camus has been clearly shown by

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Thomas Bishop in *Pirandello and the French Theatre*. Beckett, Inonesco, Genet, and Vauthier all are indebted to him as they have publicly acknowledged.

Because Pirandello's reputation, especially outside of Italy, rests primarily on his plays, it is important to recall the scope of his total career, and the quality and importance of his writing and activities outside of the theater. Novelist, playwright, poet, and Nobel Prize winner, Pirandello was clearly Italy's greatest literary figure following the decline of D'Annunzian romanticism until his death in 1936. But he was also concerned with the cinema and, as a result, made some valuable contributions to film thought.

For a writer to have dealings with the film industry in Italy during the early years of this century was not at all unusual. Most of the major figures signed contracts to write scenarios or silent-film titles, or to permit films to be made from their stories or plays. Those authors included Giovanni Verga, Guido Gozzano, Lucio d'Ambra, Luciano Zuccoli, Marco Praga, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and Pirandello. In the case of D'Annunzio a unique contract was negotiated with Ambrosio Studios in 1911—which included not only the rights to his published works but to all his future writings as well. He thus became the source for a large number of films. The incentive for most of those working with the cinema was simply the large amounts of money the studios were willing to pay for help and for properties. Pirandello, too, was interested in the money, but, at the same time, he was almost alone among the literary figures in Italy in being concerned with the aesthetic problems of film and its possibilities as an art form. Even D'Annunzio, in spite of the fact that he did the screenplay for the mammoth *Cabiria,* seems to have had little interest in motion pictures. He did not like films and rarely went to see one; *Cabiria* itself he never did see.[1]

Curiosity about the nature of Pirandello's relationship to motion pictures is certainly stimulated by such references to him as that made by Eisenstein when commenting on the uses of sound and narration:

> In the sound-film the sub-title, maintaining its place among the expressive means (try to remove the titles from *Minin and Pozharsky* and see what is left!), and its counterpart, the actual voice of the narrator (a 'convention' nearly identical with that of the theatres we have been describing), are successfully employed. The latter means is a voice whose dramatically weaving potentialities have scarcely been touched by the cinema. The late Pirandello used to dream aloud of what could be done with this voice, when we met in Berlin in 1929. How close is such a voice, intervening in the action from outside the action, to Pirandello's whole concept![2]

Mention of Pirandello by contemporary filmmakers shows that his theatrical innovations have their logical extensions in the film medium —an implication of which he was perfectly well aware. Jean Luc-Godard, for example, whose cinema is characterized by his treatment of the "real" as an unpredictable blending of illusion and reality, fact and fiction, is among those who are indebted to Luigi Pirandello. He has said:

> I believe I start more from the documentary, in order to give truth to fiction. I am also interested in the theatrical aspect . . . I would like to film *Six Characters in Search of an Author* to show, cinematically, what theatre is. By being a realist one discovers the theatre . . . as in *The Golden Coach:* behind the theatre is life and behind life, the theatre. My point of departure was the imaginary and I discovered the real: but, behind the real there was the imaginary.[3]

It is a statement that might have been made by Pirandello himself. In films like *Breathless, The Little Soldier,* and *Une Femme est une Femme,* Godard demonstrates quite clearly these Pirandellian themes.

Others who use cinematic extensions of Pirandellian motifs are Bergman and Renoir. Bergman's *Fangelse* (1948), the first film he both wrote and directed, undertaken after he had written and staged three plays for the theater, invites comparison with *Six Characters in Search of an Author* because of its structure and characters. Parallels are to be found also

in other Bergman pictures, such as *The Devil's Eye* with its narrator commenting on the action and intervening in the film. Renoir's *Le Carrosse d'or* is directly in the Pirandellian tradition. A play-within-a-play-within-a-film, it is a tangled web of the real and the illusory. That the similarity of theme is anything but coincidental is shown by Renoir's own remarks: "Pirandello influenced most of the modern authors . . . he opened a new window on the infinite horizons of the collective imagination, and like so many others, I certainly breathed some of that air."[4]

If Pirandello's influence on film-makers stems primarily from exciting new concepts he demonstrated in theatrical form there is ample evidence to indicate that one of his great hopes was to play an even more direct role in cinematic developments. Late in his life he said:

> In theater I have been a revolutionary. I would like, if I can—and I am certain that I will be able—to bring to the field of motion pictures also the revolutions of which I dream.[5]

From the earliest evidence of Pirandello's participation in cinema enterprises (1913) to the end of his life, film did play an important part in his wide-ranging career. Caught up, like so many during those years, in the great novelty of film, and its potential as an art form, he felt the need not only to work directly with this new artistic tool but to address himself to the aesthetic challenge it posed. In addition, as a playwright, he found himself in the middle of the controversy of the late twenties and thirties over whether or not the cinema would destroy the theater. For at the very moment that he was providing new sources of vitality for the theater the economic threat posed by films was extremely real. In order to understand the significance of that threat one has only to look at the sheer quantity of film production in Italy during the second decade of the century. In 1913, one of the most prolific years, Italy produced some 738 films.[6]

It is well to remember, too, that quantity alone does not account for the fact that during the years 1910–1919 the Italian film was at the zenith of its popularity and influence. By 1908, when Ambrosio made the first version of *The Last Days of Pompeii,* the form and techniques of the "film spectacle" had emerged. Incredible productions followed: *Quo Vadis?* (1912), *Cabiria* (1914), *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Julius Caesar* (1918). These Italian "feature films," as they were even then called, had an almost immediate effect in studios around the world, not only because of their length, format, and techniques, but because of their great financial success. Little wonder then that a man with Pirandello's great intellectual and artistic curiosity could be caught up in the excitement of Italy's thriving cinematic enterprises.

There is considerable evidence that documents Pirandello's interest in films. In 1913 he wrote his first film scenario. It was a script for a film which was to have starred Giovanni Grasso, but the producing company, Morgana Films, went out of business and the scenario was never produced. In 1915 he labored again over a script which was destined never to be filmed; a version of *Confessioni di un Italiano* by Nievo.[7]

Interestingly, it was during these same years that Pirandello was also involved in his first attempts at playwriting. His first play, the one-act *La Morsa* (The Trap), appeared in 1912, and his first three-act, *Se Non Cosi* (If Not Thus) in 1915. None of these early plays made much of an impression on the world of the theater. It was not until *Pensaci Giamcomino!* (Just Think, Giacomino) that Pirandello began to attract more than casual attention as a playwright. The year of that play was 1916, and Pirandello was 49 years old. Unlike those early plays, the film scripts have been lost and forgotten. But, from his work on those scenarios, and from his experience with film and its stars, directors, and technicians, he drew inspiration for a novel, *Si Gira* (Shoot!). The book was written during 1914 and early 1915 and first appeared as a serial in the *Nuova Antologia,* June-August 1915. It was published in bound volume form in 1916 and reprinted in 1925 with a new title, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio Operatore*

(Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio, Cameraman). *Shoot!* was translated into English by C. K. Scott-Moncrieff (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927, and New York: E. P. Dutton 1927).

This little-known novel is an experimental work dealing with the world of motion pictures, centering around an alienated and existential hero, the cameraman Gubbio. *Si Gira,* which is part diary and part scenario, is probably one of the earliest examples of what has come to be called the "film-novel." In it Pirandello goes beyond the genre limitations of the novel and makes use of devices which are not, basically, literary; they are cinematic. A reading of the book suggests parallels with Robbe-Grillet, Joyce, and other experimentalists. Uses of the literary equivalents of filmic techniques—cuts, flashbacks, and shot descriptions—abound in the novel. Parts of the book are even written in scenario form; the reader is constantly pulled between reality and illusion, one minute thinking he is meant to be watching a film and the next reading a diary.

In addition, some critics have found manifestations in *Si Gira* of traits which, in later years, would lead to neorealism in Italian films. Mario Apollonio, for example, sees it as "one of the first texts basic to the principles of Neorealism," and Stefano Crespi has also paid considerable attention to this aspect of the novel.[8] While it is by no means a neorealist manifesto, the book does provoke speculation about it as a precursor of neorealist attitudes. Finally, the book is important in a study of Pirandello's career because it is a pivotal work: clearly transitional between prose and drama. Evidently the cinema was, to some degree, instrumental in that transition.

The active interest Pirandello began to show in the movie industry around 1913 betokened a shift of attitude. In earlier years he tended to treat film lightly, as did many intellectuals. There is, in fact, some evidence suggesting that, like many other writers of the time, regardless of their personal feelings about motion pictures, he was drawn into films initially by the monetary lure more than any other factor. According to Crespi, the earliest gesture Pirandello made toward the cinema was to write to Morgana Films in 1913 with proposals for two films; he was very careful to specify that he was to be paid at a decent price for each. Crespi also quotes the eldest son of the writer, Stefano Landi, as saying that the initial contacts of his father with the cinema, far from being aesthetically ideal, were "determined essentially by economic motives."[9]

Before 1914, Pirandello, like many others, had considered films something of an amusing joke. It was an attitude soon to change. He was living then at the edge of the Via Nomentana in Rome; almost in the country, with gardens and orchards, and where the solitude was conducive to his work. But from the window he could see the glass roofs of the film studios; his attention was often caught by them. Enrico Roma gives the following account of the beginning of the writer's real interest in films:

> One morning, to our surprise, we find that the poet had let himself be lured by curiosity to observe a movie set. Lucio d'Ambra had introduced him to Soava and Carmine Gallone, movie makers of singular merit; with that he had put his foot in hell. He wanted to know everything, and to learn as quickly as possible what was happening in there, even the most laughable mysteries of the yet primitive techniques. He came back again and again, and then stayed away from it for a period of time. Within a few months there appeared in the bookstores *Si Gira,* a novel of movie making which revealed for the first time a strange environment and the intimate meaning of all that work; a philosophic interpretation of the cinema, not only as a new artistic means but as a very new aspect of life.[10]

Whatever the motivational mixture, Pirandello lent his works and his name to a long list of films in the years which followed. Beginning in 1918 with Lucio D'Ambra and Amleto Palermi's film *Papa mio, mi Piaccion Tutti!* (for which Pirandello suggested scenes and episodes), there were 28 films made from his plays, stories, and novels. This does not include the important, but never filmed, screenplay of

Six Characters in Search of an Author, which he wrote in collaboration with Adolf Lantz. The films were not only produced in Italy but in the United States, France, Germany, and South America as well.

In the production of many of these films Pirandello himself played little or no part. But this is not to say that he was out of touch with the industry. He was working seriously with films from at least as early as 1919 when he was one of the founding partners of a production company called *Tespi.*[11]

It is not so difficult to think of Pirandello as a film producer if we remember that in 1925 he attempted to inject some vitality into the sagging fortunes of the legitimate theater by setting up his own company. Such may have been part of the purpose of the *Tespi* group, for in the early postwar years, Italian cinema was suffering from the rigidity with which it adhered to the formula films which had been so successful for so long. *Tespi* was founded by Arnaldo Frateili, Umberto Fracchia, and Pirandello. The firm had a clear literary bias, as a look at the films they produced shows. In 1920 Frateili made *Una Notte Romantica* (A Romantic Night) which was based, despite that title, on a story by Edgar Allan Poe. Other films were: *La Scala di Seta* (The Silken Staircase), from Luigi Chiarelli's comedy; *Cesar Birotteau,* from Balzac; *L'Indiana* (The Indian Girl) by Umberto Fracchia, based on a novel by Georges Sand; *La Bella e La Bestia* (The Beauty and the Beast), an original story of Fracchia's; and a film based on Pirandello's *La Rosa* (The Rose). One of the first *Tespi* films was a strictly commercial venture called *La Pantera di Neve,* by Arnaldo Frateili, on which Pirandello acted as advisor. The screenplay was written by his son, Stefano Landi. What happened to *Tespi* is not clear; as a company it simply seemed to fade from the scene, though the founders continued to be outstanding names in the industry.

Some of the finest film versions of Pirandello's work were made outside of Italy, outstanding among them two treatments of *Il fu Mattia Pascal.* The first was made in 1925 by Marcel L'Herbier in France, and starred the great Russian Ivan Mosjoukine, along with Marthe Belot, Pauline Certon, and Michel Simon. L'Herbier's production was noteworthy primarily because of the work done by Mosjoukine and the sets conceived by Cavalcanti. The second version in 1937, was done by Pierre Chenal (who along with Armand Salacrou and Christian Stengel did the screen play). The film is of interest, too, because Pirandello himself, along with Roger Vitrac, worked on the dialogues.[12]

Three American films have been made from the plays. In the case of *Come tu mi vuoi* (As You Desire Me) Hollywood wasted little time in securing the film rights to the successful drama. The play was published in Milan in 1930 and had its first production in that same year, also in Milan. It opened in New York in 1939 and the following year Hollywood released the film. *As You Desire Me* was adapted by Gene Markey, directed by George Fitzmaurice, and starred Greta Garbo, Erich von Stroheim, and Melvyn Douglas. *Come prima, meglio di prima,* though it was staged in New York as early as 1923, was not taken up by Hollywood until 1945, and was favored again with another adaptation in 1956. The 1945 film, *This Love of Ours,* was a Universal production adapted by Bruce Manning, John Klorer, and Leonard Lee; it was directed by William Dieterle and starred Merle Oberon, Charles Korvin and Claude Raines. In 1956 the same trio of writers, working this time for Universal International, did another adaptation of the same play. With the title *Never Say Goodbye* it was directed by Jerry Hoppner and starred Cornell Borchers, George Sanders, and Rock Hudson.

Shortly after 1930 Pirandello was again tempted to try his hand at a full original scenario for a film. It was in 1930 that Italy produced her first sound film, *La Canzone dell' Amore,* and that picture was based on a story by Pirandello. The author's unhappiness with the handling of his work in that picture led

to his determination to create a more cinematically effective piece. The film which resulted from his efforts, *Acciaio* (Steel), proved to be one of the most important of 1933. Originally entitled *Gioca, Pietro!*, the script was written by Pirandello with the collaboration of his son Stefano. The film was directed by the great German film-maker Walter Ruttman and starred Isa Pola, Piero Pastore, and Vittorio Bellaccini. This was not the director and cast Pirandello had envisioned but it is a notable assembly in spite of that. The author was enthusiastic about the project and in an interview which took place before the shooting began he had some thoughtful comments to make about what he was attempting. In reply to a request for information about *Gioca, Pietro!* he said:

> I promised silence; you will see shortly. (But) I have composed a scenario which is a true score. In many scenes I have taken into consideration the effects to be obtained with sounds, just like a musician in the instrumentation of a lyric work. The sound part will have a great importance in the film. At a certain point the rhythms of the machines become humanized; reaching in this way perfect synchronization between mechanical movements and the beat of human life.[13]

He thus shows a great deal of understanding of the potential of sound. And with regard to the question of who would direct the film and who would star in it he replied:

> A great director of universal fame; very probably Pabst or, if he is not free at that time, Eisenstein. They (the stars) have not been chosen yet because that is the privilege of the director.[14]

Emilio Cecchi, who had come into the Cines studios to revitalize it, was the supervisor of the film and Pirandello had a great deal of faith in his ability. The entire picture was made at Terni, an industrial town a bit north of Rome, and deals with the iron and steel industry. Environmental elements are extremely important as Ruttman made rhythmic use of machinery, the ironworks, bicycle races, and festa scenes. *Acciaio* provides further evidence linking Pirandello with the precursors of neorealism. At least one observer in Italy noted this: Mario Verdone, in a fascinating book called *Gli Intellettuali e il Cinema,* traced the neorealist movement through Umberto Fracchia, Arnaldo Frateili, Mario Corsi, Stefano Landi, and Pirandello. He argues that *Acciaio,* along with some other films, preceded the whole Italian neorealistic trend.[15] This is especially interesting because of the general belief that Zavattini and other scenario writers were the inventors of neorealism in the postwar era.

Also of great interest is the scenario of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* written in 1930 by Pirandello with the collaboration of Adolf Lantz.[16] The scenario has never been published in English, or for that matter in Italian either, though a partial translation, the "Prologue," did appear in Italy in *Cinema,* Number 120 (25 June 1941). It is unfortunate that it is not better known for, in addition to being an explication of the play, the script is an exposition in prose form of Pirandello's theories about the cinema, and at the same time can be thought of as a novel using literary equivalents of cinematic devices. Indeed, such an evaluation as the latter is invited by the use of the term "film-novel" in the German title, and takes on considerable validity when Pirandello's experiments with such devices in *Si Gira* are recalled. In any case, Pirandello was sensitive enough to reject the idea of literally transcribing the very verbal play into a film. As a result he wrote a scenario which was "completely distinct from the language which I have employed till now as a method of expressing my experience of life." He went on to say: "I am trying to solve in a purely optical way the same problem one finds at the root of my drama; and which is dealt with in this adaptation. I am compelling myself to render intelligibly, through this visual method, the way in which the six characters and their destinies outside the mind of the author, saturate themselves with life and act independently of him."[17]

It is a pity that the film was never made. Pirandello himself was to have played the lead and he visited Hollywood to supervise the preparations going on at Universal. The scenario is a continual flow of visual imagery. Dialogue is secondary to the progression of visual shots. It is a work of pure fantasy in which the physical elements, the characters, the objects in the scenario, are all seen through the eyes of the author/camera. The two points of view are conveniently interchangeable, and are shown to be so in the film-novel. Pirandello recognizes no limitations of either time or place. The script is an intensely subjective description which is heightened by its emphasis on action and visual imagery rather than on dialogue. It demonstrates that Pirandello was not only aware of the differences between theater and cinema but that he was able to move from one form to the other with ease, while, at the same time, utilizing those differences to his advantage.

It is well to remember that not everyone at that time recognized the differences between theater and cinema; theater people especially sometimes seemed shortsighted. Alberto Cavalcanti has mentioned the wasted energy thrown into the production of photographed plays at the beginning of the sound era: "Here the theatrical people felt that they were on ground they knew. But it never occurred to them that a film is not, and never can be, the same thing as a play."[18] It had certainly occurred to Pirandello, as his writings on film theory make very clear.

In 1929, when the theater-versus-cinema debate was at its peak because of the recent advent of the talking film, he addressed himself to the technical and aesthetic problems posed by film in a major essay, "Se il Film Parlante Abolira il Teatro" (Whether the Talking Film Will Abolish the Theater).[19] And, in that same year, his "Il Dramma e il Cinematografo Parlato" (The Drama and the Spoken Cinema) appeared in the newspaper *La Nacion* in Buenos Aires. There is also an "Interview With Pirandello on the Italian Cinema" which was printed in *La Stampa,* Turin, December 9, 1932. All of which bears witness to the fact that Pirandello's interest in the cinema was a deep and sincere one; the content of these articles reveals a fertile and sensitive mind willing to consider film as an art form and to evaluate its potential, and shortcomings, in that light.

In "Whether the Talking Film Will Abolish the Theater" he begins by acknowledging the importance of the cinema/theater debate, if for no other reason than the light such a confrontation will shed on the unique properties of each. In no uncertain terms he declares that the cinema should leave narration to the novel and leave drama to the theater; for, if films continue to be patterned after the theater, the natural attributes and characteristics of cinema will never be realized.

Unlike those purists who insisted that the only true cinema was a silent cinema, Pirandello was quick to realize that now that the motion pictures had spoken they would never be silent again. What kind of voice it would be was another matter entirely for Pirandello. It is, he believed, foolish to look for that voice in literature. Cinema, he felt at that time, should immerse itself in music. Not vocal music (leave musical melodrama to opera and jazz to the music hall) but music which expresses with and by pure sound. Calling sight and hearing the two most important senses, he suggests an art of pure vision and pure sound, coining the term *Cinemelography* to describe what he feels to be the mission of cinema: the visible language of music.

Thus, Pirandello's attitudes are closely allied with those of the French *avant garde* of the twenties. In that sense he saw film as an art form into which most of the primary directions and problems of modern art inevitably lead. Cubism, Futurism, and Surrealism, with their respective concern for simultaneity, form, motion, and the orchestration of dream, illusion and reality, find logical extensions in film; so too, because it has affinities with each of these directions, does Pirandello's theater.

However, while Pirandello was in sympathy

with the experiments of the *avant garde,* and while many of his ideas corresponded with theirs, he ultimately did not advocate, as some of them did, the complete severing of all ties to story and narrative. His remarks in later interviews make this clear. What he was after was innovation in filmic form which would make use of all the elements available in the other arts in a synthesized, uniquely cinematic structure. And he certainly knew that there is a difference between what words can do and what the cinema can do.

In addition to aesthetic concerns, Pirandello was troubled by the state of the Italian film industry during the late twenties and thirties. Having been unwilling to experiment and keep abreast of exciting developments in the US, Russia, Germany, and France the Italian formula film was unable to compete at the box office. He took the industry to task at every opportunity: "The problem of the Italian cinema . . . is not one of technicians and of competency but, on the contrary, one of solutions used and re-used, accepted indifferently and without revisions of any kind."[20] He attacked both production methods and distribution structures in his desire to revitalize his country's cinema.

Pirandello, then, was able to isolate those elements which could best be taken advantage of by films, and to point out the unique qualities of the medium. He was able to see the distinctions between film and theater without losing sight of the advantages of each. He viewed the entire cinema/theater conflict as only a pseudo-problem. But he was anxious to prod the cinema industry, and those who created for it, into exploring the natural avenues available to it—avenues at which he had clearly posted the signs, not only in his critical writings, but just as importantly in the examples he offered in *Si Gira, Acciaio,* and the scenario of *Six Characters in Search of an Author.*

In purely literary terms, Pirandello must be considered one of the pioneers in the use of cinematic writing techniques. By applying cinematic imagination to narrative style he made use of a device that was to become a characteristic of twentieth-century literature. Pirandello saw the future of film in illusion and in fantasy. Not the fantasy of trivial, escapist cinema entertainment but a fantasy which reveals, through its sensory appeal, some truth about the human condition. It was the possibility of a "cinema of ideas" that intrigued him, just as he worked toward a theater of ideas. It was through fantasy that Pirandello felt he could best arrive at a revelation of truth. His vision was of a cinema that would do no less. In reply to Roma's question of how he saw the future of the cinema, he said:

"Without limitation."

NOTES

[1] Tomasso Antongini, *Vita Segreta di Gabriele D'Annunzio* (Milano: A. Mondadori, 1938); p. 174. Antongini has a very interesting chapter called "D'Annunzio e il Cinematografo."

[2] Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form* (Cleveland: World, 1957); p. 189.

[3] Quoted by Andrew Sarris in the *New York Film Bulletin,* Number 46 (1964).

[4] In a letter to Thomas Bishop dated May 7, 1956 and quoted in *Pirandello and the French Theatre,* p. 143.

[5] In Stefano Crespi, "L'esperienza cinematografica in Pirandello," *Vite e Pensiero,* Vol. 50 (1967); p. 847.

[6] My production figures are taken from Pierre Leprohon, *Le Cinéma Italien* (Paris: Seghers, 1966).

[7] My source for this information, and a useful source in general for factual material in Pirandello's activities in cinema, is Vol. 6 of the *Film-lexicon degli autori e delle Opere* (Rome: Bianco e Nero, 1958); pp. 647–651.

[8] Quoted by Stefano Crespi, op. cit., p. 850.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Enrico Roma, "Pirandello e il Cinema," *Comoedia* (15 July–15 August, 1932); p. 20.

[11] There is information on *Tespi* in both Vernon Jarratt, *The Italian Cinema* (London: Falcon Press, 1951) and in *50 Years of Italian Cinema* (Rome: Carlo Bestetti, 1954), the American edition edited by Herman Weinberg. Leprohon says that *Tespi-Film* produced its first picture in 1918; *Frate Sole,* by Mario Corsi.

[12] For more information on both versions of *Il fu Mattia Pascal* see Osvaldo Campassi and Virgillio Sabel, "Chenal, L'Herbier e *Il fu Mattia Pascal*," *Cinema*, prima serie, No. 117 (10 May, 1941). Also see Mario Pannunzio, "Chenal di Fronte a Pirandello," *Cinema*, prima serie, No. 10 (25 November, 1936).

[13] Roma, p. 22.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Mario Verdone, *Gli Intellettuali e il Cinema* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Atteneo, 1952), p. 226.

[16] Luigi Pirandello and Adolf Lantz, *Sechs Personen suchen einen Autor: Film-novelle* . . . nach dem gleichnamigen Theaterstück von Pirandello (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing, 1930). French translation by E. Goldey, "Six Personnages en quête d'Auteur: histoire pour l'ecran par Luigi Pirandello et Adolf Lantz," *La Revue du Cinéma*, Number 10 (May, 1930), pp. 35–53.

[17] In "Dramma e Sonoro," *Cinema*, prima serie, Number 81 (10 November 1939), pp. 277–278.

[18] Alberto Cavalcanti, "The Sound Film," in Lewis Jacobs, *The Emergence of Film Art* (New York: Hopkinson and Blake, 1969), p. 175.

[19] The essay first appeared in the newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, Milan, 16 June 1929. On July 28, 1929 it appeared as a feature article in *The New York Times*.

[20] See "Intervista con Luigi Pirandello sul Cinema Italiano" in the newspaper *La Stampa*, Turin, December 9, 1932.

RANDALL CONRAD

Diaries of Two Chambermaids

Mirbeau's *Diary of a Chambermaid* is a violent, cruel novel, written out of hatred for the corruption of bourgeois society, for the lies and servility with which it infects every mind and relationship. Celestine's "diary" intersperses the story of her service in the Lanlaire household—ending with Joseph's robbery, her marriage to him, and their new life as café proprietors in Cherbourg—with recollections that fill in her background and character. A contradictory character, in which a sensual depravity, acquired from her masters, exists together with the most ardent love*: the two poles are transcended only in her terrible attraction to Joseph. Published in 1900, only months after the scandalous second court-martialing of Dreyfus, the novel uses Celestine's lucid observations to portray all the machinations of a provincial bourgeoisie as it begins to brandish anti-Semitism and nationalism as political weapons.

The two film versions were produced under practically opposite circumstances. Renoir made his (1946, with Paulette Goddard and Burgess Meredith) during a period of exile, no doubt unsure of his future although willing to work for American studios, filming a Hollywood script on Hollywood sets, a world away from his prewar work in France. Buñuel, on the other hand, was at the height of his new creative freedom when a French producer offered him the chance to film the novel he admired (1964, with Jeanne Moreau and Michel Piccoli).

Renoir's film retains some of the brutal scenes in Mirbeau, like Joseph's sadistic killing of the geese, and it creates new ones (in the final sequence, a sudden image of Joseph lashing at the crowd, with his horsewhip). Renoir gives all the richness he can to particular scenes, letting some develop naturally, giving unexpected turns to others (the scene in the greenhouse), creating the suspense and climax with skill. But, one feels—this marks the decline of Renoir's cinema—whatever style the film has is only compensation for a deficiency in conception.

* "I shall gather the flowers for his bouquet, one by one, in the garden of my heart . . . where grow the deadly flowers of debauchery, but where also bloom the tall white lilies of love."

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Renoir's DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID, *with Paulette Goddard*

Even Joseph, Georges, and Celestine herself are stereotyped figures. Renoir's screenplay exteriorizes the contradiction within Celestine by creating a direct conflict between Georges and Joseph, between love and evil, and then simplifying the terms of even this conflict so that Georges easily triumphs. In the process, the deep sensuality of Mirbeau's heroine, capable of loving opposite types of men, disappears. One looks in vain for any sign of real erotic attraction between Paulette Goddard as Celestine and either Francis Lederer as Joseph or Hurd Hatfield as Georges.

Joseph's rape and murder of the little girl are entirely omitted from Renoir's version. Instead he kills Mauger, for money. (Mauger is portrayed as eccentric and even inhuman, but not malicious.) The substitution of crimes reduces Joseph, in effect, to a predictable character. The irrational crime is horrible in its isolation (as is the image of the dead girl which Buñuel creates in his version); behind the crime of murdering Mauger we can see a common motive.

Georges, the Lanlaires' son in Renoir's version, actually combines two characters from the novel's recollected parts. One is Georges, the consumptive whom Celestine loves . . . and kills with her love.* The other is Xavier, the dissolute cynic she loves in spite of herself and in spite of his contemptuous treatment.

Renoir has combined them selectively, leaving out drawbacks (Georges's moribund constitution, Xavier's cynicism) and keeping only Georges's virtue and Xavier's privileged position. With this combination Renoir easily obtains a perfect antagonist to Joseph. The antagonism proceeds, not from Celestine's attraction to both at once, but simply from the sinister doings of Joseph, who is bent on taking Celestine away almost by force (trying to implicate her in his crimes, etc.).

Celestine is thus deprived of inner conflict. At the beginning she is a realist, resolved to marry money, but her love for Georges wins out. Joseph is unequivocally defeated in Renoir's ending, whereas in Mirbeau, Celestine

*Mirbeau pushes the love-death identity to the limit of atrocity: "I glued my lips to his, I clashed my teeth against his, with such trembling rage that I thought my tongue was penetrating the deep wounds inside his chest and licking, drinking, drawing out all the poisoned blood and all the deadly pus."

becomes Joseph's wife and accomplice. In the final sequence, Celestine becomes a popular heroine, rebellious and free, distributing the Lanlaires' hoard to the townspeople.

Renoir's townspeople are united by their longstanding hatred of the Lanlaires, so that they all support Celestine's rebellion at the end. Such a simple opposition of forces would be unthinkable in Buñuel's version. His provincial countryside is oppressive: cold deserted roads, grey skies, faceless church, laconic villagers. Buñuel's film dwells on the Monteil estate (Buñuel changes the family name) until it becomes a universe. Indoors is Madame Monteil's world of bourgeois order and obsession: don't break the lamps, don't walk on the rug . . . The only escape is outdoors, where the men find sublimation in their ritual destructions (killing animals, chopping wood, breaking panes).* Buñel also expands a character who occupied only a couple of early pages in Mirbeau's novel: Monsieur Rabour. The old man embodies the sexual frustration (his fetish) and unnatural isolation (his locked room) that dominate the household.

Buñuel's version eliminates all the background material in the novel, including Georges, and makes a closed, mysterious person of Celestine as played by Jeanne Moreau. If there are contradictions within her, they appear only through her relation to Joseph, a relation which even in its hatred is suffused erotically. In a shot of the two of them outdoors at night, their faces are lit from below by the glow of a fire as Joseph tells her, "You and I are alike, in our souls." (Joseph makes this assertion to Celestine in Renoir's version too—but he can't mean it. The whole film is based on the irreconcilable contrast between them.)

Celestine is realistic about her prospects; she probably plans to marry for money. At the same time she is the only character who has a keen sense of justice. She alone intuits that it was Joseph who raped and killed the girl. Without revealing her feelings, she comes back to the household she despises in order to personally get even with Joseph for his crime. She sacrifices her own integrity to incriminate Joseph: she sleeps with him, she plants false evidence. And her effort to bring Joseph to "justice" is a failure.

One reason may be that she is suppressing a strong attraction to Joseph. If she is seeking to incriminate him, it is partly because getting rid of Joseph will ease her own trouble as well as avenge the dead girl.

But, independently of Celestine's designs or motivations, her effort is destined to fail. Celestine has only her own resources. Joseph has ambitions and plans that have been ripening for years . . . and he has connections. Buñuel has already shown us whose side official justice is on, in a key episode between Mauger and Monteil. Monteil, the Jew, brings his dispute with Mauger, the retired army captain, before the magistrate. Mauger, who we know is guilty, is upheld on his word of honor as an officer.

The film's dovetail ending—one sequence showing Celestine with Mauger, the next showing Joseph in Cherbourg—is the logical outcome of Celestine's predicament. She refused to be used by Joseph in Cherbourg, but she has also failed to enjoy any victory over Joseph, which alone could have vindicated her. She forfeits her freedom and consents to be Mauger's wife.

These things represent a crucial departure from Mirbeau's novel. In Mirbeau, Celestine overcomes her scruples and completely gives in to her passion for Joseph. In Buñuel Celestine tries and fails to incriminate Joseph. If she fails, it is because she could only confront Joseph as an individual, as a common-law criminal, whereas Joseph has more than in-

*The association is meant to work almost subconsciously. At one point, Buñuel goes from an outdoor to an indoor sequence by cutting from a shot of Monteil splitting wood with his ax to a shot of a fragile white bust adorning a cabinet indoors. This theme reappears, realized to some extent, when the old man's death behind a locked bedroom door forces Joseph to take an ax to the woodwork.

dividual resources, having cast his lot with the growing fascist movement.

Only Joseph, the child-rapist and murderer, the Jew-hater, successfully engineers his freedom. Unlike Mirbeau (and Renoir), Buñuel has eliminated Joseph's theft of the family's silver. Thus Joseph's rise in the world is the result, financially, only of his shady investments—"Politics pays, now and then"—not of a simple crime. (Besides, that would detract from the isolated horror of the rape and murder—which will now never be avenged.) The final sequence finds Joseph on the road of petty bourgeois prosperity, an active militant in the fascist move. ment The café in Cherbourg; Joseph's new wife (she looks like Celestine); the fascist demonstration; the slogan "Vive Chiappe" launched by Joseph; the final thunderclap: this final sequence gives an unusually explicit (for Buñuel) political dimension to Celestine's moral failure and her resignation.

In dramatizing the contradiction between Celestine's impulse and a social reality that turns it into its opposite, Buñuel does more than alter his source to suit his own preferred structure. He redefines Celestine's relation to Joseph for a different historical period, our own.

The anti-Jewish, anti-foreign nationalism of 1900 was provoked in France by the Dreyfus affair, and it grew amid rumors of war with England. Mirbeau's Celestine, who gives in to her passion, symbolizes a moral capitulation before the forces that Joseph represents.

Buñuel has updated the time to around 1930, when the French fascist movement was spreading: Joseph and the sacristan read *Action Française*. At the least, Celestine is a moral witness to the bestiality of Joseph, something she tried to stop and couldn't. But perhaps her secret attraction, her fear of it, and her individual powerlessness make her an accomplice to Joseph's rise. In that case, Joseph's assertion—"You and I are alike, in our souls"—takes on full meaning.

Both Renoir and Buñuel, each with a purpose, made radical changes in Mirbeau. Renoir's version uses every means to reduce Mirbeau's story to the triumph of a healthy popular spirit over an evil force. It has eliminated all the historical and social relevance of Mirbeau (the theme of anti-semitism in particular disappears). The film takes place in a bygone, socially indistinct France. No doubt Renoir intended it to have an immediate sentimental appeal among Americans and Europeans who had recently lived through World War II and the liberation of the occupied countries. The film would counter the image of a servile France under Vichy that had been current in American propaganda.

Buñuel, on the other hand, returned in his film to the France he left in the thirties, and created its portrait. It is, however, decidedly not just the portrait of a past era. The film has the closed structure characteristic of Buñuel: the end is a beginning. An individual's gesture toward freedom not only fails but lays the ground for still worse oppression. The era that has begun, as the demonstrators turn the corner and march up a street in Cherbourg, is the one we are still living in.

Buñuel's DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID: *Jeanne Moreau*

Reviews

TRISTANA

Directed by Luis Buñuel. Script by Buñuel and Julie Alejandro, based on the novel by Benito Perez Galdos. Photography: Jose Aguayo. Maron Films.

On the surface, *Tristana* is about a pure young girl who is seduced by her guardian. It takes place in Toledo, Spain, long a stronghold of the double standard guaranteeing the man sexual license and the woman the choice of falling from grace or repressing her sexuality beneath a guise of sanctimonious innocence. Most of the women in Tristana's world choose the latter; she, however, has courage enough to flee from the house of her guardian, Don Lope, who calls himself her father or husband, "whichever I choose." She elopes with a handsome young artist who wishes to marry her. Two years later, still unmarried and afflicted with what seems to be a fatal illness, Tristana returns to the house of the guardian she despises. Bearing for the rest of her life the mark of her illness, an amputated leg, she murders Don Lope years later by allowing him to die of a heart attack without calling a doctor.

But within the confines of this rather melodramatic if morally resonant plot, which always borders on the perverse, as do all of the director's films, Buñuel has managed to interweave meanings that go far beyond the Electra theme. Throughout the film, Buñuel comments on the psychological effects of social dependance. Tristana quickly hates Don Lope because he watches her every move and refuses to allow her even to go for a walk unless she is in the company of the maid, Saturna. As the film begins, over the credits church bells peal, enclosing within their power the two women in black, Tristana and Saturna, who walk toward the camera. The church bells represent the authority of the male over the female in patriarchal Spain. Left an orphan by the death of her mother, Tristana is at the mercy of Don Lope. That no man is to be trusted by a woman is expressed in Saturna's first words in the film which are a confirmation of the injustices suffered by her sex: "May my dead husband rot in hell."

Don Lope is the "good man" of his time, a liberal aristocrat. Yet when we first see him, he is soliciting a vivacious girl on the street. His overwhelming concern with matters of honor and morality does not pertain to his amorous relations with women. Don Lope strips Tristana of all her possessions except a few musical scores, and of her ideas as well. "I'll manage to clear your head of superstitions," he tells her at this first meeting. Her mother (who was also his lover), he asserts, "had no brains." Later, Tristana begins to have the nightmare that will pursue her throughout her life: she sees the head of Don Lope transferred into the phallic bell clapper at the church tower. This terrifying image of the ghoulish head of Don Lope represents at once her desire and repulsion for the lascivious, aging guardian. Tristana's fear of him is the fear of being smothered, her identity obliterated both psychologically and sexually. It is a fear confirmed by the authoritarianism of the man. "The only way to keep a woman honest," says Don Lope, quoting a Spanish folk saying, "is to break her leg and keep her at home," a prophecy of what will happen to Tristana.

Buñuel carefully develops the means by which Don Lope molds and shapes the young Tristana's mind to conform to his own plan to make her his life-long dependent. Out for a prominade, they see a young couple, and Don Lope sneers: "the sickly odor of marital bliss." Marriage, he tells Tristana, means a farewell to love; for love to be free, no official blessings should intervene. By seeming to allow her total freedom, Don Lope hopes to bind her to him in more subtle and binding ways than the legal. Only apparently sceptical, Tristana, whose goals are to be "free" and "to work," absorbs the lesson.

Buñuel's psychology is impeccable. Her mind a *tabula rasa*, it is logical that Tristana would become whatever her surroundings provide,

that her psychic impulses would be directed by the will of her domineering guardian. The teachings of Don Lope prove to be deadly for both. By having Tristana persistently refuse to marry her young artist lover, Don Horacio, Buñuel illustrates how deeply the unconscious of Tristana has accepted Don Lope's half-baked notions about "free love." But this in turn increases her dependence upon Don Lope himself, filling her with a despair and self-hatred that culminates in his murder. Cleverly, Don Lope kisses Tristana for the first time right after he has spoken against marriage. Her defenses weakened, she with a giggle admits that she does indeed care for him.

Ultimately, this dependency leads her to become simply perverse. She takes delight in the presence of the half-witted, deafmute son of Saturna who at the end pushes her wheelchair for her because he is dependent upon *her*. She shuts him out of her room only to expose her body to him gloatingly from the balcony. Like Don Lope, Tristana needs a victim. As Saturno rushes off into the bushes, the boy provides an analogue for Tristana's own youthful reaction to the aging Don Lope with its simultaneous fascination and repulsion.

Sexually, Tristana, after her initiation by Don Lope, becomes the sister of Belle de Jour. It is no accident that both parts are played by Catherine Deneuve, whose perfect blond beauty has the quality of ice, of emotion repressed, a trait utilized as well by François Truffaut in *La Sirène du Mississippi*. Like Belle de Jour, Tristana is a woman whose sexuality has been perverted by a fear of seduction, by an older, forbidding father figure, and who can now respond only to the brutal and the perverse. Thus Tristana leaves her young lover to return to the sombre house of Don Lope.

The archaic, gradually decaying quality of Don Lope's world is expressed in the golds and browns, the colors of autumn, which dominate the *mise en scène*. This mood is enhanced by Deneuve's being dressed throughout the film only in combinations of brown, white and black, reflecting a sensibility tamed by the norms of its world. Toledo's narrow winding medieval streets provide a real labyrinth to echo Tristana's unconscious imprisonment. (A panorama of Toledo both opens and closes the film.)

Tristana's tie with the force that corrupted her is epitomized by her return to the house of Don Lope. It is the force of his repulsive-attractive presence upon her sexuality, the equivalent of the desire of the daughter for her father. Don Horacio is logically repelled by Tristana's perversity, expressed in her refusal to marry him and her rejection of his love for that of Don Lope. In alliance with the corrupt and the unnatural are the priests who describe Tristana's refusal to marry Don Lope as "irrationality" and who would legalize her psychological, social, and sexual imprisonment.

Until the fantasized wish-fulfillment at the end, the murder of the oppressive father-lover, the hatred of Tristana for Don Lope can express itself only in the small victories of the oppressed. She toys with and then devours two testicle-like chick peas. She throws in the trash his motheaten carpet slippers, for which he has a more than rational attachment. The final expression of her perversity is her gesture at the end of the film of opening the window and letting the snow and cold engulf the dying Don Lope. For the perverse in the world of Don Lope has always been treated as the natural. (He even tells her that she would be more appealing to some people with her amputated leg.) He is delighted with the conjunction between her return to absolute dependence as a cripple and his lifelong perverse feelings toward the sexual and women. It is, of course, perfect justice that Don Lope should fall victim at the end to his own perversion. Tristana responds in the manner he has taught her. "The kinder he is," she says, "the less I love him." She expresses the psychological damage done to women in her culture—the same damage expressed by Belle de Jour, who could be awakened sexually only in a brothel.

Tristana reflects as well Buñuel's preoccupa-

TRISTANA

tion with the decay of Spain. He explores its obsession with an old order, represented by Don Lope and his cronies who meet every day in a café filled with indolent former aristocrats. It is a world defined by norms and relationships which have outlived their time and have now becomes dangerous. *Tristana* takes place in the twenties after the fall of the first republic which presaged the invasion of the fascists in the next decade. It conveys the image of a Spain that is already amputated. The crippled Tristana represents in her person the generation to be maimed by the Civil War, embodying as she does the frequent image in Franco's Spain of the amputee.

Buñuel creates an image of the defeat of liberty. In one scene workers are being chased by some Guardia Civil on horseback while others pursue them with swords. The precarious existence of the worker, the man on the street, is meant to be viewed in opposition to Don Lope's impotent reactions to the horror of work. While the men in the machine shop from which Saturno runs away must work long hours, Don Lope is free to decide to live in genteel poverty until the death of his wealthy sister, Josefina. Don Lope's attitude toward the workers reveals the self-righteous *noblesse oblige* of the aristocrat. Pointing the police in another direction, he allows a thief to escape because "he was weak and needed protection . . . the police stand for power." His gesture on behalf of "justice" is, characteristically, an act in which he does not have to participate. For Don Lope "money is vile"; for the workers in the metal shop, on the streets, and omnipresent in the scenario, it means survival. Buñuel clinches the decadence of Don Lope by rapidly cutting from Don Lope and Tristana going to bed for the first time to the scene of the police chasing workers down the street.

Don Lope stands thus for the impotence and historical amnesia of Spain, a role defined as well by Carlos Saura in *The Garden of Delights* through the character of Antonio. And Don Lope's impotence is far from innocent. Hypocrisy defines his very sensibility. It is expressed in his self-conscious and superficial rejection of religion as well as in the ridiculousness of his code of honor which decrees that he live by all the ten commandments except those having to do with sex, by which he means seduction. Don Lope has the arrogance to argue that he takes a girl only if she consents. He proudly maintains that he would exclude the wife of a friend or "the flower blooming in innocence." With no dialogue needed, Buñuel cuts to the innocent Tristana reading musical scores, soon to be the victim of Don Lope's lust.

Don Lope refuses to judge a duel because the participants have agreed to fight only "until the first sign of blood," and he hates "circuses." He won't be the arbiter at so cheap a price. His morality is thus expressed in limbo, devoid of any real content. It is couched in terms that will not touch upon his life: a duel, a harmless denunciation of priests, the contempt for the degradation of work by a man who is kept all his life by a private income, the rejection of marriage by a man who savors sex more with a mistress, particularly if she is innocent and thirty years younger than he. It is the almost psychotic sense of honor of the hidalgo who would rather starve to death than work, although he must sell everything he owns. In Don Lope's case it is the honor of a man who has debauched a girl destined to live with him as his daughter.

The essential frivolity of such a code, the hypocrisy of a morality which exacts no sacrifices, is nowhere better expressed than in one of the last sequences of the film in which the now aged Don Lope, bespectacled and grey, with his beard no longer dyed black, has coffee with three grasping priests on the eve of his death. The priests are waiting in eager anticipation for his death, which they hope will mean bequests to them. They savor his rich, creamy coffee and cakes, stuffing themselves as snow falls outside the window. Taking shelter with the rich, they are shielded from the harsh aspects of life. Don Lope has forgotten his atheism, his heretical cry, "long live the living," after the funeral of the intractable dowager, his sister Josefina. He has forgotten that he refused to call a priest when Tristana was deathly ill on the ground that "the only true priests are those who defend the innocent." After Tristana returns to the house where she was dishonored, ironically but with precise realism, the priests return also. They have been enlisted to convince Tristana to marry Don Lope and end her life of "sin."

Nowhere is the "honor" of Don Lope better satirized than in Buñuel's cutting back to Tristana's days of innocence, before she entered the house of Don Lope. The film ends on the image it began with: the innocent Tristana walking pleasantly with Saturna, beautifully under-played by Lola Gaos. The repetition of the view of Toledo now expresses the world which has buried her. The resounding church bells are no longer nostalgic but painful symbols of hypocrisy.

Spain, like Tristana, its "sadness," has been destroyed by a cruel code of honor, defiled and left amputated by hypocrisy. And it can summon nothing with which to replace the old code. Tristana is left in the house (Spain) of Don Lope with no new values to heal and revitalize her internal and external habitation. *Tristana* belongs with *Belle de Jour* in the Buñuel *oeuvre*. It is post-*Viridiana* and post-*Nazarin* in its sensibility, refusing even the illusion of a messianic figure equivalent to Viridiana, Nazarin or Simon of the Desert come to heal the poor. The political has been transformed back into the sociology of a callous aristocracy struggling with its death throes in an unrelieved homeland. Buñuel no longer can offer the deception of the character with Christian impulses whose hopes will come to nothing because his dedication to the poor as a single individual is painfully inadequate. The religious motif appears now only in burlesque, in the begging priests hovering around Don Lope on the eve of his death.

Tristana briefly shares the innocent hope of a figure like Viridiana, but she is too soon engulfed by a world which denies a woman any outlet for her creative energies. Tristana must sell her beloved piano soon after her mother's death, and it is only after her leg is amputated, when she is once more under his reign, that Don Lope buys her a new one. By this time Tristana sees her amputation as defining her condition and her future. Paradoxically, although he does not live to see it, Don Lope was right when he demonically said that the sick Tristana would never leave his house alive. Her loud piano playing during the last visit of Don Horacio is symbolic of her repression of all healthy impulse. Transforming tender feeling into harsh aggression, it is meant to drown out what remains in her of hope and possibility. Don Horacio, as Tristana guesses, will never return. She is left amidst the furniture of decadence to live out her future. Her youthful sexuality has been reduced to a semi-demented exhibitionism before the frightened deafmute, Saturno.

The circular structure of the imagery, the rapid repetition of the images of Tristana's life until we return to the first sequence of the film, reflects the hopelessness Buñuel feels, both toward Spain and toward its victims. Buñuel has relentelessly and brilliantly exposed the destruction of the individual by a corrupt, hypocritical moral code which makes no pretense of improving a society in which class animosities are deepening and brutality is growing.—JOAN MELLEN

LES VAMPIRES

(Serial made in 1915-1916 by Louis Feuillade)

It is difficult to begin to describe *Les Vampires.* It is a good "movie" movie, entertaining even as presented today, almost six hours at one sitting with one intermission. It is silent, not a comedy but a *Perils of Pauline* type affair, and yet only rarely did I feel its age or that it was dated, quaint, or camp. Which is saying something for a movie made in 1915 and 1916: why, this flick is so old that it looks like *Jules and Jim,* a period piece set in the same era.

All the titles and credits of the ten original episodes of the serial have been lost, so the five and a half hours that the film runs are hours of *pure* moving pictures. That's all you see: no polite introductions to the characters and actors, no hints about what's coming next or exactly when it's time to start watching for the next episode. No "Early the next evening," and no "Meanwhile back at the ranch." We are directly exposed to the world of the movie; just as, in *Rear Window,* we see directly what Jimmy Stewart sees, here our identification with the reporter Guerande colors our attitude toward the reality we both see.

And the things we see!!! Heads found in closets, glamorous dancers poisoned by rings given them by false admirers, kidnappings and rescues galore. Throughout people appear and reappear in new guises or disguises, looking vaguely but surely like themselves or like their last appearance. In plain houses and offices and city streets they hide themselves behind curtains and emerge from inside trunks, sneak in and out, and in general deliberately conceal themselves from and reveal themselves to the people around them.

Les Vampires is not about ordinary vampires; it is no *Nosferatu, Vampyr,* or *Dracula.* "Vampires" refers instead to a gang of bandits operating very successfully in France. None of them is an old-fashioned, literally blood-sucking vampire, but the associations of the word make it an appropriate name for them to have adopted, and they illuminate its meaning in turn. In olden times vampires sucked blood, the authority-giving birthright of the aristocratic ruling class and hence the pillar upon which society's structure depended for support. In the twentieth century blood and breeding are no longer the sole sources of power. Wealth is now vital. Feuillade's vampires lust after the ruling class's wealth as insatiably and snatch it as inexorably as their predecessors did the pure blood of the aristocrats. Like their "ancestors" they dwell apart from the normal world and only enter it to prey upon it. Like "true" vampires, their essence is to prey upon the vitality of the established order; hence, they are insatiable, in a way infinite, and exhausting and destructive of that vitality. Unlike the earlier variety, they haven't the ability to turn into bats (as evil as doves are spiritual), but they are adept at concealing their reality by other, though not supernatural, methods to effect their unwelcome intrusions into the normal world. Their disguises are as good as actual transformation. Their lust for the taboo carries over into all areas of their life just as with blood vampires—a nuance of the vampire mythology made hilariously explicit in Polanski's *Fearless Vampire Killers.* So they are debauched sensualists, their nether world the scene of drunken orgies, wild with apache dancing, table-top shimmying, and all the rest.

Needless to say, the police are impotent before such creatures. Somehow, however, Guerande, the reporter in charge of covering their crimes, gets on their trail. He tails them for the duration of the serial, which ends with his discovering their hiding place for the police. He is the "good guy" who brings the "bad guys" to justice.

Les Vampires is not, however, primarily the story of Guerande as an individual character in the way that *Rear Window* is the story of the Jimmy Stewart character. Guerande is a device for getting us into the story; as the curious reporter, he plays an important part in the story itself. But it is certainly not *his* story, but the story of the Vampires and their powerful and ever-changing presence in the heart of the normal world. There, to everyone's chagrin, they reveal themselves in criminal acts of the

most flamboyantly baroque and audacious style. The episodes are structured around members of their gang and their bold crimes: "La Tête Coupée," "La Bague qui Tue," "Le Cryptogramme Rouge," "La Spectre," etc. These crimes bring something remarkable into what would otherwise be uneventful everyday life. They "make things interesting." *Les Vampires* is as justly named as the gang itself.

What does their story look like as it unreels? An important question if I claim that we have a sense of the story of a fifty-five-year-old silent crime melodrama serial. Throughout the hours of film, we are continually seeing the ordinary made extraordinary: the world is not so simple as it looks. Certain previously unnoticed, innocent-seeming locations turn out to belong pure and simple to the Vampires: the nightclub, jails, the garage where they take Guerande, their laboratories. But their power is not in having their own nether world, but in their concealed existence in the heart of the normal world. They are so strong that their nature transforms the world upon which they prey. Because they control the possible disparity between appearance and reality, it becomes a world of disguised domestics where a dead man can escape from jail, where it may not be safe to go to the window or walk in the street—a world where unheard of events occur, where *anything* can happen. It is a world defined by the universal threat that the Vampires may reveal themselves anew, a world which the Vampires threaten by their very existence, unknown, unadmitted, and even excluded though they may be.

We believe that there are Vampires in the the world because we *see* them. They are in the film, and, as far as we are concerned, the real world is the world of the film. It is fitting, then, that their story is over when they are brought to light. Once in the light, they can't threaten to appear for they are already there. As Vampires they must control their "appearances" before the world that is their prey. Their discovery in their own world is the stake through their collective heart. They are caught by surprise, out of character as Vampires, no longer shadowy figures coming from a nether world, invading and attacking this world. The nether world is simply part of *the* world. Once seen as part of this world, and dealt with, the Vampires no longer threaten it. Things can once more be what they seem because some things are seen to be the work of Vampires, those masters of disguise. (The question of how long there had been Vampires before the film picked up the story, and whether there are maybe some Vampires who didn't get revealed, is one that occurs to the viewer of traditional vampire films too, and is the slight threatening aftertaste that gives the subject and hence the films some of their interest, resonance, and universality).

What does the world of the film look like? Most of the action takes place in interiors, and even exteriors are all in social settings, Paris or its civilized country surroundings. Several interiors are basic to the story: Guerande's home, his fiancée's home, the underground cabaret-like den of the Vampires. Of these, certain sets are frequently the scene of action: a hallway with two doors to bedrooms along one wall; an entranceway with draperies behind which people often hide; a prison cell. Few of the sets are extraordinary; the halls are prototypical halls, the bedrooms rooms where the characters obviously sleep. Only rarely are strange details discovered in the scenery itself, and these are clearly the sneaky additions of the Vampires, like the poisoned wine at Guerande's engagement party.

Usually the sets are simply the settings of actions performed by the actors, the only moving, interesting elements in view. Not only is the scenery stationary but many of the actions are not visually exciting either. The characters exchange a great number of notes and cards by various couriers. Like the social practise it represents, this was, I suspect, in part a device for introducing character's names and disguises; many of them must have been explained by intertitles which we no longer see. But the continual deliveries and interchanges of letters, cards, pens, and notes are more than a device; they have dramatic effect. They remind us of

characters not at the moment on the screen. The rather closed-off interior of the respectable home where Guerande is often seen trying to figure things out is not an island of sanity and impenetrable exile. Even here Guerande is himself driven to dissemble like a Vampire: he feigns fatigue and actually gets into bed while intending to sneak out later. The influences of the Vampires are many and all-pervading; one is always conscious of, and on one's guard against, their intrusions from the other and momentarily invisible world.

A clearer result of the at times unbelievable amount of notepassing that goes on in *Les Vampires* is an emphasis on manners and civilization which is in the film not only for structural reasons but also because it is an important characteristic of the society in which the story is set. It is a polite film; only the Vampires have no manners.

All this politeness, the lapses of the Vampires, and their great assaults on the well-mannered world, are presented visually and with the thriftiest of means. Feuillade was on a low time and money budget, but it is a rich film. The drawing-room comedy quality of the world of the established order is realized in the subtly humorous treatment of scenes like the visit of Guerande and his mother to his fiancée's house. The young couple and the two mothers separate into pairs, each consciously unconscious of the other. A brilliant portrayal, swiftly sketched, of the two couples watching each other like hawks, it is the essence of the human comedy. In contrast, consider the scenes that reveal the Vampires, cat-like burglars climbing buildings, gliding among their victims at a party, or dancing at orgies. The first are exquisitely beautiful as abstract design, the latter as pictures of "animal" abandon. There is no human blend of instinct and intelligence; the Vampires' animal grace and intelligence are impersonal, abstract, and most certainly humorless.

Now a word about the main (practically the only) characters. First a list. There's Guerande and his immediate circle: his fiancée and their mothers. Then there's Mazamette, an ex-Vampire now a copy boy on Guerande's paper and the reporter's loyal if somewhat bemused companion—sort of a comic, a lecherous but wise fool. There are three top Vampires. The woman, Irma Vep (we are shown that her name is an anagram for *vampire* in the course of the film), is played by a beautiful actress, Musidora, whose name and face were made by Feuillade much as Dietrich's by Sternberg. Irma has seven different aliases—that is, she pretends to be seven different people. Without the aid of titles it was not obvious to me each time that she appeared in a new disguise. It was more that this woman might turn up anywhere at any moment—"you never know what this dame'll do next." With stunning variety and imagination she (and all the Vampires) continually surprise us in a way that the reporter's fiancée could never hope to do. With only the pictures to guide me, I was sometimes taken in by the Vampire's disguises and was jarred into understanding only by daring Vampirish actions that showed me what was what. If at times it is not crystal clear what the Vampires are doing, that only contributes to our perception of their power. We don't question why things are happening because they look right, Feuillade making events follow from and connect with each other visually. By repeating events almost identically, he gives their occurrence a certain necessity and rationale: having seen someone hide himself behind a curtain several times, we don't question it as unnatural. All doubts become awe in the face of these complex creatures, the Vampires.

Yet there were times when I could appreciate the Vampires' craftiness while it had still not become obvious to the innocents on the screen. When in on the various jokes they put over (like Satana's visit in priest's clothing to the jail where the captured Irma is being held), one has to admire the gang. Between the fascination they exert and the admiration they deserve, the Vampires have quite a hold on the audience's energies.

The structure of the serial is conducive to the greatest enjoyment and appreciation of the Vampires; how they threaten the established order, and how vital they are in com-

parison with their victims. Linked with the events by the reporter-hero, we can do what Guerande cannot: just watch. He must obey the imperative of action against the evil whose story he is unravelling. The reporter is not able to catch the Vampires single-handed, however. He would be defenseless in their world, a veritable babe in the woods. It is Mazamette, who gets Guerande into the whole mess in the first place by stealing his files to give to the Vampires, who ultimately is the one most effective in bringing them to justice. The only character who could be and has been in both worlds, he can deal with polite society and "real world" problems; the ability shows in his behavior, which is not fully respectable and even a bit ridiculous. Guerande would never marry the concierge's widow, but Mazamette finds her leeringly attractive and winds up with her in the end. It's a double wedding, the young Guerande couple and this pair. His human personality is too strong to let him remain a Vampire, but he is not tied to conventions of what "is done" and what isn't. He is not dumb.

But if anything I say is true about this film, it must be true visually. We *see* how Mazamette acts toward the widow, *see* that he is not quite *comme il faut, see* that he is alert to what goes on around him, that he notices important details and knows what they mean he must do. He sees the clues to the crimes or the locations of the Vampires; he sees them stash Guerande and gets him out. And we see that his dress and cleverness with modern or criminal-like devices is similar to that of the Vampires, even while his warm, easy-going smile, his wisdom, and his sense of humor make him unquestionably mortal, however *originel.* In fact, he brings the Vampires into Guerande's life in much the way that the old professor in Polanski's *Fearless Vampire Killers* brings the classic vampires into the life of his young assistant. (That professor is, I believe, a combination of the appearance of the wicked white-haired doctor of Dreyer's *Vampyr* and the sort of clever, high strung, and slightly-in-bad-taste behavior of Mazamette. The resemblance is, I think, no coincidence.)

Mazamette does one more thing that prevents his identification with either of the two groups in the film and simultaneously connects him to them and to us, the audience, in new ways: he looks at us. He checks to be sure that we understand things, he laughs aside with us, he "puts on a show" for us, and sometimes joins us with a conspiratorial wink. In a word, he acts consciously, so that, while the movie is *about* the Vampires and how they are hunted down and captured by the grave young reporter assisted by the older less attractive fellow, it is held together by the old character. Mazamette is in a sense the Missing Link that interweaves the two worlds in one time.

Ultimately *Les Vampires* is a silent film with two distinct groups of characters; a few other figures who, though personally unimportant, add color and depth by extending the consequences of the central character's actions beyond their own individual lives; and one independent intermediary, the only self-consciously performing character, Mazamette. The characters are never far away, and everything is always in focus. The only moving figures are characters in the film: no extras. The only spectacles that occur are created by the Vampires. For example, when all the noble guests at the grand ball in episode 5 are asphyxiated, they drape themselves ornamentally over the furniture, making a beautiful Watteau-like image on the screen. Into this stationary garden of figures come the Vampires, sleek cats stepping among the limp bodies and gracefully denuding them of their sparkling jewels and other valuables.

In general the photography is easy on the eyes and unobtrusively beautiful, like a shot of lace-curtained window with the sun shining through it. The women are very beautiful and beautifully photographed too, with a distinct difference between the hard modern beauty of Irma Vep and the Victorian charms of Guerande's fiancée. Exterior shots, like cat burglars climbing walls, and people being swept off in carriages, are absolutely authentic looking, besides being beautiful.

So, in the end, what is it like to watch *Les*

Vampires in 1970? It is perhaps like watching something reveal itself under mescalin. One keeps seeing the same things, slightly changed, punctuated by great occurrences like the discovery of the head or the death of the dancer on stage. The repetition, the variations on a theme, the consistency of the faces of the actors and actresses somehow make it clear that the series is an entity. It is something, perhaps, like an analytic cubist painting.

And the sense of what is being revealed is always: anything might conceal a Vampire. Things aren't always what they seem! Pay attention to appearances for the truth is right there, it's Irma Vep again if you can recognize her. The phenomenon on the screen is so fascinating that for almost six hours I could sit there and really enjoy watching it as though charmed by a swaying cobra. A good deal of the pleasure comes from watching actively, holding all the parts of the vision in your head at the same time, trying to resolve it, second-guess it, grasp it apart from seeing the stuff going on right in front of you. But it keeps moving. It will only let you see, experience, then remember. André Bazin saw it and described what he felt:

> That night only one of the two projectors was working. In addition, the print had no subtitles and I imagine that Feuillade himself would have had difficulty in trying to recognize the murderers. It was even money as to which were the good guys and which the bad. So difficult was it to tell who was which that the apparent villains of one reel turned out to be the victims in the next. The fact that the lights were turned on every ten minutes to change reels seemed to multiply the episodes. Seen under these conditions, Feuillade's chef-d'oeuvre reveals the aesthetic principle that lies behind its charm. Every interruption evoked an "ah" of disappointment and every fresh start a sigh of hope for a solution. This story, the meaning of which was a complete mystery to the audience, held its attention and carried it along purely and simply by the tension created in the telling. There was no question of preexisting action broken up by intervals, but of a piece unduly interrupted, an inexhaustible spring, the flow of which was blocked by a mysterious hand. Hence the unbearable tension set up by the next episode to follow and the anxious wait, not so much for the events to come as for the continuation of the telling, of the restarting of an interrupted act of creation. (*What is Cinema?* p. 59)

The last word: another way of saying why this film is so good to watch is that Feuillade really put a lot of good "movie business" in it, like prototypically French customs and bits and pieces of reality that imply a whole elaborated social system. Many devices which Feuillade uses very simply are so loaded with potential that other directors have elaborated them into whole episodes in themselves. There is, for example, the hallway scene in *La Règle du Jeu* where the idea that people may or may not bump into each other in the hall, and in fact do, is expressed in an almost dance-like sequence of great complexity and good humor. Or the villain disguising himself as a priest to get into jail; that happens, with more comic elaboration again, in *Le Crime de M. Lange.* I feel an uncontrollable urge, in fact, to think of *La Règle du Jeu* as very similar to *Les Vampires.* In both people reveal themselves simply by what they do, and in both the various elements of the cast of characters are brought together quite actively by the central and well-meaning, almost self-effacing character, who alone is aware of the events going on as things to be watched. The stuff of these films is the same, perhaps just in being perfectly cinematic and perfectly French "social" dramas of sorts. They are, as Bazin said, both creations where before our eyes the different elements combine and mix and change, reveal themselves on all sides, and once revealed, fit together. Somehow, with all the variety of combinations and permutations, the film resolves itself beautifully, leaving no loose ends.—ELLEN MANDEL

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the film contains some nice jokes on masculine and feminine stereotypes, and even a wry ironic twist at the end, when Myra realizes the only way she can have Maryann, the clean-living Girl Next Door whom she had hoped to convert to lesbianism, is to become a man again. In the last scene Rex Reed (as Myron) manages one curious, sheepish glance at Maryann which, coming after all the deliberately grotesque perversion, is a surprisingly tender acknowledgment of the mystery and complexity of human sexuality. To complement its sexual theme, the film offers a bizarre, grandiose satiric examination of Hollywood: just as Myra crusades to subvert "normal" sexual roles and myths, the film as a whole means to undermine the "clean" romantic myths about love and life that Hollywood has propagated over the years. The satire almost all turns on one device—juxtaposition of corny old movie clips with the decadent goings-on in the "new" Hollywood where Myra Breckinridge hopes to make her fortune. This intercutting eventually gets tedious, but it works well enough for a while, perhaps because the "live" scenes are conceived in the same extravagant terms as the old movies themselves. The film replaces the wholesome romantic fantasies of yesteryear with a flamboyant lewd fantasy of its own; I think Sarne's ironic point is that even while audiences for years swallowed those antiseptic movie celebrations of pure love, heroism and nobility, they were imagining, for their favorite stars, a secret life of thrilling, unspeakable decadence. Like most of the inside-Hollywood movies, *Myra* has an ambivalent attitude toward its subject; while it aims to deglamorize Hollywood, it cannot quite resist the allure of that gaudy, dream-studded world. The character of Myra Breckinridge is meant as a parody of the forties movie star—the sexually provocative, tough-talking good-bad girl (Lauren Bacall, Rita Hayworth, Linda Darnell); yet it is a real star part. And who could have played her but Raquel Welch, that ludicrous caricature of a sex goddess who is nonetheless the last genuine sex goddess we have? Her performance is a dizzying mixture of intentional and unintentional self-parody—one of the most perfect examples of Camp ever recorded on screen. In spite of all the hullabaloo about what a dirty, disgusting movie this is, only one thing in it offended me: the spectacle of Mae West reciting dirty jokes and trying to walk and sing and look as she did 40 years ago, providing a ghastly, cruel mockery of old age. Otherwise, the movie is vulgar, uneven, desperate, and sometimes right on target.—STEPHEN FARBER

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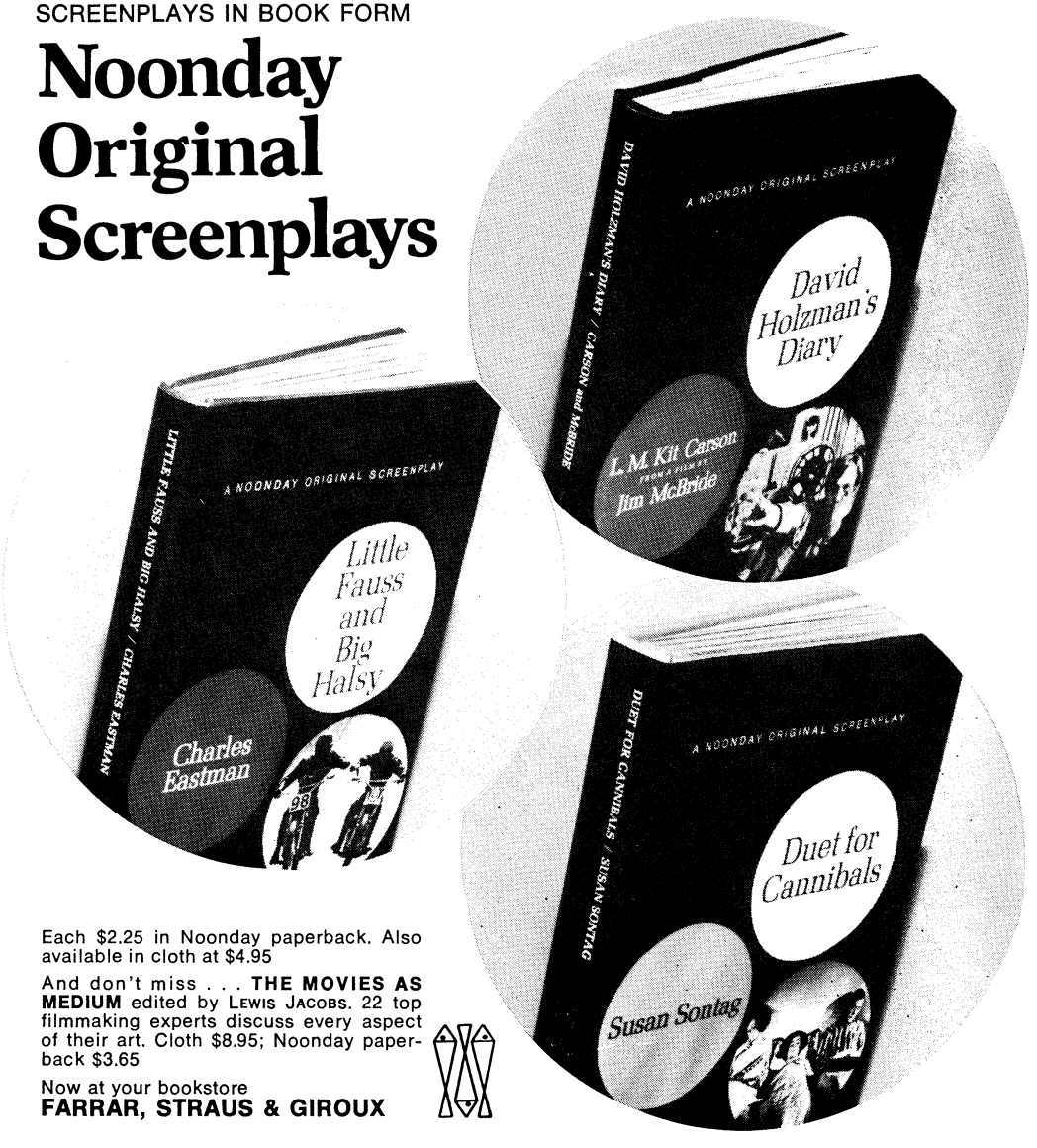

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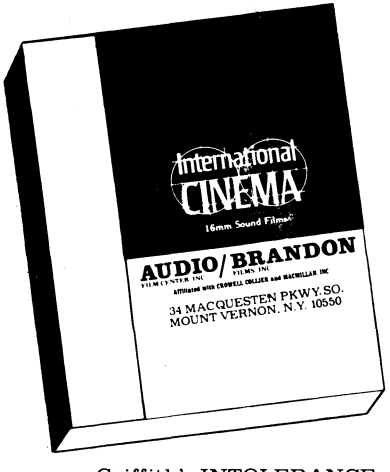

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