FILM
QUARTERLY

INDEX TO VOLUME XXIV

Titles of films and books reviewed appear in *italics*. First reference number indicates volume number; second indicates issue number; third indicates page. Major topics are also indexed.

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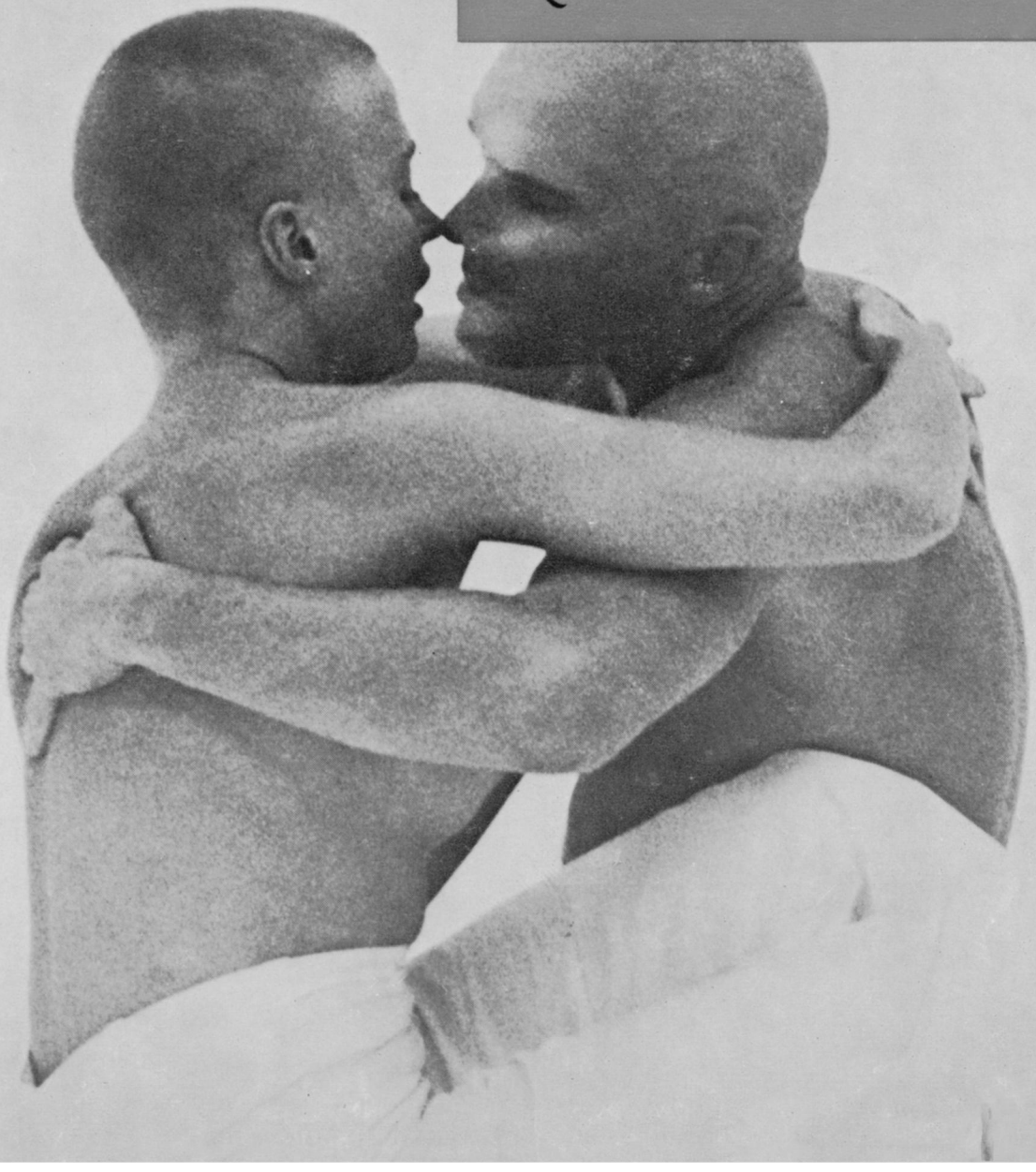
FILM QUARTERLY



VOLUME XXIV, No. 4 Summer 1971

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COVER: George Lucas's *THX 1138*.

Editor's Notebook

TELEVISION, ANYONE?

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CONTRIBUTORS

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JOAN MELLEN

Fascism in the Contemporary Film

The last few years have seen among serious young European directors like Bertolucci, Costa-Gavras and Saura a resurgence of interest in fascism, not as the arena for physical combat between absolute forces of right and wrong, but as a social phenomenon. These directors, and they include such older, established figures as Visconti and Petri, reveal a reawakened interest in examining its social structure and its psychological origins in the mass man who is most susceptible to fascist movements.

Films about fascism are, of course, not new. But the formula for the "antifascist" film as practiced in both Hollywood and Europe has always involved more apologetics than truth. With the exception of the neorealist examples, the Italian films, of which a recent example is Luciano Salce's *The Fascist* (1965), have shown the Germans as congenital brutes and those who joined the Italian fascists as misguided but good-hearted buffoons. The American films concentrated on violence and the show of strength, marking America's growing hegemony over Western Europe and indeed the world.

The entire period of radical upsurge to which the younger directors now dealing more seriously with fascism belong can be dated usefully with the death of Stalin in 1953 and the Hungarian revolution of 1956 on the one hand, and the Cuban revolution of 1959 on the other. The reassessment of the Soviet Union meant an intellectual liberation for Marxists (this is especially apparent in both of Costa-Gavras's recent films, Z and *The Confession*) and a new appetite for analysis of capitalism in disintegration, or what it often results in, fascism. Free from having to apologize for the atrocities of Stalin's Russia, young intellectuals could finally look at the fascist period from a socialist point of view. Thus Costa-Gavras and the others began to trace the origin of fascism and to see a connection in countries like the United States between the tolerance of civil liberties at home and social exploitation and a fascist repression of dissent in its "colonies." The upsurge of revolution in the colonial world has meant for young intellectuals like Bertolucci an impetus for reassessing the recent political history of his own country. And the worker-student struggles of France and Northern Italy in the late sixties suggested an alternative to the capitulation to fascism of the twenties and thirties. It made the study of fascism no longer passé: directors are sensing the possibility of new fascist repression or even its rise to power in the advanced capitalist countries. It has made them feel the urgency of examining the history of fascism and see the study of fascism as relevant once again.

The new films exploring the fascist sensibility are among the most interesting and challenging work being done in the film today. When they are at their weakest, these films substitute melodrama for a sustained dramatization of the circumstances under which capitalist countries have resorted to fascism. Yet some quite unique examples of the political film have emerged from this new interest: Bertolucci's *Il Conformista* (1970); Visconti's *The Damned* (1968); Petri's *Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion* (1970); Costa-Gavras's Z (1969) and *The Confession* (1970); and Carlos Saura's *The Garden of Delights* (1970).

These films (and even the feeble American example, Paul Newman and Stuart Rosenberg's *WUSA*) have integrated within their texture three major areas of exploration: the social dynamic and means by which fascism functions; the nature of the resistance to fascism;

and, most successfully, the dissection of the personality particularly susceptible to fascism, with its configuration of homosexual anxiety and sadomasochism. Pessimistic about the marshalling of forces to prevent a new rise of fascism, not one of these recent films can with confidence suggest a mode of resistance or the nature of a political alternative that would mobilize opposition to a power structure which abandons all democratic rights and then attempts to win people over through the use of charismatic demagogues. However, with ruthless and searing penetration Bertolucci in both *Il Conformista* and *The Spider's Strategem* (1969–70) condemns the default of intellectuals to devise and lead the necessary resistance to the rise of fascist power.

•

National Socialism is out to create a uniformly sado-masochistic character, a type of man determined by his isolation and insignificance, who is driven by this very fact into a collective body where he shares in the power and glory of the medium of which he has become a part.

—Franz Neumann, BEHEMOTH

The fascist personality that emerges in the figures of Marcello Clerici in *Il Conformista,* the Police Inspector in *Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion,* Martin von Essenbeck in *The Damned,* and even the murderers Yango and Vango in *Z,* consistently reveal a latent or manifest homosexuality accompanied by a sense of frustration that finds relief only in continued acts of sadistic brutality. Searching for a theory to account for this type, Petri, Bertolucci, and Visconti subscribe to Wilhelm Reich's sense of the connection between vulnerability to fascism, and, as Reich put it, "the repression and distortion of the sexual life." This repression succeeded in distorting aggression into brutality. The implication is not that homosexuals all display such a pattern. Too many homosexuals are artists, rebels, and gentle people for that. Rather, it is that feared homosexuality results in a self-hatred derived from scorn or unwillingness to accept such feelings; the defenses mobilized against it lead the personality to behave brutally. This mechanism is too widely known to warrant the charges against these directors that their relating homosexuality to fascism is simplistic. Petri chooses a policeman as cryptofascist type precisely because the police bully is so notoriously anxious about his masculinity. No less credible is Bertolucci's Marcello, covering up conscious homosexual tendencies aroused by a movement pronouncedly oriented toward feats of male strength. And most obvious a likely fascist recruit is Visconti's Martin, who, long abused by parental manipulation, can express his sexuality only in cruel ways. These particular manifestations of homosexuality, all characterized by self-hatred, seem to be fascist prototypes and very unlikely to be recruited to a movement with humanitarian means and goals.

Reich located the origin of sexual repression in the institution of the patriarchal family in which a father possessing absolute power engendered the subservience of his children to another absolute power, the state. He reproduced in his children his own submissive attitude toward the state's authority. Subscribing to this theory, Visconti, Bertolucci, and Saura treat the fascist sensibility in the genre of the family chronicle.

Visconti's much remarked upon (by Bertolucci for one) "operatic" expressionism in *The Damned* with its gothic interiors expresses as well the crushing of the sexual freedom of the young by an oppressive patriarch, Joachim von Essenbeck, whose ritual murder climaxes the first section of the film. The isolated, also gothic mansion of the Cano family in Saura's film visually expresses the same theme. In *Conformista* the hero, Marcello Clerici, pays a visit to *his* family mansion—old, decaying and now ruled over by his mother alone. The surreal and stifling evocation of the past visually explains Clerici's decision to join the fascists because he has a powerful need to be "normal." Thus too the sadism of characters like Petri's Police Inspector (he is given no proper name), Clerici,

and Martin von Essenbeck has at its root an overwhelming desire created in childhood for an all-powerful father. They search for an alliance to replace the one with their absent patriarchs. Clerici's father is in an insane asylum, having gone mad with guilt over participation in the torture of his own victims. Martin's father has died in World War I.

Ashamed of this need, feeling impotent before it, these potential fascists develop a contempt for the powerless. Martin scorns his mother's lover, Friedrich; the Inspector despises the student radicals who taunt him; Clerici is contemptuous of his former professor, an antifascist and would-be substitute father. A lust for power replaces responsibility for the homosexual aspects of the self the individual holds in contempt and wishes not to face. As revealed in the characters of the Inspector and Martin von Essenbeck, it is a lust that is insatiable. The compulsion to control a sexuality not sanctioned as "normal" sends these men into the arms of the fascists, whose doctrine that all things are permissible offers a club to the murderers of Lambrakis, an SS uniform to Martin von Essenbeck, a basement of secret files to the Inspector who takes charge of the intelligence work of a state not yet openly fascist, and a revolver to Clerici.

Perhaps taking cues from the actual history of fascism, with its suppression of the rights of women (a correlative to the latent or overt homosexuality of its men) Bertolucci, Visconti, and Petri reveal the women under fascism to be either mainly promiscuous whores (Anna in *Conformista,* Augusta in *Investigation,* Dreyfa in *Spider's Strategem*) or "all bed and kitchen," like Giulia, the mindless girl Clerici marries in his campaign not to be different. "To be normal is to turn to look at the ass of a pretty girl, see that others have done the same, and be pleased," says Clerici's best friend, the blind Italo–speaking Clerici's thoughts.

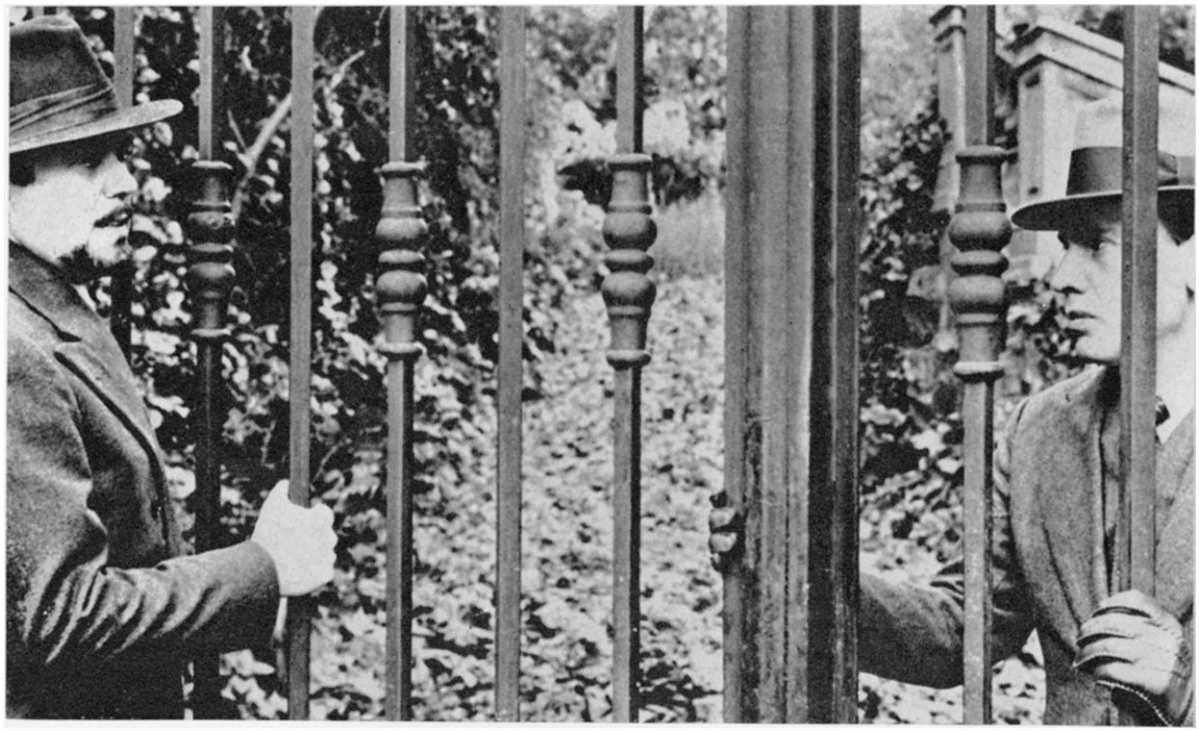
IL CONFORMISTA

When Clerici (Jean-Louis Trintignant) has his decisive interview with the fascists, it takes place in marble halls which dwarf him. The image reflects his sense of his own smallness and his fear: it is correlative to the panic in individuals who join the fascist mesh to escape from the sense of their inadequacies by identifying with an all-powerful force. The fascist leader asks Clerici why he wishes to join them. Many, he says, do it for the money, very few because they believe. Clerici says nothing, although the film reveals his motives as totally personal and psychological, having nothing whatever to do with the "cause." When the fascists are defeated in 1943, at the end of the film, Clerici denounces his former friends in hysteria and attaches himself to the antifascist side. Marching in triumph, the liberated crowd pays him no heed, sensing that his cause has not been theirs.

With fascism's defeat, Clerici abandons the pretense of normality. He finds refuge in the arms of a naked street urchin, thus completing the pattern of seduction that began when as a boy he was the seduced child. His seducer Lino (Pierre Clementi), a chauffeur like his mother's present lover, wore a uniform and high boots during the seduction, fondling his Mauser. So later Clerici joins the fascists in their high boots and proudly receives a pistol.

The origins of Clerici's homosexuality are located by Bertolucci in an Oedipal struggle. His seductive mother still receives her adult son half-naked in a flimsy negligee. She talks about her lover to awaken the jealousy of her son and ridicules his bride-to-be as "scrawny." She tells him baldly that she wishes his father dead. Reinstating himself as the sole man in her life, Clerici brutalizes her lover, who suddenly is not to be seen, surrealistically whisked away by the son's wish.

The easily awakened passionate attachment to his mother is combatted in Clerici's personality by sexual inhibition and powerful repression. Trintignant plays the part with a walk straight as a board, rigid, immobile. His mannerisms convey a compulsion toward control which, if relaxed, would expose him. This repression brings out in him as well an exag-



IL CONFORMISTA

gerated sense of honor and duty, and bravery (except when in his conflicted immobility he must finally shoot Anna Quadri) and self-control, all of which make him an ideal fascist agent. For the fascist personality the ideals of homeland and nation are transferences of the desire for mother and family. The fascist institutions themselves function to allow the pathologic individual a home.

Bertolucci's editing is Proustian, based upon the random association of ideas by an involuntary memory (most of the action of the film occurs in flashback as Clerici travels to the ambush of the professor). As he confesses to a priest before his marriage to Giulia, Clerici's mind returns to the scene when he was twelve and he and Lino were cavorting on the grass. The confession scene itself is recalled in a flashback while Clerici and his brutal fascist partner Manganiello pursue the antifascist professor. A child inadvertently steps in front of the car, introducing into the film the element of the fortuitous. Clerici immediately recalls himself as a twelve-year-old being seduced by Lino. The priest asks Clerici the crucial question for the fascist state: "Are you a member of a subversive organization?" When he says that he is in the organization which hunts the subversives, the priest absolves him of all his sins; the church joins with the fascist state in manipulating the life of the individual. (Clerici's name itself expresses this unity in his person.) Even Clerici does a double take when he is so immediately set free.

It is as skillful of Bertolucci as it is significant that in the scene where he is given his orders for the murder, Clerici worries most over the loss of his hat: it is something he needs for cover, to conceal him from himself. In the moment of his initiation into fascism it depicts his reason for joining the fascists in the first place, reflecting desire to merge his identity within the bourgeois garb of respectability. Alienated from himself, he cannot summon the energy to make love to his new bride until he hears Giulia's account of how she was seduced by the paternal old family lawyer. Clerici tries step by step to reenact her loss of virginity. It is the story that arouses him, not her physical presence, just as it is the need to conceal

his homosexuality from himself that inspires him to join the fascists, and not a commitment to their ideology. Bertolucci's point about the psychology of the fascist is that individuals pursue the compulsions of their sexuality in conflict with their social freedom and self-interest, that in a culture encouraging sexual repression, fascist power finds its most likely supporters.

Giulia is as passive a victim to Clerici as she is to Anna Quadri (Dominique Sanda), who appropriates her as soon as they meet. The film treats their shopping trip as an idyll. The camera pans the shop windows as if through the delighted eyes of Giulia, seemingly unaware that she is being seduced. Primarily a lesbian, Anna gives Giulia their address in Savoie where "the beds are enormous," betraying not only her husband, but also Marcello, her would-be lover. By seducing Giulia, Anna would involve Giulia in a betrayal of *her* husband too.

Marcello is drawn to Anna despite his homosexual feelings because she is like him; while she responds to him, she is actually desiring his giddy wife. Anna is attractive to Clerici precisely because she is a lesbian, the analogue to his own latent homosexuality. With her he can vicariously enjoy a physical closeness to her husband about whom his ambivalent feelings, stemming from student days, reflect both respect and a sense of betrayal. That she is not ultimately sexually accessible, although they do make love once, makes it possible for him to show feeling for her.

At the end Clerici reverts to the form of his original trauma. He meets Lino again (another surreal note) and frantically accuses him of the murder of the Quadris. Thus he locates the root of his own destruction, the motor that generated his acts and his deceptions.

The camera work in *Il Conformista*, designed to pick up the nuances of decadence coexisting with political fascism, is expressionistic. Mocking Clerici's wish to be normal, the camera reveals how abnormal is the world he so longs to enter. Clerici's introduction to fascism is accompanied by the camera's zooming in on a party secretary making love to a beautiful woman lying on her back on his desk. The camera zooms back and we see Clerici's expressionless face peering through the curtains. When Clerici is given his first assignment, the fascist in charge shells dozens of walnuts at his desk with garish sensuality. Not surreal, these images yet express at once the arrogance and preposterousness of fascism. Other such visual anomalies include the pathos of the blind Italo's wearing one black and one brown shoe twice in the film. Dominique Sanda appears as a redheaded prostitute in the house in Ventimiglia where Clerici is told he must murder Quadri, then later as the blond Anna Quadri. Her death, a hand-held camera following her stumbling through the woods until she finally falls, her face covered with blood, is the most horrifying image in the film and the most compelling for its startling insistence upon depicting what, after all, fascism is about. And the image is prepared for by the fragmentation of reality, in a Cubist manner, with which Bertolucci has ordered the visual aspects of his film.

IL CONFORMISTA

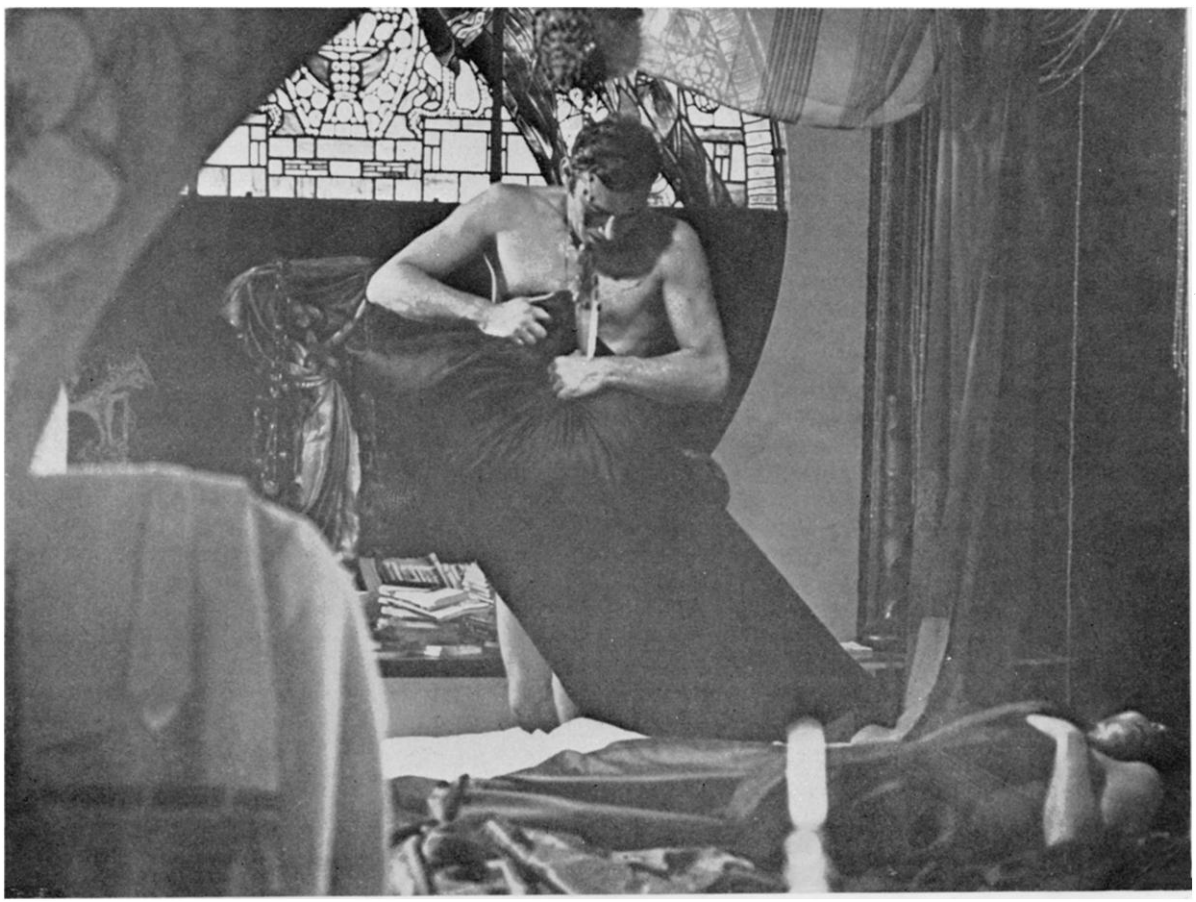
Bertolucci even feels free enough to employ a visual poetic justice at the end of the film: in 1943, no longer prosperous, the Clericis are to be found in a dreary tenement, reduced to a proletarian condition. A naked light bulb hangs prominently from the ceiling. For the first time in the film Clerici is dressed, not in a smart grey suit, but in a colored sport shirt, open at the neck. Looking perceptibly older, having become a tired housewife, Giulia vacantly tells him that she knows of his complicity in the murder of the Quadris.

INVESTIGATION OF A CITIZEN ABOVE SUSPICION

Visconti and Petri concentrate on the psychology of the fascist in power. Like Bertolucci, they locate the source of the fascism of their heroes in a feared homosexuality that finds release only in studied brutality.

Petri's Inspector is literally a sadist. He takes delight in photographing his mistress Augusta (Florinda Bolkan) in a variety of poses of murder victims: a German stewardess strangled in the toilet of a plane, a singing star with her tongue ripped out. "Does it excite you when you find them?" Augusta asks him—as excited as he, a masochist to his sadist. The sadism of the Inspector is rooted, in Petri's characterization, in an acute sense of sexual inadequacy, exacerbated by a mistress who mercilessly ridicules him and tells him that he makes love "like a baby."

The Inspector finally kills her. He is placed in charge of the investigation of the murder of his victim, whom he has killed in exactly the sadistic manner previously enacted by them in



sexual play. As she comes down on top of him to be penetrated, he cuts her throat—a depiction they had earlier observed in photographs and mock-performed. (That within a fascist-moving culture woman is treated as a sexual object alone is revealed in the characterization of Augusta herself, a glorified whore who holds court in a boudoir in negligees designed to reveal more than they hide, with low colored lights, stained-glass windows, and an enormous bed made up with black satin sheets.)

As the murderer-inspector proceeds to conduct his "investigation" he first wishes to pin the responsibility for the murder on a young, highly sensual, and potent revolutionary. The youth is not only the object of his hatred because he is a rebellious hater of authority and a licentious socialist, he is also the seducer of the Inspector's mistress-victim and indeed the very lover in comparison with whom she ridiculed the Inspector's love-making. It is also clear that the youth's sensuality excites the Inspector himself. But simultaneously the Inspector proceeds to plant clues inculpating himself, forcing his department to see his own guilt while knowing he can evade the evidence he has himself supplied.

The murder of Augusta who exposed him to himself becomes the Inspector's means of finding invulnerability within the neofascist ranks of the police department. Her murder coincides with his appointment as chief of the secret police. Like Clerici in *Il Conformista,* he sacrifices a vulnerable self (begging Augusta to consider him an adequate sexual partner) for an invulnerable one.

Like Bertolucci, Petri indicates in his fascist strong homosexual feelings. He caresses the necks of his subordinates and finds pleasure only with a whore for whose death he feels no remorse; cynically, he asks the examining physician whether she had an orgasm before she died. He has photographs of deep-sea divers and boxers in his ascetic, anally furnished apartment. And Augusta herself taunts the Inspector with his over-attachment to his mother, coaxing him to take off his undershirt with the invocation that his "mother needn't know." Cutting off his tie, she acts out the role of a castrating mother.

Visually, *Investigation* is less interesting than the other films about fascism. Petri's visual style is oriented toward creating a sense of the claustrophia afflicting his hero. Augusta's boudoir is dark and stifling, like the dungeons where the students are imprisoned and the cellar where the secret files are kept. The Inspector's own office is a cubicle. Petri also focusses on images which reveal the Inspector's illusions of grandeur about himself; huge reproductions of the Inspector's fingerprints hung from the ceiling fill a room; the Inspector collects dozens of blue silk ties like the one he wore on the day of the murder; he expects 10,000 graffiti endorsements of Mao Tse-tung. He has proudly booked "600 homosexuals" and counted "70 groups of subversives existing outside the law."

These images simultaneously suggest the Inspector's paranoia as well as a lust for power satisfied only by the magnifying of his enemies. Volonte's performance may be overstated in places, and he may shout too much, but Petri is looking for the truth behind the stereotype. For the first half of the film he is successful.

The film breaks down once the Inspector is devastated by the attack on him by his sexual and political rival Pace, who calls him "a criminal directing the repression." The youth's confidence and defiance are so powerful that the Inspector is rendered fearful before them. They make him feel inadequate and doubt the power of his office. Although the Inspector was well aware that every man becomes a child (vulnerable) when he is confronted by official authority, by laws, his power is undermined by his recognition of this fact. "I become the father," he had said earlier, indicating Petri's acceptance of the view that fascism makes use of individuals accustomed to subservience to a patriarch. "My face becomes the face of God," he continued, indicating the complicity of the church with fascism.

The Inspector's downfall is completed at the end of the film with a dream in which he confesses to his superiors. His confession is not accepted, on the ground that any weakness revealed in the workings of fascist power weakens the authority of its entire structure—as, in truth, it does. The representatives of the ruling class who call on the Inspector are displeased with his sense of guilt. They wish him to continue his work without any sense that his act was a crime. Petri illuminates how the fear of inadequacy, of impotence, of homosexual "weakness" leads the Inspector to become a policeman, a sexual sadist, a voyeur, and a fascist. In pursuing others, the fascist is thus pursuing himself; in his fury to annihilate what is weak in him, he is returned to that very weakness. But those who use the Inspector, like those who used Clerici, are unconcerned by whether he is driven by a need for expiation and seeks punishment. Possessing privilege and power, but outnumbered by those they dominate, they need policemen who fear themselves and so would willingly serve a master.

Petri, leaving us with the dream, does not complete the scene. The Inspector's last act in reality is to bow to his chief, opening the door, convinced that he will be only "confessing his innocence." Petri's illustration of the fascist personality in disintegration in the last third of the film weakens the earlier conception, suggesting as it does that the fascist is no serious threat, that the Maoist student need only expose him to himself as a criminal and he will fold up. The film degenerates into spoof with the dream sequence in which the Inspector is accused of a schizophrenia born of "the long and unrelieved exercise of power." The Inspector is left as a weak and neurotic man who merely went too far and who can be absorbed back into the bureaucracy with little trouble. His criminality can be easily contained. The horror of the murder of Augusta in the first sequence of the film is palliated by the comedy of the last, in which Petri is more interested in showing the weakness of the Inspector than in the inherent danger of the type.

THE DAMNED

Visconti's *The Damned* takes the psychology of the members of the von Essenbeck family (in history, the Krupps, whose largest steel works was in Essen) as his focus. The opening scene visually introduces us to the high culture and wealth of the von Essenbecks—opulent furnishings, china, glassware, linen, paintings, chamber music: a culture, the film underlines, which rested upon wealth realized through arms merchantry. Visconti's visual style is most effective in his evocation of the old Germany, both in the von Essenbeck mansion and in the stylized funeral of Joachim von Essenbeck, complete with coach and horses. The factory, the dominant force in all the characters' lives, provides a "stable" background for the frame.

The film opens in 1933 when the social crisis endangering the old order has brought the Nazis to power and the von Essenbecks must sacrifice their cultured façade to the overt realities of power. Martin, grandson of the von Essenbeck patriarch Joachim, has become compulsively desirous of his mother Sophia (Ingrid Thulin). At Joachim's birthday party he performs for the family as a transvestite imitating Marlene Dietrich's Lola.

In the background of the film is the quest of the Nazis, assured of state power, for the von Essenbeck arms factories. And within this larger plot the SA and SS vie for hegemony within the Nazi movement, each needing control of the von Essenbeck arms for their survival. With the massacre of the SA in June 1934, the SS triumph is complete; in Visconti's film the SS then come to see in Martin a more reliable agent than Fredrich their "manager," Sophia's lover whom they used to murder old Joachim on the night of the Reichstag fire. If Martin was enraged because the fire interrupted his transvestite performance, he is soon integrated into the Nazi movement. Ironically, it is Martin, the one von Essenbeck who was despised as a weak, perverse reject of the stern self-sufficient patriarchy, who finds in Nazism the perfect outlet for his psychosis. It is he

THE DAMNED

who personifies the merger of the old ruling group with the Nazi movement.

Heir to the steel works, Martin is a sadist, violator of children, transvestite, and matricide. Unlike Clerici who joins the fascists to escape from consciousness of the homosexuality he dreads, Martin finds with the fascists a legalized outlet for his sadomasochism and a form of homosexuality which would, in a nonfascist state, be treated as criminally deranged. Martin is ashamed of his dependence upon his mother and impotently jealous of Friedrich. He develops a contempt for the powerless that makes him eligible for the highest ranks of the SS. Visconti makes use of the known homosexuality of the Rohm clique (the SA) and shows how the massacre of June 1934 was followed by the ascendancy of another vicious homosexual, one more ruthless, within the highest ranks of the fascist state.

Recognizing that under fascism spontaneous sexuality repressed in the patriarchal family is imputed to a persecuted race (the scapegoat), Visconti has Martin become obsessed with and rape a Jewish child who then hangs herself. The incident is taken directly from Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*. In both film and novel it suggests a paradigm of depravity, heralding in the film an era in which, as Aschenbach, a von Essenbeck cousin and already in the SS, announces, "all things are permissible," again echoing Dostoevsky, this time Ivan Karamazov. (Visconti's literary sense pervades the film. His Aschenbach is of the next generation after Thomas Mann, who described in his novels the moral disintegration of the bourgeois order.)

It is a weakness in Visconti that he fails to treat the ambivalence of Nazism about homosexuality. The Nazis with their official cult of maleness scorned and persecuted homosexuals, reflecting fear of their own homosexual impulses. Yet Martin flourishes among them. Visconti is too facile in representing repressed motivation as overt behavior. Martin is himself made credible primarily in his ability to be at ease only with images of male strength and sexuality, less so in his sadism.

Unconscious of the distortions of his personality, Martin blindly acts out his Oedipal strivings. He rapes his little girl cousin on the night that is indeed "different from all other nights" in Germany—the dialogue ironically echoing the Passover Seder service of the Jews. Visconti cuts to Joachim in his bed awakened by the little girl's piercing scream, unnoticed by anyone else. His next cut is back to Martin under the table and from Martin to the Nazi SS arriving at the house to arrest Herbert Thallman, the liberal member of the family. The cutting from Martin's crime of violence to the SS which will provide a cover for such crimes both visually and conceptually comments on the morality of the Nazi takeover.

The portrait of Martin is a study in the dynamics of the personality most valuable for the implementation of fascist policies of terror and absolute control. Martin finally turns on his overpowering mother, raping her. Sophia von Essenbeck loses her mind and submits to a meaningless wedding followed by a suicide in which she and Friedrich are handed the cyanide by Martin himself. Visconti's epic melodrama is saved from sheer gothic horror by his conviction that fascism means an entirely new psychic order. Taut in his SS uniform, Martin observes the bodies of his mother and Friedrich, presses his heels together, and offers the *"Heil Hitler!"* salute: his loyalties have been transferred from the family to the Nazi state.

The opulence with which the von Essenbecks live sets the tone for the camerawork throughout the film. In contrast to the muted tones of *Il Conformista,* the colors are bold, the sounds unmistakable. But the flamboyance of the film visually tends to make of fascism a *Walpurgisnacht* of violence rather than a movement to which tacit consent, if not complicity, was given by many ordinary people. The ghoulish make-up and posture with which the mad Sophia is married to her lover Friedrich makes of Visconti's conception only a nightmare —from which one is confident of being saved by the return of reality. In this important sense Visconti's style works against his subject. Sophia is presented as witch-like harlot and manipulator with the camera focussing on her long fingernails. She can send the wife of Herbert Thallman to Dachau without a tremor and she is always ready to embrace her son if she must use him. The play of blue light on her through most of the film emphasizes her inhuman qualities. Its equivalent is the pallor of Martin.

THE GARDEN OF DELIGHTS

Saura deals with the configuration of the fascist personality only in the abstract, and this is the central weakness of his imaginative use of the surreal in depicting how living in fascist Spain immobilizes and laments the sensibility. The counterpart to Joachim van Essenbeck in *The Garden of Delights* is Antonio: middle-aged, once energetic director of a Spanish cement factory. Having lost his mind in an automobile accident which paralyzed him, Antonio can only grunt and recapitulate the grossest physical demands of early infancy. To restore him and retrieve the Swiss bank account number buried in his memory, his family seeks to recreate the events of his childhood, enacting scenes of his youth and childhood in a theater of the past. The ploy fails to work. Antonio cannot remember and the fortunes of the family are, as a result, destined to fall.

In the last scene of *Garden of Delights* Saura, abandoning even the very thin veneer of realism with which he has cloaked his allegory, has all of his characters moving in wheelchairs, not only the still paralyzed Antonio. Staring immobile into space, they cannot look at or see each other: each selfishly pursues his own ends. With Antonio at the center, an image of the failed hope for Spain's future, they pass like marionettes before the camera. Fascism has dehumanized and devitalized them, left them shells of human beings, deadened all capacity of each to feel for the other, just as none of his family felt sympathetically toward Antonio's accident.

Saura's central metaphor is that of the absence of self-knowledge, the paralysis of individuals who have been destroyed by fascism. This type appears in all serious films dealing with the psychology of fascism. It is evident in the Police Inspector of *Investigation* who has no knowledge of the infantile quality of his sexuality and can only murder his mistress when she taunts him with it. And it appears in the amnesia of Antonio, for what he wants to forget is the whole quality of his former life—his role as boss in the factory, as patriarchal heir to the family estate, as supporter of a church and state which were allied in the oppression of the populace during the Civil War. This is why Antonio is so fascinated by the

films he is shown of La Pasionaria's farewell to the International Brigades, why he watches the film over and over again, calling for *la película, la película.*

In the marvelous sequence which opens the film, half-surreal yet psychologically valid, Antonio is shut up in a room with a gigantic hog. He is being forced to experience a childhood event in the hope that by remembering this trauma, he will remember the number of the bank account as well. As a child he was threatened by the patriarch with castration. He was terrorized by being told that the pig would eat his hands and feet. Saura has the father literally assume the role of repressor of sexuality and provide the means by which the young male is made subservient. "What is important," says Antonio's father quite correctly, "are the symbols."

The trauma of Antonio is thus an unconscious rejection of his world by the only means accessible to him, a return to babyhood and the direct opposite of the aggressive behavior he manifested with the executives of the metaphorical cement factory when he was healthy and "normal." The only image that now appeals to him is that of his seductive "auntie" who took him to forbidden films. The aunt represents the very sexuality forbidden and repressed by the patriarchal family. The adult Antonio remembers very few things, but he does remember how his aunt repeatedly kissed him on the lips as a boy. At night he dreams of her.

Fascism has meant a total renunciation of individuality. Freed from fascism only as an amnesiac, Antonio must learn to write his name anew, define himself anew. Thus the accident which damaged his brain is also the sole means by which he can extricate himself from his role as ruthless industrialist. Lacking the heart to recover and resume his old role, Antonio must be declared "legally insane." In a fascist world there is no room for the rebel or the doubter who would reject a world and an imposed identity he despises. After the accident, Antonio's first words were "do what you want with my body, but don't touch my head." His head is precisely the object of fascism and its first victim. The body is easily made to follow.

Saura's camera picks up the grotesquerie in the lives of his people, the ugliness of their self-centeredness: old Don Pedro tells the woman playing Antonio's mother in the reenactment to separate her mascaraed eyelashes with a pin; the hog led into the room to scare Antonio is enormous, grunting and squealing; at night Antonio is suddenly lying in a real cradle because he has regressed to childhood; Antonio, rebelling against learning to write his name, pedals his wheelchair across the law into the swimming pool—in his imagination.

Saura thus attempts to depict visually the unconscious impulses of his characters. He succeeds in this with a minimum of dialogue, relying upon our established sense of the motives of his people. Having seen Antonio dreaming of "Auntie" we accept the Buñuel-like moment when he refuses to drink his milkshake unless the maid bares her ample breast for him to stare at. While the camera is depicting the somber loveliness of autumn at Aranjuez, Antonio, rowing with his wife, suddenly begins to rock the boat, intoning, "an American tragedy, an American tragedy." Sympathizing with him in his flight from reality, Saura has us wishing him success.

Knights on horseback ride by, "Auntie" bursts into church in her nightgown to rescue "the saints," a mock-Eisensteinian battle has children throwing steel balls at each other with bloody results, over the music of Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky.* These are the distorted images of Antonio's world. Saura leaves them as uninterpreted images for us to put together, and in part his film seems unsatisfying precisely because of its successful use of the conjunction of images alone for its meaning.

SOME AMERICAN EXAMPLES

American films which have dealt with the theme of fascism have attempted very little insight into the psychology of the fascist. Three

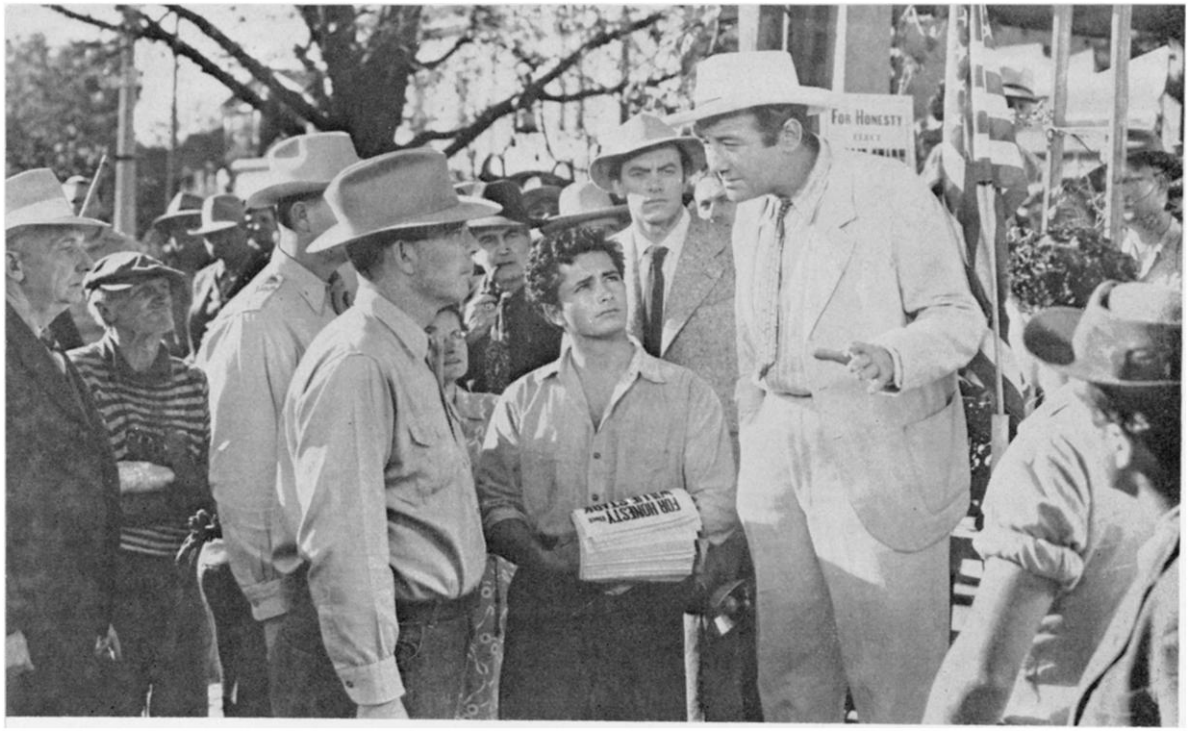
striking examples, Rossen's *All The King's Men* (the earliest and best), Kazan and Schulberg's *A Face In The Crowd,* and the recent *WUSA* see fascism as personal demagoguery alone, the lust for power of an individual who is intoxicated by his ability to manipulate masses.*

All The King's Men describes through the person of Willie Stark (Broderick Crawford) the pilgrim's progress of a genuine, popular crusader inflamed by rural misery and the callous corruption of wealth and political power based upon it. But his culmination as an authoritarian and cynically power-hungry demagogue is portrayed solely as a function of the corrupting force of power—an abstraction as circular as it is trite. For the film fails to explore why the need to be a leader of men which was fulfilled by speaking to their needs, and thus earning their support, should suddenly become equally fulfilled in the service of the oppressors of these people, using the illusions of people who still believe in him.

American films on the fascist theme have been far less interesting than the new European works. Visually, they resemble the tough murder melodramas of the 1940s—borrowing their clichés, which include the close-mouthed facial gesture and the cigarette dangling from the lips. *A Face In The Crowd, All The King's Men,* and even *WUSA,* now appear very studio-bound. They convey no sense of the reality of the world which the fascist demagogue seeks to transform. All seem low-budget enterprises, and the films bring with them a sense of the director's uncertainty about the marketability of his ideas. Thus there are few memorable visual illuminations in these films, certainly none to compete with the still, shimmering lakeside resort of the SA on the morning when the SS suddenly, inexplicably, appear from around a bend in the road in *The Damned.* Nor with the snowy forest closing in on Professor Quadri and Anna in the climactic scene (both visually and thematically), which *The Conformist* makes so telling an evocation of the vulnerability of all to fascist terror. Only two shots of *All The King's Men* serve Rossen visually in a like manner: that in which Willie Stark (Broderick Crawford), flushed with his first victory, stands high upon a platform looking down upon the dwarfed mob of his supporters and the moment when Willie comes to the window of the capitol during his impeachment proceedings and in the dusk, in silhouette, raises his arms to the screaming crowd in a *"Sieg Heil"* moment of communication. Rossen contemptuously makes his point explicit by heavy-handedly cutting to an engraving on the side of the building: "The people's will is the will of the state." The American films are as visually insular as are their ideas: we watch Lonesome Rhodes in *Face In The Crowd* through the device of his television program, twice removed from the illusion of a real presence.

Thematically, American films about fascism fail to differentiate between power in itself and fascism. They concern themselves with the pragmatic struggle for power as an end in itself, offering little psychological nuance. The association between patriarchy and susceptibility to fascism in the European film appears only subliminally in the American. The sexuality exuded by Broderick Crawford in his role as Willie Stark does suggest that Huey Long may well have appealed to a forbidden longing for an all-powerful, accessible father. But Rossen seems unaware of this level of meaning and attributes the appeal of his womanizing demagogue to a mystical charisma and the ease with which naive Americans are duped. Kazan and Schulberg do the same thing with Lonesome Rhodes. Americans are presented as vulnerable to fascism, not because they have no fathers, but perhaps because they have no sense of history. The farmers in overalls and rimless eyeglasses who champion Willie Stark are presented with *tabula rasa* minds, ful-

*Omitted from discussion here are those films which treat military coups by fascist-minded generals in the absence of a fascist movement. They include *Seven Days in May* and *A Gathering of Eagles.*



ALL THE KING'S MEN: *Cardboard demagogue, cardboard followers.*

filling the American myth about our own innocence—which by 1970 couldn't be more unconvincing. It is too easy to have the cardboard demagogue followed by his counterpart, the cardboard follower. The American films about fascism do not convince us that the Europeans are exaggerating in their use of Reichian psychology nor that this psychology is inapplicable to the American scene. They insist that Americans too can, in certain circumstances, be raw material for fascist cadres. But they omit to tell us why. They fail to distinguish sufficiently between the party stalwart and the member of the "silent majority" who goes along with the fascist program without understanding what he is assenting to. Given the American director's contempt for the "mass man," it is probably because he does not credit this distinction. Stylistically, it is inappropriate to his technique of the broad stroke. In these films the "crowd scene" is too frequently a substitute for sustained dramatization of the process toward fascist beliefs.

Finally, only the contemporary European directors, Saura, Visconti, Bertolucci, and Petri are concerned seriously with the formation of the fascist personality. In this sense, Costa-Gavras both filmically and thematically is much closer to the American directors who portray the power plays of fascism without looking into the origins of its hold on the individual personality. This is why he utilizes the techniques of the crime melodrama. As a study of how fascism makes its appeal to the population, transforming the alienated and impoverished into a mass of angry men, *All The King's Men* is the finest example of the genre. Yet without delving into the formation of the personality of the potential fascist, his childhood and his sexuality, the American film cannot account for his appearance nor for the transformation of the ordinary man into one of his blind adherents.

What all of these films make clear is that the fascist leader draws his strength from the unorganized, those who don't vote or belong to any existing party, or if they belong to one, are disenchanted. They draw upon the isola-

tion of the mass man and they show how the fascists recruit for their leadership, as in the case of Petri's Police Inspector, men who lack normal social relationships. This is equally true for Vango and Yango of Z. Among the elite, Hitler appealed to the decadent elements of the bourgeoisie, essentially antirational elements. Questing for extremes of sensation at all costs, they saw as values in themselves total indulgent license in violence and power. The Police Inspector's act of defiance satirizes the hypocrisy of bourgeois culture with its reluctance to blame those in power for their criminal acts. Augusta, the Inspector's sensualist victim, is no better than he; she reflects the bourgeoisie which used fascism to act out vicariously its sadistic impulses. The recent American film *Joe* illuminates the structure of fascism from a similar point of view with its alliance of alienated, cynical bourgeois (the advertising man) with right-wing worker, Joe. The latent sadism of both culminates in vigilantism: the slaughter of the hippies at the end. That fascism with its terrorism is self-destroying is revealed in the image of the advertising man killing his own daughter in his hysteria.

But the image of the worker as a mindless bulwark of facsist movements is a reactionary interpretation, shifting responsibility for fascism to its deepest victims. Superimposed over the credits of *The Damned*, in purely visual terms, Visconti dramatizes the victimization of the working class by industrial capitalists like the von Essenbecks. With the red-hot furnaces of the Krupp steel works glaring in the night as background, the shadows of workmen stand behind the credits. They stretch and cover their eyes—suggesting both their strength and their blindness to how decisive their rebellion could have been to a defeat of the fascists. The sequence is punctuated by the boiling up of black smoke heralding the imminent destruction of both Germany and its victims. Visconti's including this working-class image effectively intimates a fundamental truth about fascism—its use of the terminology of Marxism and the inequalities of capitalism as a means of neutralizing the left and achieving the support of the disenfranchised.

Yet this hint at the beginning of *The Damned* is never developed in the course of the film. Neither Visconti nor the other contemporary directors exploring the theme of fascism delineate which sectors of the working class respond to fascism, which do not, and why. Nor do they suggest why the anticapitalist theme had to pervade the fascist appeal to the masses.

Most of the recent films treating fascist power expose an absence within the fascist state or even the would-be fascist leader of any declared political or economic principles short of a ruthless opportunism. In practice, fascism, to serve its own interests, could even ally itself with the official communist movement, if that movement is nonrevolutionary. Thus Costa-Gavras indicates in Z that the Bolshoi ballet is in Salonika on the evening of the assassination of Labrakis—a comment on the complicity of the Soviet Union with the fascist colonels; it reminds one of Stalin's telling German Communists that their true enemy was not Hitler, but the Social Democrats. Neither Willie Stark, Lonesome Rhodes, nor Bingamon of *WUSA* are shown to have any theory of government or coherent program of change. Illustrating the directors' awareness of the transitory impact of fascism is their disappearance at the end of the films they dominate. And at the end of *Il Conformista* in 1943 the fascist party disappears as if it had never existed.

The recent films about fascism are often at their best in depicting the behavior of fascism in power. Once fascism has concentrated all political power in the hands of the police, its inherent lawlessness can come to the surface. The violent impulses it has mobilized are now free to be expressed.

Z, *The Damned*, and *Investigation* illustrate how the more secret the workings of an organization, the greater is its power. If the Inspector has a basement of files where he even checks up on "my pals on the homocide squad," so does Aschenbach, the SS officer of *The Damned*. Each of these films dramatizes Han-

nah Arendt's point about the role of the secret police under fascism: "Not only is the organization *not* beyond the pale of the law, but, rather, it is the embodiment of the law, and its respectability is above suspicion." From this insight Petri takes his central conception.

The best cinematic representation of the cruelties of fascist power occurs not in the films dealing with actual fascism (the rounding up of the students in *Investigation* is more comic than frightening) but in Costa-Gavras's *The Confession,* set in Communist Czechoslovakia. Its hero, Artur London, is subjected to round-the-clock interrogations and condemned to dank cells for nearly two years. In a brilliant courtroom scene all of the defendants in the Slansky trial are made, without looking at each other, to confess to crimes they haven't committed. They don't even wince when eleven of the fourteen are designated "of Jewish origin." The anti-Semitism of London's torturers ("You and your filthy race are all alike") is as virulent as that of the Nazis. Costa-Gavras describes in Stalinist Czechoslovakia a fascist mentality which ruthlessly and systematically dispenses with even the rights of its privileged own.

Once fascism is in power, it can use any means necessary to retain its hegemony. Borrowing from the Germans, the fascists of Z use the theme of the betrayed homeland. Their leaflets read: "Restore our country to its rightful place." Dissent is brutally stifled, as Costa-Gavras, Petri, Visconti, and Bertolucci all reveal. In Z the generals call the students "bacteria" against whom an "antidote," their own lumpen thugs, is required. Using the same metaphor, Petri's Inspector shouts, "Revolution is like syphilis. They've got it in their blood." The Inspector even uses a computer—albeit programmed with a fascist mentality, since it selects as the murderer of August the student revolutionary Antonio Pace! As the Generals pointed to Greece as a "democracy," the Inspector disingenuously points out to the students that they are "democratic citizens" with the privilege of reading Mao and Lin Piao.

A film treating the origins and methods of fascist power should concern itself with the social and historical milieu in which the charismatic leader convinces the masses of people to follow him. Psychological aspects of twentieth-century man (his feeling of impotence nurtured by family, church, and educational structures which work to repress rebellious impulses, either sexual or social, and his alienation from exploitative institutions in an impersonal society) still do not entirely explain why fascism occurs in some historical circumstances and not in others. Unfortunately, most of the recent films about fascism are much more successful in describing the conjunction of psychology and fascist methodology than they are in exploring the qualities of a historical period which make a fascist coup particularly likely. Thus the weakest aspect of these films which analyze the roots of fascism is this ahistorical quality. Concentrating on the susceptibility of the modern sensibility to fascism, Petri, Bertolucci, Costa-Gavras, and, to a large degree, Visconti ignore the entire question of under what circumstances capitalism resorts to fascism and finds it necessary to employ severe repressive means to maintain its political hegemony. Nor do these films account for the failure to resist fascism by the social forces who had most to lose by the rise of fascism. Their fascists are, rather, presented as *Ubermenschen* whose power it is not possible to question.

The problem is that these directors, avowed Marxists all, nevertheless in their films see fascism as a monster sprung full blown from the head of Zeus. Accepting fascism as a given, they then analyze the personality most likely to carry out its program: morbidly anxious, latently homosexual, lusting for power, hiding sexual inadequacy and guilt over one's sexuality, and fear of being exposed as weak and "different." Remarkably enough, in none of these films is there a representation of a conscious resistance to fascist power, although, historically, in all the countries represented (Spain, Italy, Greece and Germany) the fascists had to crush, syste-

matically, sizable opposition by the organized labor movement before it could be certain of its power. Hysterical psychologizing in the worse moments of *Investigation,* for example, is, in part, a result of the failure of the director to examine the historical relation between the parties of the working class and a capitalism approaching a fascist solution to its problems.

It is with a curious despair and pessimism that these directors point to the default of resistance to fascism. From the point of view of meaningful resistance to fascism, the true hero of Z is not Lambrakis, but the skeptical Prosecutor played by Jean-Louis Trintignant, who quietly refuses to be incredulous in the face of the monstrous and who is willing to attack the entire structure of the Greek government if need be.* The attractiveness of Yves Montand as an actor to the contrary, the figure of Lambrakis is made so weak and so empty of ideas in Z, his point of view so easily reducible to a flabby pacifism, that it is difficult to assess what difference he could have made to the power of the colonels had he remained alive, (Costa-Gavras is, of course, capable of political irony, on this point as on others; but it is a passive irony.) Like Herbert Thallman in *The Damned,* Lambrakis underestimates fascist power and what it will do to perpetuate itself. He calls his soon-to-be murderers, whose ranks ascend to the highest officials in the Greek government, "a few extremist police." His refusal to resist and his illusion that the police must be forced to "face their responsibilities" prevent any effective opposition to the fascists from emerging. In minimizing the danger to himself, he is minimizing the danger to the collective. "Why should our efforts provoke this raging violence?" asks Z naively. The very creaking of the shoes of the generals should have told him all. Their newly assumed power will not be easily wrested from them. Z never once looks to the sectors of the population who might have been mobilized to defend him and what he stands for. He is easily defeated.

In his refusal to deal with the politics of fascism, concentrating as he does on the evocation of milieu, Visconti too abstains from the question of resistance and why it failed. The cause lies in his lack of interest in dramatizing the history of the period. The brilliance of the voluptuous scene of the SA camp abruptly interrupted by an SS massacre is breathtaking, viewed as it is from the point of view of its victims; but Visconti gives only the barest suggestion of the origin of the argument between SS and SA, or why Hitler found it necessary to exterminate the very SA which brought him to power. He treats the default of those who could have provided an alternative to fascism only briefly in the weak and pathetic figure of Thallman. In giving this man a name reminiscent of the leader who was head of the German Communist Party in the Nazi period, Ernst Thaelmann, Visconti at once conveys the failure to resist of one group from whom serious struggle might have been expected. But the nuances of the German CP's insistence upon regarding as their real enemies the Social Democrats and not the fascists, and therefore offering literally no resistance to Hitler, is nowhere brought out in *The Damned.* That it is legitimate for effective resistance to have been expected from these forces is painfully revealed in the election figures of July 1932, for example, when the Social Democrats and the Communists together received 13,241,000 votes; 65% of the workers and salaried employes voted for them.

These two parties were unwilling to counter fascism's use of the rhetoric of Marxism in a vague anticapitalist appeal ignoring the need to struggle against the ruling class or replace it. This phenomenon is explored most interestingly by Bertolucci in his portraits of the antifascist Athos Magnani in *The Spider's Stratagem* and of the antifascist Professor Quadri, in *Conformista.* In a brief sequence in *Conformista* a bedraggled flower girl and

*That the person upon whom this character was based was arrested for his role in the Lambrakis case in Salonika last year comments on the inadequacy of individual resistance to fascist power.

two little urchins sing the Internationale; the motif is repeated in the last sequence, the parade of antifascists singing the *Internationale* along with *La Bandera Rosa* as they march through the streets of Rome. The flower girl, as she sings, follows Clerici and Anna, fascist and fascist collaborator. Following them, she is appealing in image and song to a higher code of values than the ones Clerici and Anna pursue. That her call for the solidarity of those oppressed by fascism goes unheeded foreshadows the destruction that will come to both characters by the end of the film.

The echo of the *Internationale* is meant as well to be contrasted to the particular mode of accommodation with the fascists that Quadri himself has made. What keeps Clerici to his course of killing his former professor is his unconscious anger at the betrayal of young men like himself that he senses in the professor's *de facto* acquiescence to fascism. Safe in Paris, Quadri looks "with alarm" at the defeat of the Republicans in Spain and the success of the fascists in Italy. But his moral pose never translates itself into action. Anna and Giulia giggle as they operate his mimeograph machine in an erotic scene, turning out reams of ineffectual leaflets. The vignette subtly points to the ineffectuality of the course Quadri is pursuing.

In repeating the professor's own earlier words to him, "The time for meditation is past; the time for action is now," Clerici articulates his own sense of having been betrayed by a second father. Just as the professor fails to see that Clerici is really a fascist, so he cannot perceive how his own accommodation to fascism is a façade hiding his inaction. This Bertolucci underlines in metaphor in the myth of the cave in Plato's *Republic*, the topic of Clerici's dissertation had the professor remained in Italy to advise him. Bertolucci is also suggesting that had he not been abandoned by this spiritual father, Clerici might have gotten behind the shadow of his own past, the homosexual encounter, and so not have become susceptible to fascism. By admitting to the professor that he is a fascist, Clerici is accusing the professor of having abandoned him to fascism by going into exile.

Filmically, Bertolucci employs the myth of the cave as a governing image. In the first encounter with the professor, he and Clerici see each others' shadows reflected in windows behind them. The professor can see only the shadow or appearance of Marcello. Moments before the murder of Quadri, Marcello has a dream in which he is blind—as opposed to seeing only shadows, he is not able to see at all. Manganiello is taking him to be operated on by the professor. The blindness as a symbol of Oedipal castration harks back to the blind fascist Italo's statement: "We are friends because we are different." Clerici, however, longs to return to a community of men, to abandon his fascism and no longer to be alienated from his feelings; his commitment to fascism is superficial and reversible. Unlike Oedipus, Clerici is blind *before* he murders his father. He murders Quadri because Quadri has refused to restore him to sight, dooming himself, Marcello and the hopes for renewal in the society itself. Finally, the theme of the cave is translated into the film in the last sequence when the flames throw shadows outlining Marcello's head against the bars adjacent to the cavern in which the boy whom he will seduce sleeps: the professor's default has ultimately left Marcello only to reenact his original trauma.

Anna has justified the professor's course by arguing that "with what is happening in Spain, we dare not leave Paris." Bertolucci, of course, uses "Spain" as the symbol of the choice to fight, and the necessity of struggle. Quadri's refusal to ally himself with the victims of fascism recalls Visconti's characterization of Thallman and he becomes the object of the film's bitterest satire. When Anna denounces the torture in fascist prisons at dinner, the professor silences her for "bad taste." He even tells Clerici that "a short time in jail would do you good." His ignorance of the true nature of fascism, reflected in his half-joking willingness to abandon a former pupil for whom he feels

some affection to one of its torture chambers, is a just prelude to his murder. In this relationship between Marcello and Quadri, Bertolucci thus merges his social and his psychological insight. Just as the fear of his sexual impotence led Marcello to the fascists, so too did the political impotence of his professor. That the professor is finally murdered in exile is yet another means Bertolucci uses to suggest that, no safer outside of Italy than in it, he would have done far better to have remained to resist.

Of all the directors dealing with fascism, Bertolucci is most preoccupied with the failure of an adequate resistance. This is revealed as well in *The Spider's Strategem* with its theme of the lie of the antifascist. In their little town Athos Magnani and his group of friends plot to assassinate Mussolini in the new theater opening to a performance of *Rigoletto*. His son returns, years later, to find that although Magnani is acclaimed in the town as the most revolutionary of all the antifascists, it was he who betrayed the plot, telling the police where to find the dynamite. Then Magnani had himself murdered ostensibly by the fascists, but really by his own comrades so that he could go down in history as an antifascist hero rather than as a coward and a conspirator. That he is murdered during the same performance of *Rigoletto* is Bertolucci's way of implying that he is no better than Mussolini. The progress of the film is Magnani's son's initiation into how little coherent resistance to the fascists there was in Italy. "We were antifascists," says the salami taster, one of Magnani's friends, "and didn't know what it meant. We had no program. None of us were intelligent. We understood nothing."

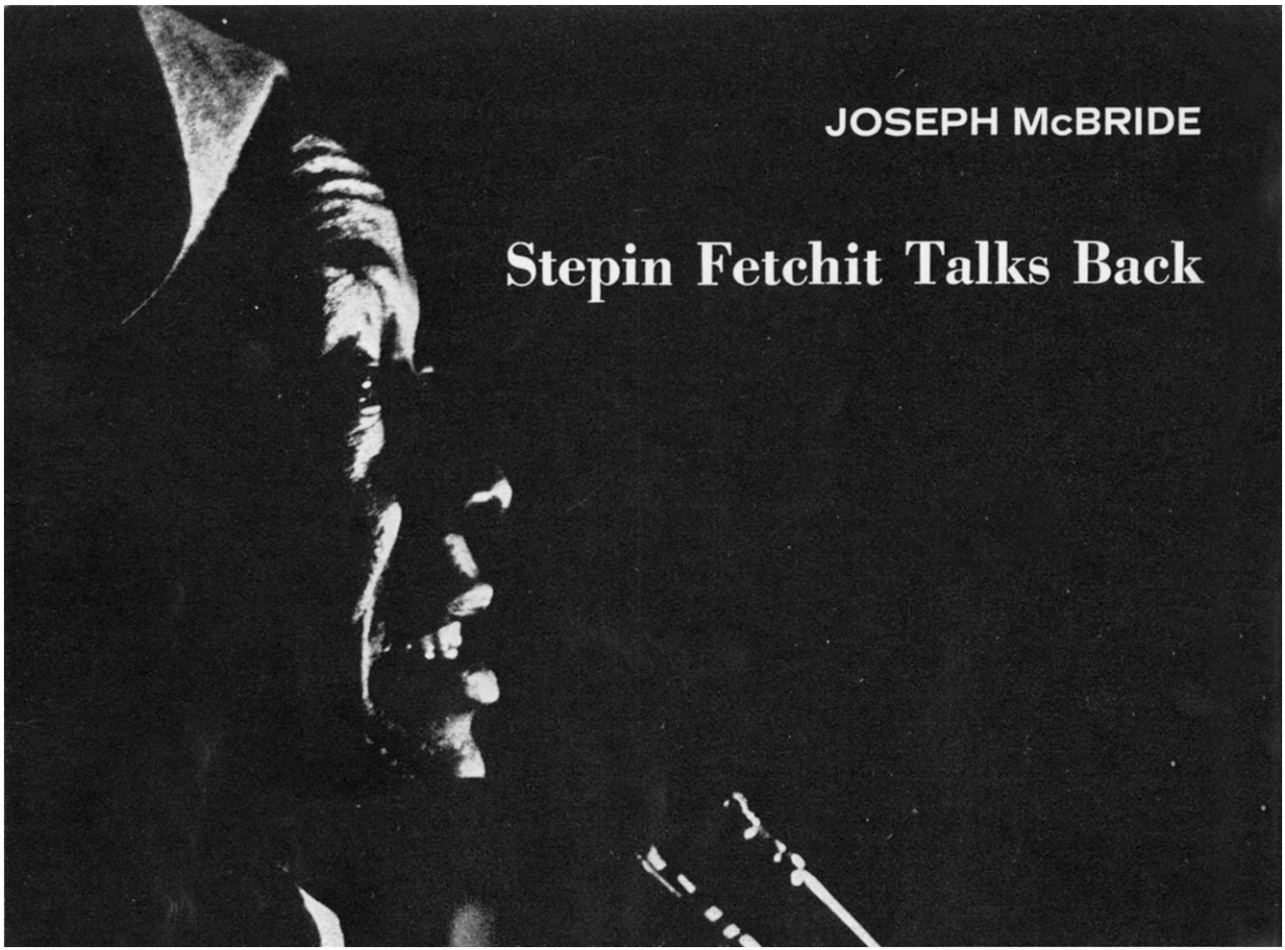
We never learn why Athos Magnani turned informer, but what comes through is Bertolucci's bitterness about the default of the past. It is with an intensity of purpose that he makes a victory of the son's discovering the strategem of his father.

All The King's Men, Face In The Crowd, WUSA, The Spider's Strategem and Z suggest that only individual strong men, *Ubermenschen*, can combat fascism, whereas, in reality, only the organization of large numbers of antifascists could have accomplished the purpose. These films thus take on an elitist quality, unconsciously akin to the very doctrine those who took power in the name of fascism applied to themselves.

In an important sense *The Conformist, The Garden of Delights, Investigation of a Citizen Above Suspicion* and *The Damned* are not about fascism alone. They are as much concerned with the interaction of man as a fundamentally neurotic being with a world of institutions which, almost mysteriously, have been created in support of his neuroses. Men like the Inspector and Clerici find too much opportunity to accommodate the needs of their weak and unsteady egos. The quest for psychological health in these films is rendered almost hopeless by a society created in the image of man's deepest frustrations.

"Fascism" thus becomes a metaphor for man's need to set first his own internal house in order; the failure of this crucial process of self-examination explains why these films point with such bitter irony to the absence of coherent resistance to fascism. Bertolucci and Saura especially are convinced that self-consciousness must precede attempts at activism. With this, given the painful image of our history which they have set before us, we must partially agree.

Yet it is no less true that because the distortions of the personality make people both susceptible to fascism and poorly equipped to transcend it, man is not absolved of the important task of creating a social environment which will produce saner human beings. It is this dimension which we miss in the recent antifascist films.



JOSEPH McBRIDE

Stepin Fetchit Talks Back

PHOTOS: L. ROGER TURNER

To militant first sight, Stepin Fetchit's routines—all cringe and excessive devotion—seem racially self-destructive in the rankest way, and his very name can be a term of abuse. And yet, in looking at his performances (for instance as the white judge's sidekick and looking-glass in Ford's THE SUN SHINES BRIGHT) cooler second sight must admit that Stepin Fetchit was an artist, and that his art consisted precisely in mocking and caricaturing the white man's vision of the black: his sly contortions, his surly and exaggerated subservience, can now be seen as a secret weapon in the long racial struggle. But whatever one makes of Stepin Fetchit's work, he was one of the few nonwhites to achieve status in American films, and he deserves to be remembered.

Like all American institutions, Stepin Fetchit is having a hard time these days. The legendary black comedian, now 79 years old but looking decades younger, has found himself a target of ridicule from the very people he once represented, almost alone, on the movie screen. A revolution has erupted around him, and he has been cast not in the role of liberator (as he sees himself), but as a guard in the palace of racism. The man behind the vacant-eyed, foot-shuffling image is Lincoln Perry, a proud man embittered by scorn and condescension.

Once a millionaire five times over, he now lives modestly in Chicago and takes an occasional night club gig. He hasn't acted in a movie since John Ford's *The Sun Shines Bright* in 1953, though he appeared in William Klein's documentary about heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali, *Cassius le Grand*, while acting as Ali's "secret strategist" during the Liston fights. Perry once served in a similar capacity for Jack Johnson, and Ali's gesture of kinship has given a massive boost to the comedian's self-esteem.

I encountered him in a garish bottomless joint in Madison, Wisconsin, on the night of Ali's fight with Oscar Bonavena. Before we talked, I sat down to watch his 20-minute routine, which was sandwiched on the program between Miss Heaven Lee and Miss Akiko O'Toole. Audiences at these Midwestern nudie revues behave like hyenas in heat, but there is one very beautiful thing about a place like this, and I mean it: nowhere else in America today will you find such a truly democratic atmosphere. Class distinctions vanish as hippie and businessman, hard-hat and professor, white and black and Indian and Oriental unite in a common impulse of animal lust. Women's liberationists would object, of course, but not if they could observe the audience at close range—Heaven Lee had us enslaved.

When Step appeared, in skimmer and coonskin coat, there was a wave of uneasy tittering, and his first number, an incomprehensible boogie-woogie, stunned the audience into silence. What's this museum piece doing out there? Better he should be stored away where we can't think about him. But as he launched into his routine, a strange thing happened. Slowly, gradually, people began to dig him. Stepin Fetchit is, first and last, a funny, funky man. It isn't that his jokes are so great (a lot of them were tired-out gags about LBJ, of all people), it's the hip way he plays them. What made Step and Hattie McDaniel outclass all the other black character actors of bygone Hollywood was their subtle communication of superiority to the whole rotten game of racism. They played the game—it was the only game in town—but they were, somehow, above it: Step with his other worldly eccentricities and Hattie McDaniel with her air of bossy *hauteur*. A tableful of young blacks began to parry back and forth with Step as he talked about the South. "You know how we travel in the South?" "No, how we travel in the South?" "Keep quiet an' I tell you." "That's cool. That's cool." And Step drawled: "Fast. At night. Through the *woods*. On top of the *trees*." The irony may have been a shade too complex for the rest of the audience, but everybody understood when he laconically gave his Vietnam position—"Flat on the ground"—and explained the situation of the black voter: "Negroes vote 20 or 25 times in Chicago. They don't try to cheat or nothin' like that. They just tryin' to make up for the time they couldn't vote down in Mississippi. When you in Mississippi you have to pass a test. Nuclear physics. In Russian. And if you pass it, they say, 'Boy, you speak Russian. You must be a Communist. You can't vote.' "

Out flounced Akiko, and we went downstairs to a dusty storage area which had been hurriedly transformed into a dressing room. Stepin Fetchit may be funny, but Lincoln Perry isn't. "Strip shows are taking over everything," he lamented. "You're either at the top or you're nothing." The stage he was using, a rectangular runway, forced him to turn his back on half of the audience, and he was trying to improvise a new means of attack. (It was sad and strangely appropriate that the lighting was so bad he

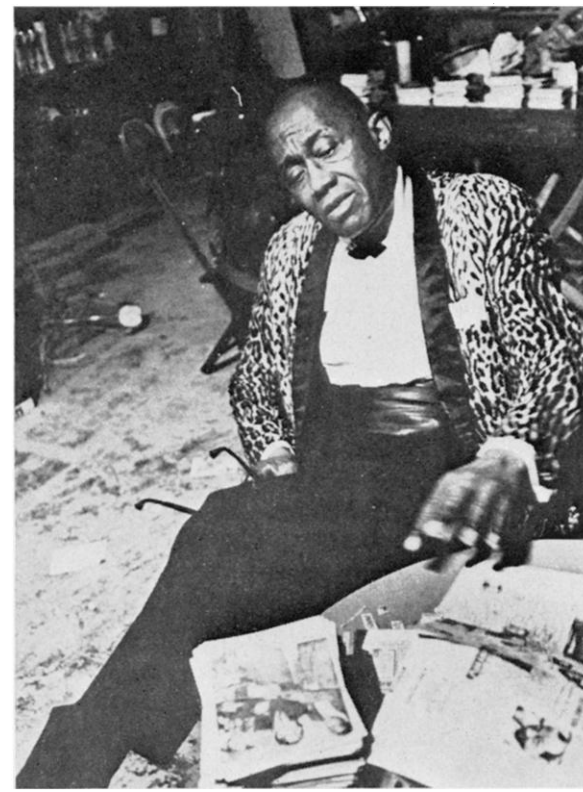
had to carry his own spotlight around with him.) His heart, moreover, was with Ali. "That's where I should be, with that boy," he said. Jabbing his finger and circling me like a bantamweight boxer, Perry quickly turned the interview into a monologue. Under a single swaying light bulb, the sequins on his purple tuxedo flashing, he moved in and out of the shadows like a restless ghost. I began to get the eerie feeling that I was serving as judge and jury, hearing the self-defense of a man accused of a cultural crime. This is what the man said:

I was the first Negro militant. But I was a militant for God and country, and not controlled by foreign interests. I was the first black man to have a universal audience. When people saw me and Will Rogers together like brothers, that said something to them. I elevated the Negro. I was the first Negro to gain full American citizenship. Abraham Lincoln said that all men are created equal, but Jack Johnson and myself *proved* it. You understand me? I defied white supremacy and proved in defying it that I could be *associated* with. There was no white man's ideas of making a Negro Hollywood motion picture star, a millionaire Negro entertainer. Savvy? I was a 100% black accomplishment. Now get this—when all the Negroes was goin' around straightening their hair and bleaching theirself trying to be white, and thought improvement was white, in them days I was provin' to the world that black was beautiful. *Me.* I opened so many things for Negroes—I'm so *proud* today of the things that the Negroes is enjoying because I personally did 'em myself.

People don't understand any more what I was doing then, least of all the young generation of Negroes. They've made the character part of Stepin Fetchit stand for being lazy and stupid and being a white man's fool. I never did that, but they're all so prejudiced now that they just can't understand. Maybe because they don't really know what it was like then. Hollywood was more segregated than Georgia under the skin. A Negro couldn't do anything straight, only comedy. I did more acting as a comedian than Sidney Poitier does as an actor. I made the Negro as innocent and acceptable as the most innocent white child, but this acting had to come from the *soul.* They brought Willie Best out there to make him an understudy for me. And he wasn't an actor, he wasn't an entertainer or nothin' like that. I didn't need no understudy, because I had a thing going that I had built my own. And the worst thing you'll hear about Stepin Fetchit is when somebody tries to imitate what I do, the first thing they're gonna say is "Yassuh, yassuh, boss." I was way away from that.

Do I sound like an ignorant man to you? You made an image in your mind that I was lazy, good-for-nothing, from a character that you seen me doin' when I was doin' a high-class job of entertainment. Man, what I was doin' was hard *work!* Do you think I made a fool of myself? Maybe you might *want* me to. Like I can't be confined to use the word black. For a comedian, that takes the rhythm out of a lot of jokes and things. So when I use the words colored and Negro I'm not trying to be obstinate. That's what I'm going around for—to show the kids there are a lot of people that's doin' things to confuse them. I'm just trying to get the kids today to have the diplomacy that I had to when I was doing it, and I think they'll come out first in everything. I didn't fight my way in—I *eased* in.

Humor is only my alibi for bein' here. Show business is a mission for me. All my breaks came from God. You see, I made God my agent. Like it's a coincidence that I'm here talking to you now. They bring a lot of people here, they pay 'em to talk to these students. They teachin' these students to go against law and order, they teachin' 'em to go against God, against their country, and they're *payin'* 'em. They wouldn't pay me to come to town to talk to the students. Are you one of these college boys? No? That's good. All these college boys, the first word they think of when they write about me is Uncle Tom. I was lookin' for the



word to come up but it didn't. Uncle Tom! Now there's a word that the Negro should try to wipe out and not use. Uncle Tom was a fictional character in a story that was wrote by Harriet Beecher Stowe. And Abraham Lincoln said that this thing was one of the propaganda that put one American brother against his other.

Kids is eccentric. They think they want to hear all these eccentric things. Like I see beautiful kids—I went to a place near where I'm working called the Shuffle and the reason they're using all this long hair and these whiskers, looking like apostles, that's because they're leanin' towards God, instinctively. Good kids, and a lot of old men is foolin' 'em. I want to let 'em know how I as a kid, a small Negro kid that was a Catholic too—so I had eleven strikes against me in them days—became a millionaire entertainer. Now these kids, they think that I'm unskilled and I'm uneducated, you know, and I don't have no diplomas or anything like that. But they must remember that they're listening to 79 years of experience.

I was an artist. A technician. I went in and competed among the greatest artists in the country. Charles C. Gilkins, who was doing *The Emperor Jones* on Broadway, a one-man show, came out and we was making a picture called *A Modern Uncle Tom Story*. He was a great actor, and do you know I stole this picture from this man? When I was about to make a movie with Will Rogers, Lionel Barrymore went to him and said, "This Stepin Fetchit will steal every scene from you. He'll steal a scene from anything—animal, bird, or human being." That was Lionel *Barrymore*, of the *Barrymore* family!

John Ford, the director, is one of the greatest men who ever lived. We was at the US Naval Academy in 1929 making a picture called *Salute*, using the University of Southern California football team to do us a football sequence between the Army and the Navy. John Wayne was one of their football players. And in order to be seen by the director at all times, because Ford wanted to make him an actor, John Wayne taken the part of a prop man. That director made him a star. And on that picture, John Wayne was my dresser! John Ford, he was staying in the commandant's house during that picture, and he had me stay in the guest house. At *Annapolis!*

I was in *Judge Priest*, that Ford did with Will Rogers in 1934. Did you see that? Well, remember that line Will Rogers says to me, "I saved you from one lynching already"? We had a lynching scene in there, where I, as an innocent Negro, got saved by Will Rogers. They cut it out because we were ahead of the time. In 1953 we did a remake of that picture, called *The Sun Shines Bright*. And John Ford, he did the lynching scene again. This time the Negro that gets saved was played by a young boy—I was older then. But they kept it in. That was my last picture.

I filed a $3 million lawsuit against something that Bill Cosby said about me in a show called *Of Black Americans*. But I didn't make Cosby a defendant. Know the reason why? Because

that's not the source of where the wrong come. It's CBS, Twentieth Century-Fox, and the Xerox Corporation, the men that sponsored it, that's responsible for distortin' my image. Cosby was just a soldier. He was not a general. I know all the black comedians. Bill was the onliest one I hadn't met. I met him for the first time in Atlanta at the Cassius Clay-Jerry Quarry fight. Cassius called me and say, "Hey, Step, I want you to meet Bill." I just said hello, because I was busy, and then he said, "Bill *Cosby!*" I went back and I say, "Well, Cosby, I hope that you help to put a happy ending to my damages that has been done." He says to me, "Yeah, I told my wife, I hope that you win this suit, because it was taken out of context." Cosby's a great comedian, but for the educated classes. Savvy? A few years ago he wouldn't have been able to be where he is—I was the one who made it possible for him. The worst thing in America today is not racism. It's the way the skilled classes is against the unskilled classes. You understand me?

Now, if we don't get this country straight, your next president is going to be George Wallace. They figure everybody is being turned idiot and they gonna all agree it's gonna be a man like George Wallace to help our problems if we don't straighten them out ourselves.

Ain't but two things in the world today. That's good and bad, right and wrong. Now if we follow everything down to them two things, and we are either on one of them sides, it ain't no white, no colored, no Black Panthers, no Ku Klux . . . we either for good or for bad! We ought to have a National Association for the Advancement of *Cre*ated People and not think about each nationality that represents 50 per cent of America. When God made Adam, he didn't make all these different nationalities. Man did it. There is no mules in heaven. Now let me explain this to you. Mules are man-made, made from crossing a jackass with a horse. So when man got mixed up, it wasn't the work of God, it was the work of *man.* Racism? Remember when there wasn't but four people on earth, Cain killed his brother Abel and started unbrotherly love. God didn't have nothin' to do with unbrotherly love.

To show you how fate works—Cassius Clay, none of these great liberals would touch him and give him a chance to fight again. And who do you think give him a chance to fight again? Senator Leroy Johnson of Georgia, a man that is associated with Lester *Maddox.* Without Lester Maddox, Cassius Clay wouldn't have fought today, although the image they gave to you was that Lester Maddox was against it. You get the idea? You understand me? The greatest example of *Americanism* was shown to Cassius Clay by a proxy, through Lester Maddox! That's the way the world is running. So let's face these things right, not like we pitchin' things, or like we want it to go. God's gonna work in a mysterious way! We have had men supposed to be great all down the line—Alexander, Moses—and we still found the world all messed up. Ain't nobody in good shape. Ain't nobody got no sense or nothin'.

It was Satchel Paige that opened the major leagues to the Negro ball players. Not Jackie Robinson. *No* suh! Satchel Paige did the dirty work. He used to go and play in counties where they didn't allow a Negro in the county. He did the good work—what I did—made good will and good relations. Jackie Robinson was the politician, you understand me, the skilled one that walked in and got the benefits. Satchel Paige broke down the whole deal and hasn't got credit for it yet, just because he was unskilled labor. He was 100 years ahead of his time, like I am, like Johnson was.

The reason why Cassius sent for me was because he found out that I was the last close intimate of Jack Johnson. Jack told me a lot of things. Cassius always said they wasn't but one fighter that was greater than him, and that was Jack Johnson. And so he wanted to know *everything* about him. He got me in and he would ask me all the different things that Jack would tell me about. I taught him the Anchor Punch that he beat Liston with—that was a punch that Jack improvised. Cassius dug up some pictures of Johnson and I told

him about this out of sight punch that Jack Johnson said he had. He said he could use it any time he wanted on Willard. See, Willard did not knock Johnson out. Johnson sold the heavyweight champion of the world for $50,-000. Johnson accepted $15,000 in Europe and told them to give his wife $35,000 at ringside. He wanted the heavyweight champion title to belong to America. They had ran Jack into a lot of things, you get the idea . . . be too long to talk about.

They promised him with the $15,000 they would wipe off this year that he's supposed to serve. But they didn't do that, so he came back and served the year himself. You get the idea? I saw that play, *The Great White Hope.* I think it's terrible as far as telling the truth about Jack Johnson. It's not about Jack. Jack Johnson had noble ideas. They had him beating this girl—Jack never did a thing like that. And they showed where he was defeated and knocked out, but they didn't show that he sold out the heavyweight champion and that he wanted the championship to belong to America.

We were going to do this picture of his life story, called *The Fighting Stevedore.* You know—from Galveston, Texas, where he used to be a stevedore. While we was waiting to write the story—we was making it just for colored theaters, in them days things weren't integrated and the big companies wouldn't want to buy it because everything had thumbs down on Jack Johnson like things tried to be with Cassius, although I'm sure Cassius is coming out of it—while we was waiting to write this thing, we sent Jack down to lead the grand parade of Negro rodeos in Texas. That was the trip he got killed on. I booked him on it.

I always call Cassius "Champ" because I used to call Jack Johnson "Champ." The way Jack and me met, we was both celebrities, and I used to sit in his corner when we was fighting. We became friends especially when he found out that the same priest had taught both of us. His name was Father J. A. St. Laurent. He taught also the Negro student that became the first Negro Catholic priest in America. Here's a picture of me preachin' to Martin Luther King. I was telling him that I was in Montgomery, Alabama, *before he was born* playing with white women. This priest was the head of the school I went to, St. Joseph's College. It was a Catholic boys' school. And this priest used to have the nurses come from St. Margaret's Hospital to play with us—that's where Mrs. George Wallace was a patient before she died. They had picnics, spent a whole day on our campus with these colored boys, playing ball with us, eating in our dining room, and things like that. This priest he taught us a technical education—Tuskegee used to teach manual labor—and so he left those boys with something. We had no inferiority complex. Jack always wanted to show that all men were created equal, so he goes into Newport News society and married a white woman out of the social register, a *blue-blood!*

My father named me Lincoln Theodore Monroe Andrew Perry. Told me he named me after four presidents—he think I'm gonna be a great man. But I can't see how in the world he named me after Theodore *Roose*velt. He wasn't even president yet! I was born in 1892—here's my birth certificate—in Key West, Florida, the last city in the United States. I'm a descendant of the West Indies. My mother was born in Nassau, my father was born in Jamaica. I had talent all my life—my father used to sing. He was a cigar maker. I got in show business in 1913 or '14. The people who had adopted me and sent me off to this school, something happened to them, and so this priest told me I could work my way through school. In summertime he let me go to St. Margaret's Hospital to work. When time to go back to school, there was a carnival that used to winter in Montgomery. Turned out to be the Royal American Shows. So I joined it, joined the "plantation show." The plantation shows started to call themselves minstels, but minstrels was white men made up. Plantation shows was black men made up.

I got my name Stepin Fetchit from a race

horse. The plantation show minstrels, we went down in Texas and there was a certain horse we used to go and see at the fair. We knew these races because they went to the same fairs as we did. There was a horse that we knew would never lose, so we would go out and give the field and the odds. Well, people thought we was crazy—he would always win. But one day they entered a big bay horse on us, and *he* won. We went and grabbed the program, looked, and it was Stepin Fetchit, horse from Baltimore. And so I goes back to show business in Memphis, and hear "Stepin Fetchit! Stepin Fetchit!" from everyone. I wrote a dance song of it called "The Stepin Fetchit, Stepin Fetchit, Turn Around, Stop and Catch It, Chicken Scratch It To the Ground, Etc."

Me and my partner was introducing this new dance. We were Skeeter and Rastus, The Two Dancing Crows from Dixie. Jennifer Jones's father booked us in a white theater in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which was unusual. And in place of putting our names Skeeter and Rastus, he put Step and Fetchit and he made that our names. When my partner, he wouldn't show up, I would tell the maanger, "No, it's not two of us, it's just one of us, the Step and Fetchit." And then I'd go out and do just as good as the two of us. I fired him, since I had wrote the song, see, and in place of The Two Dancing Crows from Dixie, I was the Stepin Fetchit. I got the lazy idea from my partner. He was so lazy, he used to call a cab to get across the street.

I was in Ripley's "Believe It or Not" as the onliest man who ever made a million dollars doing nothing. Anything money could buy, I had. I had 14 Chinese servants and all different kinds of cars. This one, a pink Rolls Royce, it had my name on the sides in neon lights. My suits cost $1,000 each. I got some of them from Rudolph Valentino's valet after he died. I showed people that just because I had a million dollars, the world wouldn't come to an end. But then I had to file a $5 million bankruptcy and didn't have but $146 assets. No, I wasn't held up by no robbers, and I wasn't in any swindling gambling games. It was all "honest" business people I trusted who took the money, all good, upstanding people. I was too busy makin' it to think about savin' it. I started with nothing' and I got nothin' left, so I've come full circle. But I'm rich. I'm a millionaire. Know the reason why? Because I go to Mass every morning. I have been a daily communicant for the last 50 years. Everything I've accomplished I've accomplished in believin' that seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all things will be given to thee. Consider the lilies of the field . . .

JAMES ROY MACBEAN

The *Ice*-man Cometh No More (He Gave His Balls to the Revolution)

Robert Kramer's *Ice* is a "political film" that is not the least bit political. It is an emotionless film that is not the least bit rational. It is a documentary of an imaginary revolution—or, to put it another way, a fictionalized account of what people like the Weathermen have actually been doing—and yet despite its seemingly objective, emotionless, documentary tone, *Ice* is really a film of very personal (Kramer's?) fantasies and fears about revolution.

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But *Ice* is also a forward-looking film that will undoubtedly be one of the most important American films of the coming decade. (To call it one of the most important American films of the *past* decade, would, in my opinion, be damning it with faint praise.) *Ice* is light-years ahead of the recent rash of Hollywood garbage *on* revolution. Whatever blind spots there may be in *Ice*—and there are deep ones—they are, for better or worse, the blind spots *of* the revolutionary movement itself—or at least that part of the movement which is actively engaged in terrorist activity and likes to think of itself as the "armed vanguard" of the revolution. (Incidentally, if we hadn't realized it before, *Ice* ought to make us realize—although this is perhaps not at all Kramer's intention—that Lenin's notion of the armed vanguard urgently needs to be reconsidered, criticized, and placed in a new and hopefully more genuinely liberating revolutionary perspective than has been the case thus far in history.)

In many ways, *Ice* is a film made with and for this would-be "vanguard." Using non-actors recruited from the ranks of student activists and urban militant groups around New York, Kramer made *Ice* independently, with some financial support from the American Film Institute, shooting it with a small crew of friends and *Newsreel* associates. (*Newsreel's* organization, however, apparently disowns the film—or at least disowns any official association with it.)

Although, cinematically, there is much of the *Newsreel*-style, "direct," documentary approach in *Ice*, nonetheless, the film has an eclectic array of antecedents. The film which *Ice* resembles most is perhaps Louis Feuillade's 1913 *Fantomas*, a legendary serial-thriller in which—as in *Ice*—the straightforward camera technique and the natural decor of the city are in dramatic contrast to the fragmented narrative and its fantastic aura of conspiracy. Likewise, Fritz Lang's Mabuse films—particularly the early *Mabuse der Spieler*—would also seem to be antecedents of *Ice*, although not for their expressionist sensibility, but for the non-linear narrative and fantastic web of sinister adventures. Then, too, *Ice* recalls Godard's *Alphaville* for its eerie projection of the dehumanized future already at work in the urban metropolises of the present; and there are overt borrowings from Godard's recent militant films in Kramer's use of placards, slogans, intercut footage, and agit-prop theater. Finally, *Ice* betrays its debts to the American cinema (particularly Fuller, Walsh, and Hawks) in its fascination with violence and in its typically American brand of "social criticism" (characteristic of the films of Frank Capra, as well as the three named above) that rests on the surface phenomena of behavior while neglecting entirely the analysis of underlying socio-economic causes.

Ice was well-received in France last spring in the *Semaine de la Critique* portion of the Cannes Festival, then in Paris (where I first saw it) a few weeks later. Now the film is being shown on various university campuses around the US, usually under the sponsorship of one or another radical organization, and it is often given an in-person "political introduction" either by Kramer himself or by someone connected with the radical movement. (Jennifer Dohrn, Bernardine's sister, was scheduled to introduce the film at the Stanford screening I attended recently; but she didn't show.) Local militant groups seem to make a point of coming out in full force to see *Ice* and to rap over what's usable in the film and what's not—often during the projection itself, which, at Stanford, was regularly punctuated with shouts of "Right on!" "Off the pig!" and "Bullshit!"—with the reaction seemingly determined less by what was said or done in the film than by whether or not the militants in the audience could identify with the militants on the screen. (Yes, Virginia, even militants go to the movies to identify.)

Nominally set in some indeterminate near future when *Amerika* is carrying on its latest chapter of imperialist war (this time in Mexico), *Ice* focusses on the urban-guerrilla activities of

an underground network of youthful revolutionaries who are youthful in years only. If there is anything "documented" in *Ice,* it is the freezing-up of the personality among militant youth. But even this chilling phenomenon is not presented as a process: we see only the frozen surface of a *fait accompli.* So thorough is the depersonalization in *Ice* that we never really know who is who in the film, for the people look alike (middle-class American softness), talk alike (tonelessly), and carry out the Central Command's orders with a like mechanical flatness. Moreover, Kramer's mosaic-like construction of the narrative prevents us from following any one militant and turning the film into *his* story. *Ice* remains, from beginning to end, the coldly impersonal story of militancy itself.

And, paradoxically, Kramer both dwells on the depersonalization of his militants and, at the same time, steadfastly refuses any attempt at analyzing either the causes or effects of this emotional freeze. In the end, one gets the feeling that Kramer wants you to know that he's aware of the existence of certain psychological problems in the militant movement; but that, as far as he's concerned, an individual's personal hang-ups only matter if they get in the way of his functioning as a revolutionary. Emotions—in this view—are blown up all out of proportion by bourgeois society and its cult of individualism. So far, so good, it seems to me. But carried to its extreme—and *Ice* carries it this far, at least implicitly—this argument leads one to the position that most if not all of our so-called "human emotions" are actually degenerate behavior patterns of a degenerate social order. And, as such, they are not only expendable; they are obstacles that must be eliminated if we are to build a more enlightened society.

But the loss on the emotional side in *Ice,* quite apart from any consideration of the psychological damage that might accompany this loss, is not compensated for by any gain—or even any holding of one's own—on the rational

side. Kramer doesn't seem the slightest bit interested in any rational, analytical considerations other than pragmatic ones. Even tactical questions are treated in a truncated shorthand which lops off all but the pragmatic questions of who will handle this and who will handle that, and that's that. And even here, the point is made in the film that it doesn't matter who does what. When emotions have been "offed" and individual differences are blurred, you no longer have to match the right man for the right job: when everyone is alike, each is equally qualified—at least to go out and kill.

Completely lacking in *Ice* is the patient, down-to-earth wisdom of a Mao or a Ho Chi Minh or a Fidel, who take great pains (actually, great joy) in explaining to the masses the political considerations that go not only into every policy-making decision, but also into every *method* of arriving at a decision—whether in economics, military strategy and tactics, art and culture, or whatever. In *Ice,* Kramer pays lip service to increasing the consciousness of the masses—placards at the beginning of the film announce that originally terrorist activity was aimed at provoking the state into ever greater and more overt repression; while now, it is asserted, the purpose of terrorist activity is to convince the entire population of the need for armed struggle against the state. But implicit in this argument itself—as well as in the film as a whole—is the predilection for *intimidation* rather than rational persuasion as the way to deal with the consciousness of the people. And when Kramer's militants "occupy" a high-rise (home of the masses?) for a few hours in order to show the occupants a "political film" and to discuss with them, this potentially "educational" maneuver is really only a show of strength to intimidate them. Speaking to the hastily assembled occupants, one militant says: "We took this place over today, and we'll be back to take it over again any time we want. The SECPO [Security Police] isn't anywhere near as strong as they want you to fear."

In short, when it comes to intimidation tactics to keep people in line, the militants and the police talk the same language. And ultimately, the high-rise sequence—like so much in the film—is really only another pretext for Kramer to force the viewer into dealing with the most controversial, indeed most explosive aspect of revolution—the actual detonation of violence.

Something goes wrong in the high-rise occupation—exactly what we don't know. The militants take it on the lam, guns in hand. Somebody starts shooting at them—who we don't know. They shoot back. Somebody gets killed and somebody gets wounded. The rest of the militants manage to get away and carry their wounded with them. They will live to fight another day. And that's *all* they will live for—and all they *want* to live for. Perhaps they could tell us why. After all, there are plenty of reasons for revolution in America. But Kramer isn't interested in explanations.

The notion of *force* is central to this film, not just because *Ice* deals with terrorist force, but also because the film forces the viewer to deal with terrorist force on the terrorist's own terms. Kramer has indicated (see *Film Quarterly,* Winter 1968–69) that he views his filmmaking activity as "a way of getting at people, not by making concessions to where they are, but by showing them where you are and then forcing them to deal with that, bringing out all their assumptions, their prejudices, their imperfect perceptions." And the way to force the viewer to deal with his "reality," Kramer believes, is to "make films that . . . explode like grenades in people's faces, or open minds like a good can-opener"—in short, "convert our audience or neutralize them, threaten."

It is unlikely, however, that many people are going to be converted to revolutionary terrorism by seeing *Ice;* and it is safe to assume, I think, that in making this film, Kramer was aiming not so much at converting the audience as at neutralizing—or, to be precise, at *neuter*izing—them. And in doing so, Kramer went to the point of neuter-izing himself, right there on screen, in a grisly sequence of torture ap-

plied to the genitals of one of the militants—played by Kramer himself.

As violent scenes go, this one is particularly gruesome. Castration—if *Ice* is any indication—may be the most hard-to-watch violence imaginable. And Kramer springs it on us so suddenly we don't even know who is doing what to whom. (Even in castration, *Ice* remains coldly impersonal.) All we see is someone kicked into an alleyway, men scuffling, somebody is knocked down, pants loosened, a surgical instrument resembling a long fish hook thrust under the opened fly, and a sudden, spasmodic arching of the back as the victim lets out a horrible, semiconscious moan of pain.

Whether the torture is inflicted by police informers, a right-wing vigilante group, or dissident co-conspirators, is never made clear. Nor are the motives. There is only the brute fact of violence, the horrifying experience of it, and the need to somehow go on functioning as a revolutionary even if you can no longer function as a man.

What is really horrifying about *Ice*, however, is that Kramer seems to seek out the most self-destructive and dehumanizing forms of violence—both physical and psychological violence—and to dwell on them until they seem to be necessary (and sufficient?) elements in the making of good revolutionaries. For Kramer, you don't function as a good revolutionary in spite of no longer functioning as a man, but *because* of it. The chilling message of *Ice* is that you've got to give up everything to the revolution—including your balls.

One could argue, however—and maybe this is one of Kramer's points—that giving up their balls is no great loss for the militants, since—as several frozen "sex" scenes indicate—they are too emotionally blocked to get much use out of them. Or even if they do manage to bring it off now and then, they seem too devoid of feeling to get much pleasure out of it. (One young militant—not the castration-victim—fails to make it with a huge-breasted chick because, as he tells her, he's hung-up over the various forms of sexual torture that await him if he's captured.)

As for the female militants of *Ice*, while they at least seem un-hung-up enough to take care of their sex needs, there doesn't seem to be any indication that sex, for them either, is anything more than a matter of personal hygiene—a momentary relaxing exercise in a hard revolutionary day. And whether they are in bed or in battle, the people in the film are not so much individuals as mere cogs—interchangeable parts in the wheel of revolution—or, as Brecht put it (in *The Measures Taken*), "blank pages on which the revolution writes its instructions."

Superficially, at least, there are some interesting parallels between *Ice* and *The Measures Taken*. Both deal with the problems of prerevolutionary agitation and the role of the militant cell. Both reflect (although in different degrees—and perhaps with different attitudes towards it) on the necessary submersion of the individual in the collective. Brecht's 1930 *Lehrstück* contains a song "In Praise of Clandestine Work" which extols the virtues of anonymity, and the Brechtian militants undergo a ritual "blotting out" of their own identity by putting on masks.

In *Ice*, however, Kramer doesn't need to use masks, for his militants seem to have no real identity to blot out. Nor do Kramer's militants—unlike Brecht's—have to deal with anyone who is not just like them, so what would be the need for masks anyway? (The one near exception in *Ice*—aside from a slick cybernetic ist who simply outplays the militants in their own game of power-politics, as well as outplaying them in pool—is a slightly mad bookseller who, although he hangs around with the would-be revolutionaries, is really more of a leftover beatnik who hasn't quite been assimilated yet into revolutionary culture. Incidentally, he is just about the only individualized character in the film—and, significantly enough, the militants' way of dealing with him is either to bully him or to ignore him.)

It is important to note, however, that Kramer's and Brecht's conceptions of prerevolutionary agitation are very different. The point is made sharply and repeatedly in *The Measures Taken* that the Marxist militants do not fruitfully nurture the seeds of revolution by blustering in out-of-season with guns and tanks or even with trains and plowshares, but rather by addressing themselves to the political consciousness of the masses. "To the ignorant, instruction about their condition; to the oppressed, class consciousness; and to the class-conscious, the experience of revolution"—this is the program carried out by Brecht's agitators. In *Ice*, however, Kramer is obviously interested only in the latter—and even there he doesn't seem interested in the experience of revolution as a whole, but only in the experience of violence.

But the most important difference between Brecht's and Kramer's treatment of prerevolutionary militancy is that what Brecht sees as a *dialectical* tension between the individual and the collective, between spontaneity and organization, between emotions that border on sentimentality and rationality that borders on inhumanness, Kramer doesn't see dialectically at all. In fact, Kramer simply does away with one whole side of the dialectic by choking off any hint of the individual, the spontaneous, and the emotional. Moreover, for Kramer, the collective and the principle of organization are not even conceived as correlatives of rationality —they are mere vehicles for violence. Bombing, shooting, and burning is all you need, baby! And if you get your balls cut off in the action, well, *tant pis*, you might be a better revolutionary without all those distracting sexual needs!

Clearly, Kramer's preoccupation with violence has very strong overtones of the obsessive. The relation he sets up between the practice of revolutionary violence and castration is a particularly revealing indication of the deep-seated psychosexual tensions involved in the terrorist's life-style—and Kramer's decision to play the rôle of the castrated militant himself is all the more revealing.

Granted, Kramer might argue that playing this rôle himself simply seemed the best way of making the point that the revolutionary has got to be prepared to give up everything for the revolution. The castration scene—combined with its victim's subsequent ability to carry on as a revolutionary—would thus function as a cinematic exposition of the militant slogan "Forget your life: serve the people." Certainly the film as a whole seems aimed at convincing us that although the terrorist's lot is a hard and depersonalizing one, nonetheless he manages to live on and advance the revolution. But what Kramer may fail to consider is the possibility that the freezing-up of the personality, the blocked affectivity, and the psychosexual tensions of the militants may not merely be necessary but surmountable consequences of militant activity, but rather, at least in part, the internal causes of it.

The psychological dynamics of emotional deprivation among young middle-class militants have recently been explored by psychoanalyst Herbert Hendin, who utilized psychoanalytical interviewing techniques (free association, dreams, and fantasies) to conduct a battery of interviews with militant students from Columbia and Barnard. The emotional detachment of these militants, towards one another and, especially, towards their parents, Hendin argued, "usually conceals pain too difficult for the students to face. Their acute ability to see and feel the flaws of society is in striking contrast to their need not to see and know the often devastating effects their family life has had on them."* In case after case, Hendin found that the militants he interviewed reported experiencing early in life—and often very profoundly—a withdrawal of affection or complete emotional abandonment by their parents.

*See "A Psychoanalyst Looks at Student Revolutionaries," *The New York Times Magazine*, Jan 17, 1971.

Significantly, the militants now felt that they, too, were unlikely or unable to experience any sustained or profound emotional involvement with other people; but this fact was invariably rationalized in such a way as to pass this weakness off as a strength—either a rejection of bourgeois individualism or, paradoxically, self-sufficiency—or by projecting the pent-up resentment and hostility they felt at having been emotionally abandoned onto the outside world. "If you show your feelings, you get your legs cut off," was one young militant's way of putting it.

The parallels between what Hendin discovered in his depth-interviews and what one can sense underlying the frozen surface of *Ice* are really quite striking. In both cases, the world of others—whether undifferentiated or concentrated in the concept of "the repressive State"—is feared as a menacing, castrating monster—a vampire which, in the words of one of the militants in *Ice*, "wants to suck all our energy out of us and destroy us sexually." And in both cases there seems to be a strong need to see only the smooth surface of the emotional freeze—and to see it as "politically" positive—while the other nine-tenths of the psychic iceberg remains something one prefers not to see.

Hendin reports, for example, that his radical subjects often recounted dreams or actual childhood anecdotes which they enjoyed talking about in political terms—rationalizing out any personal emotional content and replacing it with a more or less political interpretation. Thus, one young man's dream of being caught in a barbed-wire fence while fleeing the scene of some terrorist maneuver, of being badly cut and bleeding, of being captured and placed in a detention camp, did not lead him to acknowledge any fears or ambivalence about his violent activities; but simply brought forth the assertion that society's only way to stop the radical movement was the use of widespread repression. That the latter may very well be true, however, does not really go far towards helping the individual come to terms with his own repressed tensions.* Likewise, it seems to me, in Kramer's case: he may offer a "political" rationalization for castration; but the very fact that he even formulates his thoughts and fantasies about revolution in terms of castration would seem to indicate deep psychological tensions that are not likely to be resolved by tough talk about how a revolutionary has got to be able to take it.

Admittedly, however, the militant's life-style offers him certain psychological advantages which he perhaps cannot find elsewhere. As Hendin observes, when a violent action by the militants arouses a violent reaction from the authorities, at least the militants can feel for once that they are eliciting some adequate response to themselves as persons. And the intoxication of violent confrontation—in an otherwise mechanical and emotionless existence—can rapidly become addictive, especially in a "revolutionary culture" which rewards violent behavior and exerts great pressure on the individual to prove himself through violence. In short, as Hendin points out, "many individuals have found in the revolutionary culture a 'family' which understands their emotional needs better than their real families ever did."

Likewise, the militants' readiness to resort to violence may be traceable, at least in part, to the pent-up resentment and hostility they feel over their childhood experience of rejection or emotional abandonment. In *Ice*, for example, Kramer tosses in offhandedly a terse parent-child confrontation that would be hilarious if it weren't so crudely evocative of what is really at issue. A callow, post-adolescent (Jewish) boy argues with his "liberal," uptight parents over the harboring of a seriously

*In the above case, for example, Hendin (drawing on further case material) concluded that the young man who dreamed of being put in a camp actually had an unacknowledged wish that some sort of authority would step in and prevent him from continuing the potentially destructive and self-destructive activities in which he was engaged.

wounded girl comrade, whom the parents want removed from the house—supposedly for "her own good." The son, however, demands that she stay put. The sequence hardly gets under way when it immediately boils over—with the son lunging at the father and screaming "You'll do what I say or I'll kill you!"

Typically, Kramer cuts away at this point, and the film moves on to some other fragment of the revolutionary mosaic—never to return to the Oedipal struggle, and never really giving us much of an idea of the general outline of the revolutionary picture as a whole. As for the psychological problems in the revolutionary movement, it's hard to say what position Kramer takes. Ultimately, it's as if Kramer started out to deliver a hard-fisted, tough-talking eulogy of the militant movement, then found himself repeatedly coming out with Freudian slips that threw the movement into question; and finally decided "to hell with Freud, the revolution will advance in spite of all these hang-ups—or maybe even *because* of them!"

It's the latter position, however, that seems to fascinate Kramer the most. In the father-son confrontation—as in the film as a whole—one has the impression that it's mainly the psychological hang-ups of the individuals that push them to violence. And there's almost a smug sort of implicit acceptance of this fact—as if Kramer were saying "So what? The quicker we get to real gut-level violence, the quicker we'll bring about our revolution."

As a revolutionary strategy, however, this attitude is full of grave inconsistencies that are harmful—and perhaps even *suicidal*—to the cause of revolution. While this is not the place to analyze this problem in detail [see "Terrorism and the Movement," by Charles Derber, in *Monthly Review*, February 1971], there are certain observations which—by way of conclusion—should serve to situate Kramer's *Ice* within the terrorist context. First, on the all-important question of timing, Kramer is particularly irresponsible. He sets his film in a vague future that is an all too transparent veil for the present—but, in doing so, he indulges in dream-like projections of a future he invites us to believe is already here. (In many ways, *Ice* seems to function largely as a form of wish-fulfilment—an insidious attempt to actualize the impossible through dreaming it.) And in revolutionary terrorism—where the dangers of miscalculating the situation and moving prematurely are so great—Kramer's confusionism can be disastrous. (Marcuse has recently reminded us that, historically, terrorism has never been effective except when used as a mopping-up operation *after* taking power.)

Second, *Ice* itself — like terrorism — errs in *omission* as well as in what it does do. And *Ice's* omissions are particularly deplorable, for if there is anything the revolutionary movement in America needs in order to effect meaningful change, it's rigorous Marxian analysis of the economic foundations and ideological superstructure of American capitalism. (Huey Newton isn't lecturing to Oakland High School kids on how to make molotov cocktails; he's lecturing on Marxism—and getting the students to understand the need to arm themselves theoretically as well as practically.)

Finally—and most important of all—*Ice* illustrates almost in spite of itself the way in which the cause of revolutionary liberation can be betrayed from within, betrayed by paramilitary structures that mirror the hated structures of the militaristic society we seek to destroy. And the loss of the truly *liberating* qualities of revolution amounts to the loss of the revolution itself.

By equivocating—by not clearly taking a stand and unveiling this betrayal for what it is—Kramer is an accomplice to it. In the end, and in spite of its revolutionary aspirations, *Ice* is really more of a science-fiction horror film than a political film. But see it; criticize it; and prove it wrong.

GRAHAM PETRIE

Eric Rohmer: An Interview

Where and when were you born?

What I say most often—and I don't want to stake my life that it's true—is that I was born at Nancy on April 4, 1923. Sometimes I give other dates, but if you use that one you'll be in agreement with other biographers. It was certainly 1923.

Have you always been interested in the cinema?

No, I couldn't say that. I became interested in cinema very late, when I was a student. Up till then I despised the cinema, I didn't like it, I just liked reading, painting, then music a little later. I didn't take any part in theater, I didn't go to it very much. I liked classical French theatre, Racine, Corneille, Molière, but to read it rather than see it. I discovered the cinema at the Cinémathèque. I came to like cinema because I liked silent films, but I didn't discover film through just going to the movies.

And then you began to write for Cahiers du Cinéma?

No. When I discovered the silent film, then I wanted to make films. I tried to make amateur films, but I didn't have any money, I didn't have any equipment, I didn't have anything at all, and so I had difficulties. I joined film societies and got involved in organizing these and I made friends there and with these friends we had the idea—we were all very young then—of publishing a Film Societies bulletin, and then we wanted to start a critical review. It was at the time when *L'Ecran Français* had just folded up and there was no weekly film journal. So we tried to found a very small film journal for we hadn't much money, and this published five issues, one a month. It was called the *Gazette du Cinéma* and was in the same format as *Combat* was at that time. And those who wrote for that review besides myself were Jacques Rivette, who published his first article there, and also Jean-Luc Godard published his first article there. I don't think Truffaut wrote for it, but he was one of our friends. As for Chabrol he didn't write for it either, though I knew him by then. And after the *Gazette du Cinéma*—there was a review called *Revue du Cinéma* after the war which had gone through various stages, there was a first series of the *Revue du Cinéma* in the thirties. It was founded by a critic called Jean Georges Auriol, then it disappeared, and it reappeared after the war, published by Gallimard and André Bazin wrote for this *Revue du Cinéma.* And the editor was Jacques Doniol-Valcroze. Then Gallimard stopped publishing it and moreover Jean Georges Auriol died in an accident. So Jacques Doniol-Valcroze and André Bazin decided to start another film review with the help of a distributor in Paris called Léonide de Quéjème who acted as a sleeping partner. So they began to publish *Cahiers du Cinéma*—they wanted to keep the title *Revue du Cinéma* but as that still belonged to Gallimard they couldn't. And at first a good many very different kinds of people started off writing for that review. There was a little core of young men, who were known as the young Turks because they had rather violent ideas, and these were François Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, and myself, and André Bazin called us 'Hitchcocko-Hawksiens' because we admired both Hitchcock and Hawks. I made my début as a critic as one of this little group. On the whole we were very unified because we had very similar tastes. Then Truffaut wrote a very violent article for *Cahiers du Cinéma* attacking the French "quality" cinema, people like Autant-Lara, René Clément and so on. A weekly magazine called *Arts* noticed this article and asked François Truffaut to become its film critic, or at least to do some

film criticism for it. Truffaut was still very young, only 21 or 22, and he became the film critic for *Arts* and as there were plenty of films to write about and he couldn't handle them all himself, he called on his friends and most of the *Cahiers* people lent a hand, especially myself, and for a time Truffaut and I did the film review for *Arts*. At this time the *Cahiers* people were spreading out into all the magazines: André Bazin was writing for the *Nouvel Observateur*.

During this time did you still want to make films yourself?

I hadn't given up the idea, we all tried now and then, but it was very difficult. We all made some amateur films, using whatever means we had, but in general these films weren't very successful because we didn't have anything —not even a camera. When we asked people to lend us their cameras they wanted to do the camerawork themselves and sometimes the photography was pretty bad as a result. We had problems. Then my own story gets involved with that of the *Nouvelle Vague*, at least with the most important part of it because most of the *Nouvelle Vague* people were also *Cahiers* people. We didn't call ourselves that, it was the press who decided that one year there was a *Nouvelle Vague*. It was Chabrol who got us started, he had succeeded in making a film [LE BEAU SERGE] all on his own without having done anything before, by setting up his own production company with money of his own. He was very worried because the film almost didn't get released, and if it hadn't, then the adventure of the *Nouvelle Vague* might have stopped there, but he succeeded in making the film and even in making another one [LES COUSINS] because the first film impressed the Committee that gave out subsidies and so he got a subsidy to make another one, and then the first one was released and was a big success. Then a little after Chabrol came Truffaut's *Les 400 Coups*, though this wasn't his first film as he had already made a short in 35mm, *Les Mistons*. Then, or even a little before that, in an almost desperate attempt, for he had

MA NUIT CHEZ MAUD

practically no money, nothing but the film stock itself, Rivette made *Paris Nous Appartient*, but he too had previously made a short film, *Le Coup du Berger*. I too had made some 16mm films, and my first real film was produced by Chabrol's production company in 1959, a year after *Les Cousins*, and that was *Le Signe du Lion*. And at the same time Godard made *A Bout de Souffle*, but he turned to a producer outside the *Cahiers* group, Georges de Beauregard, and that's how he met Raoul Coutard. So that's how I got started, at the same time as what came to be called the *Nouvelle Vague*.

I've heard that you recently re-edited Le Signe du Lion, *that the producer had made some cuts in it when it was first released.*

No, what happened was that I made the film as I wanted to. It was produced by Chabrol, but for personal reasons, family reasons, he had to give up the company to someone else. The person who was managing the company didn't like my film, he thought it was too long and he cut it. So there is in existence a shortened version of *Le Signe du Lion*, to which I objected, but I couldn't take the matter to court and I settled for a compromise by which this version could be distributed in the provinces, but in art cinemas and abroad only my version was to be shown. And as the film in fact was shown only in art cinemas, I was really

the winner. Les Films du Losange have now bought the rights to the film and if we find a copy of the shortened version of the film we have the right to destroy it. So the only version of *Le Signe du Lion* which is valid is the one that lasts 1 hour and 40 minutes with music by Louis Saguer. But the version that was shown in London, I'm told, and this was contrary to the agreement we made, is the shortened version which is 1 hour 25 minutes long and has symphonic music by Brahms. And that isn't my version of the film, it's the producer's one.

And then you began your series of Contes Moraux *with two films in 16mm?*

Yes, the first two are in 16mm. This was because the *Nouvelle Vague* had established itself; those whose films had done well were setting out on a successful career, but those whose films hadn't done so well, like myself with *Le Signe du Lion,* were having problems with continuing. So I decided to go on filming, no matter what, and instead of looking for a subject that might be attractive to the public or a producer, I decided that I would find a subject that *I* liked and that a producer would refuse. So here you have someone doing exactly what he wants to. And as you can't do this on 35mm, I made the films on 16mm. That way it didn't cost very much, just the price of the film stock. I found people willing to work for me out of friendship, either as technicians or actors. The first was a very short film, only 25 minutes long, the second a bit longer than that, and then I decided to make the third, which was *La Collectionneuse* and I realized that, as long as you were economical with the amount of film you used, it wouldn't really cost much more to do it on 35mm, especially if you used color. Fortunately I met a friend who could advance me enough to pay for film stock and we used 5,000 meters for a film that ended up 2,500 meters long—that means almost a 2:1 ratio. And that is how I made *La Collectionneuse,* with no money.

Can you tell me something about the subject-matter of these first two films?

In the first two *Contes Moraux* I'm telling the story of a young man who meets up with a young girl or woman at a time when he's looking for another woman. You find this idea very clearly in the first film, which is about a boy who sees a girl in the street and falls in love with her but doesn't know how to become acquainted with her. He tries to follow her to find out where she lives, but loses track of her. So he makes up his mind to make a systematic search for her, and as he usually eats in a restaurant frequented by students he decides to go without dinner and use the time to look for her in the district round about. And as he gets hungry he starts going into a baker's shop every day and buys some cakes to eat while he's exploring the area. He notices that the assistant in the shop is becoming interested in him, perhaps falling in love, and as he is getting a bit bored, he starts flirting with her. He gets caught up in the game he's playing with her and finally makes a date with her, just to see what will happen. But just as he's going to meet her, he comes across the first girl, the one he'd seen right at the beginning of the story, who lives just opposite the baker's but had sprained her ankle and couldn't go out, which is why he hadn't seen her. She had seen him go in there every day, but, thinking that he knew where she lived, she assumed that he just went in there so that she would notice him. She doesn't know anything about the girl in the bakery. It's a very slight story, an anecdote really.

The second film is a little more complex because it lasts longer. It's the story of a young boy who has a great admiration for one of his friends, a student; he's younger than him and rather dominated by him. At the same time he holds it against the other that he sees him a lot with girls he doesn't like very much. For example, the other one has a girl that he doesn't like, she's not even a student, she has a job in an office and he finds this a bit vulgar. The friend neglects her, he wants to get rid of her, and this girl, who is in love with his friend, attaches herself to him and begins to flirt with

him just because of his friendship with the one she really likes, and he wants to get rid of her too and can't. So it's the story of this boy who spends all his time with this girl who's trying to make advances to him, and at the same time his friend amuses himself by jeering at the girl and making fun of her, he even takes all her money from her because she's ready to do anything to keep him. The boy is ashamed of all this and at the same time he daren't do anything to antagonize the friend he admires so much. So that's the situation: he's ashamed of going along with the game his friend is playing, but he doesn't dare to reproach him frankly and say "no." There's a second woman here too, an attractive young girl, and the young boy the film is about is a little bit in love with her, but she looks on him as just a youngster and isn't interested in him. There's really nothing but failure in the film: the boy spends all his time with a girl he doesn't like and the one he would like to go out with is inaccessible and each time he sees her he doesn't know what to say and is aware anyway that she would refuse him. The characters are all very young: the boy is 18 and his friend is 21.

Do you plan to release these films ever?

No, because they are really very amateur films, they were made on 16mm. If I were ever to show them it would have to be in a very small cinema and I think the public would just find them too amateurish anyway.

Do you think this idea of the man who hesitates between two women is the connecting link between all the Contes Moraux?

He doesn't really hesitate, it just happens that at the very moment that he's made his choice, made up his mind, another woman turns up. But there isn't really any hesitation, all that happens is that this confirms his choice. In *La Collectionneuse* for example, he just spends a week with her and then leaves her. In *Maud* too it's an adventure for him, but he doesn't hesitate between one girl and the other; if he'd had an affair with Maud it would have lasted a week and then it would have been over. In my latest film the hero's choice is already made, he's going to get married, and if he has an adventure it's nothing more than that.

Did you start this series with very precise ideas about the subject-matter?

Yes, I had had the stories in my mind for a long time, and when I started the series I knew what the theme of each *Conte* would be. But I hadn't developed them, they were still very vague.

You've made some in color and some in black-and-white . . .

Three in black-and-white, two of them in 16mm and *Maud* in 35. *La Collectionneuse* and *Le Genou de Claire* are in color and the final one, for which I haven't decided on a title yet, will be too. I haven't written the script for it yet, I'm still thinking about it.

Why did you choose black-and-white for Maud?

Because it suited the nature of the subject-matter. Color wouldn't have added anything positive to it; on the contrary, it would only have destroyed the atmosphere of the film and introduced distracting elements that had no useful purpose. It's a film that I *saw* in black-and-white, I couldn't see any color in it. There is nothing in it which brings colors to mind, and in fact there weren't any colors in what I filmed—for example I filmed a town in which the houses were grey, certainly there were a few colored hoardings and road-signs, but I avoided these, you don't see them because they weren't interesting. There is a stone church and there are no colors in that church. Then there is snow—no color there either. The people are really dressed in black or in grey, they're not wearing anything colored. The apartment too didn't have any color in it, it was decorated in grey already. I was concerned above all with exploiting the contrast between black and white, between light and shadow. It's a film in color in a way, except that the colors are black and white. There's a sheet which is white, it's not colorless, it's *white*. In the same way the snow is white, white in a positive way, whereas if I had shot it in color, it wouldn't

have been white any more, it would have been smudged, and I wanted it really *white.*

So you don't agree with directors like Antonioni who say it's no longer possible to make films in black-and-white and that all films should be in color?

I would agree that nowadays the normal thing would be to make films in color, and it might seem a bit archaic to film in black-and-white. And yet I don't agree really. I think that man has a very strong feeling for black-and-white; it doesn't just exist in photography, it's there in drawings and engravings too—painters created pictures in color, but they also worked in black-and-white for drawings and engravings, in order to create a certain effect. As a result I think that black-and-white is now accepted by the public, and so I think that people are wrong when they say that black-and-white is impossible nowadays. It's a very curious phenomenon. I think that black-and-white will always exist, even if it's true that it will be an exception and the use of color will be standard. However, it's quite certain that at the moment film-makers aren't particularly inspired by color; most films in color have the same banal look about them and might as well be in black-and-white. Color adds nothing to them. For me color has to *contribute* something to a film, if it doesn't do this, I prefer black-and-white for, despite everything, it gives a kind of basis, a unity, which is more useful to a film than color badly used.

What would you say 'color contributes to La Collectionneuse *and* Le Genou de Claire?

I didn't use color as a dramatic element, as some film-makers have done. For me it's something inherent in the film as a whole. I think that in *La Collectionneuse* color above all heightens the sense of reality and increases the immediacy of the settings. In this film color acts in an indirect way; it's not direct and there aren't any color effects, as there are for example in Bergman's most recent film, his second one in color, where the color is very deliberately worked out and he gets his effects mainly by the way he uses red. I've never tried for dramatic effects of this kind, but, for example, the sense of time—evening, morning, and so on—can be rendered in a much more precise way through color. Color can also give a stronger sense of warmth, of heat, for when the film is in black-and-white you get less of a feeling of the different moments of the day, and there is less of what you might call a tactile impression about it. In *Le Genou de Claire* I think it works in the same way: the presence of the lake and the mountains is stronger in color than in black-and-white. It's a film I couldn't imagine in black-and-white. The color green seems to me essential in that film, I couldn't imagine it without the green in it. And the blue too—the cold color as a whole. This film would have no value for me in black-and-white. It's a very difficult thing to explain. It's more a feeling I have that can't be reasoned out logically.

What exactly do you mean by the word "moral" in the title of this series of films?

In French there is a word *moraliste* that I don't think has any equivalent in English. It doesn't really have much connection with the word "moral," a *moraliste* is someone who is interested in the description of what goes on inside man. He's concerned with states of mind and feelings. For example in the eighteenth century Pascal was a *moraliste,* and a moraliste is a particularly French kind of writer like La Bruyère or La Rochefoucauld, and you could also call Stendhal a *moraliste* because he describes what people feel and think. So *Contes Moraux* doesn't really mean that there's a moral contained in them, even though there might be one and all the characters in these films act according to certain moral ideas that are fairly clearly worked out. In *Ma Nuit chez Maud* these ideas are very precise; for all the characters in the other films they are rather more vague, and morality is a very personal matter. But they try to justify everything in their behavior and that fits the word "moral" in its narrowest sense. But "moral" can also mean that they are people who like to bring their motives, the reasons for their actions, into the

open, they try to analyze, they are not people who act without thinking about what they are doing. What matters is what they *think* about their behavior, rather than their behavior itself. They aren't films of action, they aren't films in which physical action takes place, they aren't films in which there is anything very dramatic, they are films in which a particular feeling is analyzed and where even the characters themselves analyze their feelings and are very introspective. That's what *Conte Morale* means.

In Maud *and* Le Genou de Claire *in particular you show us some people around 35–40 years old and also some who are very much younger. Do you think there is now a real disparity between these age groups, in the way that people often talk of the new generation having a completely different set of customs and moral values?*

My films are pure works of fiction, I don't claim to be a sociologist, I'm not making investigations or collecting statistics. I simply take particular cases that I have invented myself, they aren't meant to be scientific, they are works of imagination. Personally, I've never believed very much in the idea of a difference between age groups, I don't think it's very strong and it's certainly not an opposition between one group and another, and I don't thinks it's so very much stronger nowadays than it was before. And even if it is true, it doesn't interest me very much. It's not something I'm concerned with. The fact that the young generation today in 1971 might as a whole have a certain kind of mentality doesn't interest me. What interests me is to show young people as they really are just now, but also as they might be if they were fifty years old or a hundred years old, and the events of the film could have taken place in Ancient Greece, for things haven't changed all that much. For me what is interesting in mankind is what is permanent and eternal and doesn't change, rather than what changes, and that's what I'm interested in showing.

I read in an interview in Les Nouvelles Littéraires *that once you had finished this series you planned to do something completely different, perhaps a film with a historical setting?*

No, I didn't really mean that. Certainly once I've finished the *Contes Moraux* I want to do something else, I want to have a change and I don't want to go on with them. I'll do six, that's all, and I've still one to go. But I don't know what I'll do next.

You've done some work for television, haven't you?

No—I've worked for educational television, which is rather different. Television itself is intended for a huge audience, but educational television is intended for a very restricted public because, until now, there was a lot of difficulty in even finding an audience. There were very few television sets in schools and they weren't available in every classroom. Now, with the coming of cassettes, things will change. I did some educational films on different subejcts, just as other people did documentaries, and what I found very interesting was that I learned a great deal and I was free to do what I wanted. I was on my own, I wrote the scripts as well as filming them. It was a very interesting experience. But I don't know if these films would interest a wider audience.

What do you think about what is happening in films just now? Do you think a new kind of cinema is coming into being?

I've no idea. There may be people who are creating a "new" kind of cinema, but you have to ask how new it really is, if it doesn't just form part of the "eternal *avant-garde*," which sometimes just rediscovers ideas that were *avant-garde* years ago. For me what is really new is those ideas that never date. But what is certain is that lots of new ideas find their way into films that the public never gets to see. It seems to me that it would be desirable to be able to see everything that was being made by young people in the cinema, even if it wasn't completely successful, and in France, which is a country where you can see plenty of films, I think it's the country with the largest number of specialist cinemas in Europe, we haven't been given the chance to see what is

really new, and there's no place to show truly experimental films except the Cinémathèque. And so I can't pass judgment on this new cinema, though the films I make myself haven't any of the characteristics of what is called the *avant-garde,* and I feel that this "traditional *avant-garde*" isn't the route the cinema ought to follow. But I don't know very much about this new cinema, especially the young American cinema. I don't want to judge it; I make films that are right for me, and other people have their own ways to follow. What I want is for everyone to be able to take his own way and find his own public. But I go very seldom to the cinema, I don't write criticism any more, and I don't have enough knowledge to reply properly to your question.

Have you ever wanted to make a film in the United States?

No. First of all I don't speak English and I couldn't work in a country where I don't know the language. And I want to show the reality of life in France, I don't want to deal with a way of life I don't understand. At a pinch I could make a documentary about life in a foreign country, but that's a different matter. Also I have a very personal way of working and in France I have a great deal of freedom in this respect. I work with an extremely small crew; I have no assistant director, no script-girl, and I take care of the continuity myself. Perhaps I make mistakes and put an ashtray here when it should be there, but that's just too bad. And as usually there are no special clothes for the actors and few objects of special importance, in the long run there are no problems with this way of working. I use very few technicians because there are very few camera movements, but those technicians that I have are excellent, even though there aren't many of them. In other countries you have crews that are quite terrifying. I use five or six people and there you have sixty. That frightens me and I would be quite incapable of working in that way. I don't like to be the big boss who dominates everyone else; I like to be close to everyone, and I don't see how I could work under these conditions in the United States. Certainly that applies to traditional film-making; "underground" films would be a different matter. But I can show on the screen only those things I know about, and I think that there's still a lot to deal with in France. There's the question of language too: I place a lot of importance on speech, on style, on voice quality and intonation, and it's very important. The French language counts for a great deal in my films. I'm a writer too, I write my own scripts, and as a writer the French language is important to me. I couldn't write something and give it to someone else to translate, for I'm my own author in my films. So I could only make films in France.

What films or directors have most influenced your own, in style or themes?

Silent films above all, though I don't know how direct the influence is. People say that there is a lot of talk in my films, that I express myself through speech rather than images, and yet in actual fact I learned about cinema by seeing the films of Griffith, Stroheim, and Murnau, and even the silent comedies. That's how I learned about cinema. There are two directors after the silent period whom I like very much and these are Jean Renoir and Roberto Rossellini; they are the people who most influenced me. As for the others, I admire Americans like Hitchcock, but I don't think I've been really influenced by them; if I have, it's quite unconsciously. I can tell you whom I admire, but influence is a different matter, for sometimes you don't even know yourself who has influenced you and I'm perhaps not the right person to talk about it.

Do you prefer to work for a small audience that will appreciate what you are doing, rather than for a large public?

Yes, certainly. If it depended only on me, instead of attracting people to my films, I would try to drive them away. I would tell them the films are more difficult than they really are, because I don't like to deceive people, I like to show my films to people who can appreciate them. I'm not interested in the

number of spectators. Having said that, it's true that a film is a commercial undertaking and ought to recover its costs. But as my films don't cost much, I don't think I need a very large audience, and I've always thought that they should be shown in theaters that aren't too big. The intimate character of my films doesn't suit a theater or an audience too large for them. And I don't think they are suited to a mass reaction or a collective reaction. It's better if the spectator feels he is experiencing a completely personal reaction to it. Each reaction should be unique, individual, different. I think the film is enjoyed better if the spectators aren't sitting too near one another, if the theater isn't too full, and they don't know each other. Then each has a different reaction. That's better than a theater where there's a uniform reaction. I don't like watching one of my films in public and it distresses me if everyone laughs in the same place, as my film wasn't made with that in mind. I didn't write something just to make everyone laugh at the same time. It's all right if someone smiles, but it shouldn't happen at exactly the same place in the film. Perhaps this is because my films are more like reading than like watching a spectacle, they are made more to be read like a book than seen like something on the stage. So it distresses me to see a collective reaction.

Would you agree that the endings of your films tend to be rather sad?

They are not what one is expecting to happen, they are to some extent *against* the person concerned. What happens is against the wishes of the character, it's a kind of disillusionment, a conflict—not exactly a failure on his part but a disillusionment. The character has made a mistake, he realizes he has created an illusion for himself. He had created a kind of world for himself, with himself at the center, and it all seemed perfectly logical that he should be the ruler or the god of this world. Everything seemed very simple and all my characters are a bit obsessed with logic. They have a system and principles, and they build up a world that can be explained by this system. And then the conclusion of the film demolishes their system and their illusions collapse. It's not exactly happy, but that's what the films are all about.

[Translated by Graham Petrie]

ERNEST CALLENBACH

The Unloved One

CRISIS AT THE AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE

In our Summer 1961 issue, FILM QUARTERLY printed a detailed plan for an American Film Institute, prepared by Colin Young on the basis of extended discussions with educators, film-makers, critics, distributors, exhibitors, museum and archive personnel, film society people, and others. In 1966 the AFI actually came into existence, thanks to support from Lyndon Johnson, and in the following years it carried out various programs. Since the firing of research staff from AFI's Los Angeles Center for Advanced Film Studies, early in 1971, there has been much public and private debate over AFI's functioning, and its fate now hangs in the balance, with decisions on future funding about to be made as we go to press. The following article is based on extensive conversations with dozens of AFI critics and supporters, including many people who have been in positions to observe AFI operations, and also with the director of AFI, George Stevens, Jr., who discussed AFI policies with me and provided other useful information. The article attempts to put forward an assessment of AFI performance so far, and to make a series of policy recommendations (some of them for drastic changes, some for continuation of previous policies) as a basis for working toward a consensus on the AFI which would help to ensure not only its survival but its continuation with widespread support in the film community.

Outside assessments generally seem somewhat beside the point to inhabitants of a given institution, as is clear to anyone in a university rated on some national scale; and the American Film Institute, though not very large as institutions go in present society, is a complex entity which no one person can ever quite grasp. Yet there seems no escape from the attempt—even though we must also recognize, candidly, that thinking about institutions is almost always a bore. In our over-institutionalized era, the great drift of thought and feeling is paradoxically anti-institutional; as our corporations and universities and military establishment grow ever larger and more bureaucratic, the human beings who actually inhabit them grow ever more disaffected—the controllers as well as the controllees. These major institutions already show signs of fatal strain; at some point not many years off, they seem likely to suffer catastrophic breakdowns, of which we already see the signs: industrial sabotage and general laxity are widespread, students have lost virtually all confidence in the rationality of university purposes and structures, and the military apparatus is on the verge of "unreliability," with desertion, fragging, drug-taking, and political or conscientious objection reaching stupendous

levels. Large institutions have one main advantage: clout. Sometimes this translates into some kinds of efficiency, and sometimes not. But they always have one fatal disadvantage: they are no fun. Living within them, as Frederick Wiseman has patiently been showing us in his films, is a damned drag; and the natural reaction of people everywhere is to withdraw not only political allegiance but also intelligence, energy, and love, which they attempt to deploy in more direct, human, and life-enhancing channels. Thus the slogans of organizationally sophisticated people these days run along such lines as: *Never create one big organization where three small ones would do! Decentralize! Let those who do the work have a role in controlling it!*

It is obligatory to think in such large and personal terms at the start, if we wish to generate any real perspective in which to view the AFI and its achievements and failures; otherwise we remain captives of mere isolated current events. If the AFI is worth thinking about at all, we must think about it seriously, not only for what it might practically accomplish that would seem good to us, but as an institution which seeks to maintain itself, grow, and seek support or sympathy from human beings. This is not subjecting AFI to some kind of idiosyncratic political test; it is simply to acknowledge that, like all institutions in this era, AFI must be evaluated not only in terms of works (the old Puritan standard) but also in terms of what it adds to the human environment—whether it is an entity that commands human sympathy. Institutions which cannot command it will ultimately wither; for even our majestic main institutions, despite all the money and violence at their disposal, are finally vulnerable to the simple withdrawal of people's acquiescence.

On the other hand, if we wish to think seriously about the institutions of the film world, it is also important not to be sentimental—that is, not to concentrate merely on "the good of the art" and similar wholesome generalities. A scheme for a national film institute was put forward by people with the good of the art in mind, but it lay around for a long time without anything happening. The actual American Film Institute with money in the bank arose only because the national government and big foundations (which are less distinguishable than you might imagine) decided it was a good thing, and the big film companies went along.

Now in general a capitalist state takes an economic role in an art under only two conditions, which may not be exclusive: either the art is foundering commercially (like opera and dance) and is maintained by the state because it is ornamental and preserves an upper-class cultural image; or the art is potentially useful or dangerous in political terms, as film was to Goebbels and Mussolini (to whom we owe the Centro Sperimentale and Venice Film Festival). The stigmata of such state intervention are by now well known and easily recognized; in this country their most spectacular manifestation is what is called the Lincoln Center Syndrome. The chief symptoms are: massive, ornate, expensive buildings; centralized programs administered from above with little or no public participation; great losses incurred from misestimation of public reactions; a chronic disproportion in budgeting whereby ceremonial and decorative functions consume greater funds than actual work; and a fear of programs that might liberate energies from below and bring about organization from the bottom up, either by "producers" of the art or "consumers."

Such are the natural dangers to which any art institution founded under the conditions we live in may be theoretically expected to fall prey.

Certainly the film industry was in trouble; some of its more forward-looking members, at least, realized a film institute might help develop the new talent that was no longer being trained within the corporate structure; they also doubtless hoped that it could take over certain research and coordination functions that the industry might otherwise have to undertake itself, and that it could serve as a focus of national concern for the art in a more politically neutral sense than the industry's actual trade associations. Certainly also the government is aware of the dangerous potential of film in an era when the media have demonstrated profound braking effects upon the government's ability to generate war hysteria; sophisticated *Kulturpolitik* thinkers may have hoped that an institute, by "taming" dissident talents through periodic infusions of cash, might help stem the steady brain drain from the industry into alternate modes of expression; and even if this didn't always help, at least the institute would be in touch with a sizable portion of the possibly dangerous film-makers of the country. Whatever precise motives proved critical, it was clear that any American film institute would be a *liberal* force in that special American sense in which Lyndon Johnson, who authorized the AFI's beginnings, was a liberal; and George Stevens, Jr., who had run the US Information

Agency foreign-propaganda film program, was a reliable liberal to run the new institution.

The record compiled by Stevens and his staff seems to me a mixed one. Checking off AFI's score against our theoretical dangers, in brief summary (I will return to some of these items below):

The AFI has indeed acquired its monumental edifice, in the Greystone mansion in Beverly Hills; its administration presently resides there, behind fences and guards. Its mode of operation has been largely centralist, though it has regularly sought advice from widespread sources. Its Theater in Washington, lacking the support of a sizable community of film goers and saddled with unrealistically large operating expenses, has lost large sums and jeopardized the future possibility of regional theaters. Lastly, by failing to develop either a distribution system or a general membership organization, and being unable to clarify its relations with grantee film-makers, AFI has cut itself off from its ultimate potential for political health, namely a working relationship of mutual support from wide elements of the American film community.

In the present crisis, characterized by vigorous criticism of AFI priorities, administrative practices, accounting, and personnel relations, plus grave doubts about continued financing, it seems essential to keep these "strategic" considerations in mind while reviewing the actual work which, in its almost four years, AFI has accomplished. Stevens sometimes replies to critics that the defects of AFI are due mainly to trying to do too much too fast. In the administrative sense, this may be true: AFI has fostered many unrelated projects that never quite worked out to anything. But in a larger and more crucial sense, it may be argued that AFI has done too little: it has not attacked the problems of distribution which were a main consideration of most of those who proposed a film institute in the first place; it has not attempted to build a practical relationship with a large constituency until financial disaster loomed; and it has lacked a sense that the problems of the film world are connected with the large and agonizing issues of how the arts should help us confront life in a pathologically "advanced" industrial society.

What then has AFI been doing, and what should it be doing if it hopes to win wide support for its continuance?

ARCHIVES AND CATALOGUE

The main initial thrust of AFI attention and expenditure was toward the recovery, preservation, and cataloguing of the basic theatrical film heritage of the country. The great gap in the Library of Congress and other archives of the twenties and thirties was somewhat filled in. Decomposing nitrate prints in various collections were transferred to acetate stock, although some $10 million is needed to complete the job. "Lost" films were turned up in attics, European archives, neglected vaults.

Some 5,000 films have reportedly been saved, altogether. AFI should make it possible for outside historical researchers to evaluate and use these new resources, by publishing a working mimeographed list of the titles involved, although the consensus of opinion is that the task of salvage has been well performed. (Also—late in the game, but better than never—a knowledgeable advisory committee has been set up for the archive work.) At any rate, a substantial number of additional films can now be studied in the LC archive. They can be examined only on a Steenbeck table and cannot circulate; but they exist.

Moreover, an exhaustive catalogue of American theatrical films has been established, on the lines of national catalogues that had been produced in other countries, providing at last a central source of factual information about virtually all theatrical films from the past. The first volume of this catalogue is about to be published, and will constitute a first-rate research source. It is also important to begin charting the great morass of nontheatrical film, or at least selected parts of it, since it is in this area that most significant developments are henceforth likely to center.

Such a project, it bears noticing, is the kind of thing that a large organization with a lot of money is well equipped to carry out: initiative at the top, backed by cash and with reasonably good staff selection, can set objective goals and achieve them. The recommendation here seems clear:

The preservation and catalogue programs should be continued as before the drastic financial-crisis budget cuts; and an active campaign should be undertaken toward obtaining congressional funding for the remaining nitrate-transfer work. Organizationally, the objective here should be to spin off the permanent archive work into the Library of Congress once funding of the Film Division has risen to sufficient levels to support it: the LC is our *de facto* national archive, and it would be silly to maintain a separate organization to do its work for it on any except the present emergency basis. The salary amounts necessary to the AFI work of locating and obtaining films are small in any case,

less than $40,000 per year. The essential beyond that is to procure the massive funding needed to complete the archival job—involving sums far beyond any realistic AFI budgeting. Once that task is accomplished, AFI should probably confine itself to maintaining a kind of scholarly "visiting committee" which would periodically assess the work of the LC archivists and of our other "private" archives.

INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKER SUPPORT

Another largely successful AFI program was the providing of production funds to independent film-makers, and for a time to film students and to scriptwriters. There has been confusion and some hot feeling about the contract provisions on distribution; the money provided was never a free grant but in effect a loan. However, on the whole this program seems to have been well administered; it came somewhat near the granting-agency ideal: a small office containing one decision-maker with a telephone to a knowledgeable board of advisors, one secretary, and one check-writing machine. Funds were given to a surprisingly wide variety of film-makers, some well known for highly unorthodox works, some not known at all. It will be some time still before a careful evaluation and assessment of this program is possible. However, scriptwriting grants were given in 1968 and 1969 to 14 projects by writers including Melvin Van Peebles, Jim McBride, Arthur Barron, Fred Wiseman, Terry Sanders, and Jack Gelber; even if these all turned out to be failures, they would be honorable ones. Film-maker grants in 1968 went to 24 projects, and have resulted in films including Paul Sharits's *Razor Blades*, Robert Kramer's *Ice*, Will Hindle's *Watersmith*, Jimmy Murakami's *The Good Friend*, and John Korty's *Imogen Cunningham*. Thirty grants in 1969 aided films that have included George Manupelli's *Dr. Chicago*, Jordan Belson's *Momentum*, and John Hancock's *Sticky My Fingers, Fleet My Feet*. The 1970 grants aided Bruce Baillie's *Quick Billy*, Connie Beeson's *Ann, A Portrait*, and projects by Tom Palazzolo, Andrew Sarris, Scott Bartlett, Patricia Amlin, Caleb Deschanel, and James McBride. AFI plans include some $406,000 for film-maker support in fiscal-year 1972, if the desired level of financing is obtained. The American film world is substantially richer by the films that AFI has helped finance, and a substantial expenditure in this area will continue to be desirable. The recommendation here, therefore, is: *Independent film-maker support should be continued much as before, but with true grants.*

DISTRIBUTION

However, film-maker support is not an absolute good in itself. Funds spent on film-making help bolster supply; they do nothing to increase demand. Making films is only half the battle, and not the harder half either. In film as in other arts, *we do not lack talent; we lack new connections between talent and audiences.* The old connections provided when the theatrical industry was an efficiently functioning mass-production machine have been broken. The problem of building new connections is the overriding organizational problem of the art at present—with ramifications on aesthetic, technological, economic, political, legal, and industrial levels. The old Hollywood forms no longer work; the economic mechanisms of the industry's "independent" production are becoming unfeasibly chancy; the role of film in public life and as an industry is increasingly uncertain.

In such circumstances we surely might have expected a national film institute to address major energy to this area of concern. This could have meant, to give some examples: carrying out a somewhat detailed inquiry into the nature and sources of the problems vexing our distribution system; exploring novel distribution approaches which commercial distributors have not so far been able or willing to experiment with; attempting to coordinate the alternate circuits that have already come into existence in the college and university world, so that their joint economic weight would be more usefully felt; pressing new technology (8mm, videotape, cassettes, etc.) into the service of increasing diversity and directness of contact between film-makers, film-viewers, and film teachers; initiative in planning how to utilize educational and cable TV. AFI has moved in none of these directions, and as far as I can determine from talking with Stevens, has not even taken the matter seriously enough to debate policy alternatives. (This is *not*, apparently, because of obstructionism by industry representatives on the Board of Trustees, as has been rumored.)

In the event, thus, although AFI has given partial support to many excellent production projects, the distribution even of these films has been left in limbo. In some cases the film-makers have themselves been able to make distribution deals (sometimes only after hassling with AFI). In some cases films remain on the shelf. In a few cases AFI has made or instigated deals. But these activities have all remained passively within the existing constipated distribution machinery, when what is needed is precisely some energetic initiative in breaking

through the existing blockages.

It is important to realize that new films have been left increasingly stranded during the period of AFI's existence because of the cannibalization of the old independent 16mm distributors by big corporations; in the ensuing reorganizations aimed at greater profitability, the distributors have lost their film-wise staffs, and their openness to new films has declined sharply; they are making plenty of money with the old collections—built up not by corporate managers but by individual small businessman who loved films and had taste: Tom Brandon, Leo Dratfield, Willard Morrison, and their many unsung colleagues. It has, ironically, been precisely during the period when American independent production has blossomed artistically that distribution has become harder, with filmmakers turning increasingly to self-help groups like Canyon Cinema and the New York Film Makers Coop.

But it is not only to prevent its own films from lying unseen that AFI initiative in distribution is essential. There are at least three other major cultural reasons. First, the obstacles to circulation of foreign films are such that the US can be called a cinematically under-developed nation; there is a great backlog of interesting foreign films that have never gained distribution in this country, and the situation is steadily deteriorating, though we have not yet achieved the isolation of a poverty-stricken East European country like Poland. (Here, for instance, AFI coordination could assemble booking guarantees that would cover subtitling costs.) Second, distributor price policies are gradually forcing a contraction and distortion of film use by small colleges and in classrooms. The boom in college large-audience showings has led to a creeping and then galloping inflation of rentals. The situation has become so serious that some kind of concerted boycott by educators is now being contemplated, on a national basis; if housewives can roll back supermarket prices, the reasoning goes, so can film teachers, who are potentially a far more tightly organizable group. (Here, active AFI pressure on distributors could have helped develop realistic sliding scales to ensure the availability of the basic materials of the art for those who wish to teach it.) Third, only by reaching out to a national general membership with meaningful services can AFI build the constituency it needs; and better distribution is not only *a* need, it is *the* need which all American film lovers share. If AFI can provide greater availability of films, it can presumably also provide admission reductions, price advantages on books and publications, membership information services, and other worthwhile services.

This is perhaps the place to repeat that some cultural organizations—including our operas, film festivals, subsidized theater companies, and similar elements of "managed culture"—are run by initiative and money coming down from on high. When the money stops, they stop, because their vitality has been artificially induced. The old film-society movement, now largely replaced by programs managed by paid college officials, was an example of a different way of doing things: self-propelled, self-financed, and self-controlled. In the Film Makers Coop, Canyon Cinema, Newsreel, American Documentary Films, and similar groups we have contemporary examples: operations where the initiative comes from the people who badly want to accomplish something, and somehow find the wherewithal and energy needed to do it. These organizations are always a bit slapdash and seemingly in constant jeopardy; they have beat-up furniture, funky offices, unpaid phone bills, and unorthodox habits of correspondence. But they have a lot of good friends; they are resilient; they are respected and loved because of what they do and who they are, not because of their "image." We need more of them; and wherever possible we should do what has to be done through organizations of that type rather than through cushy-financing outfits. It is not only that, dollar for dollar and man for man, such small, personal organizations are more efficient than big, heavy-administrative-cost ones, but that they are more pleasant and liberating places to work in.

THE CENTER FOR ADVANCED FILM STUDIES

I must move on, however, to the stage of AFI's history when Stevens moved from Washington to Los Angeles and began the Center there, which led some observers to fear a concentration on production and a neglect of AFI's other functions. At first such fears appeared groundless, for the chief activity in LA was to be the school at Greystone, intended as a "conservatory" for talented young film-makers, operating on a tutorial system and combining production training, scholarly research, and actual film-making. The Greystone mansion (a city-owned white elephant in Beverly Hills acquired for $1 per year but expensive to repair, maintain, and guard) was refitted with

offices, a very costly projection booth and screening room, and sophisticated modern editing and sound equipment. It became, in effect, a small studio. Serfs from the outside enter the grounds through a guarded gate, reminiscent of the old studio fiefdoms. The main building is enormous in scale, and its wide corridors, balconies, and staircases seem strangely empty, as if the place has carried over some of the atmosphere of a mortuary from its use as one in Richardson's film *The Loved One*. (Forebodingly, this was Greystone's last practical use before AFI took it over, except for hippies crashing overnight in the extensive grounds.)

Something like $2 million, which is about one third of AFI's total outlays, has been spent so far on the Center, and its projected 1972 budget is over a million; these outlays have been toward the education of some 40 Fellows. This scale of expenditure has given rise to the charge that the Center tail is now wagging the Institute dog. As Kay Loveland, Stevens's former assistant who resigned in protest against AFI policies and firings puts it, "It appears that $2.6 million has been spent at the Center so that 30 film-makers can have inadequate production experience. They have been less than prolific so far. While they have received script counseling from Frank Daniel and have written a number of short and feature scripts, they have certainly failed to gain much practical experience in film-making—and they hardly needed a mansion and $2.6 million to write scripts."

The Center is, it seems to me, a microcosm of AFI problems in "miniature," and its orientation thus needs extensive discussion. The basic aim, according to Stevens, was to help train a new generation of American film-makers who might do for America what the New Wave did in France. Although most early thinking about an AFI did *not* envision a new school as a necessary part of an institute, the pulling and hauling over the Stanford Research Institute's "independent" study (which paralleled AFI's start) resulted in the inclusion of a school in the AFI's tentative organization chart.

Now on a basic level, it is extremely difficult to justify spending any money at all to establish another film school in the United States, as opposed to available easy alternatives such as subsidizing existing schools, making grants to deserving young film-makers, or establishing an extensive apprenticeship system. The sole argument for doing so would be if one had a scheme in mind which *could* in fact hope to accomplish what happened in Paris. For on a more mundane level, it is relatively easy and getting easier to teach film-makers the technical rudiments of the art. As Conrad Hall (no mean technician) recently remarked, "The technique is all easy to learn. I could teach anyone to be a cameraman in a week." Film courses in high schools, colleges, and university extension classes are widely available; besides, many aspirants are capable of teaching themselves much of what they need to know technically, with a little help from their friends in film companies, television crews, film school classes, and so on.

On the other hand, no one has yet proved that film *as an art* can be taught anywhere, or in any amount of time, or with any amount of machinery. The artistic record of our film schools is not impressive when compared, for instance, with that other great "school," vaudeville; and it might well be argued that the most successful contemporary film school is not a school at all, but the Cinémathèque Française. The lesson of Paris is indeed an instructive one: for the impact of the official school, the IDHEC, was as nothing; what counted was the impact of Langlois's incessant and dumbfoundingly catholic film exhibitions on the one hand, and the impact of the thinking done by André Bazin and his colleagues on the other. What happened in Paris during the formative years of the New Wave was that a considerable number of film-mad young people took advantage of Langlois's policies and, by forming a dense network of cinéclubs of their own, added still further to the screening resources of their city; they talked film incessantly; and they then used these experiences to work out their own new ways of making films. We are still taking the precise measure of their achievements, which can (despite their diversity) be looked at as a pushing of the American individualist cinema to its ultimate, logical conclusions; but the important thing to remember is that these achievements flowed from an *intellectual* tradition, operating at a particular juncture of history and film history. If we are to trace a somewhat similar course, therefore, it is not the example of the IDHEC we must follow, but that of Langlois and Bazin. In short, difficult problems of theory and orientation must be dealt with; and the only way they can be dealt with is to mobilize the kinds of resources marshalled in Paris: endless screenings open to all who care about the art; endless discussions, private and public; endless theorizing and criticizing in a variety of publications; and finally, an openness to new talents on

the part of financial backers and distributors.

It seems to me highly doubtful that such an intellectual enterprise can be carried out in Los Angeles, but I am not against an attempt being made; indeed the attempt should also be made in New York, San Francisco, Boston, Chicago. However, Greystone is totally unsuited as a Los Angeles site for it, and the elitist assumptions that underlie the Center are totally inappropriate. There is no human way of ascertaining who are the Truffauts, Godards, Chabrols, Rohmers of America, and then bringing them to the Center to ripen; they can be found—indeed they can only find themselves—solely through a complex social process of dealing with films, each other, and the American situation. Therefore, if the AFI is to have any significant effect in this direction, it will not be through the operation of the closed-off Center, which is after all just another (if richer) film school added to those already existing in LA, but through its aid in developing general American film culture: in other words, through its primary tasks in the archive, education, research, and distribution areas.

There are two main obstacles facing all talented young people wishing to develop their film-making talents and undertake commercial film-making at present: the difficulty of getting one's first films distributed, and the difficulty of getting "into" the industry, union-wise, influence-wise, etc. The Center has some effect in these areas for its chosen few. But both of these are general problems that the AFI *could* attack if it wished: by developing an aggressive distribution policy and by a large apprenticeship program, similar to its intern appointments but (1) far more numerous, and (2) extended to nontheatrical films, which by now may well interest more talented young film-makers than theatrical features do. The nurturing of talent is a statistical game, as the old studios knew; you must plant a lot of acorns to get a few oaks. To get some perspective on the way in which film-school spending can be evaluated, we should remember that with the funds that have been spent on the Center, about 600 apprenticeship grants could have been made, assuming something like $3,000 per grant, which most grantees could supplement with income from the productions they work on. (Those fellows who have had internships have generally reported themselves immensely benefitted, incidentally; this seems to be the most successful aspect of Center educational effort.)

To the principled case against any AFI school at all, we must add many other difficulties. The faculty, with the exception of Frank Daniel who was formerly dean of the Prague film school, has had no educational background; the operations of the school have had no theoretical or intellectual orientation that might justify its elitist position. Daniel is a good screenwriter and a fatherly figure who is apparently excellent as a script supervisor; but he comes from an utterly alien tradition and has had no significant intellectual contribution to make to film thought; his draft outline for the educational orientation of the Center sounds like a UNESCO document, full of the best intentions but hoping vaguely to offer all things to all men. The formal Center teaching program has evidently in fact boiled down to occasional guest lectures and visitations by active film-makers. Although some 900 films are reportedly screened yearly (half of these for oral-history projects) they are very badly attended by the fellows, and are largely American features, which hardly constitute the total universe of important films. (Sometimes, indeed, nobody at all shows up for the screenings, not even the person who requested them; and a rule has had to be established that a film will be run if only one person turns up for it.)

It is no news to the older film schools that it is unreasonable in the long haul to expect active film-makers to spend much time at a school, although they are glad to come for an occasional appearance (especially if, as AFI has now begun to do, this gets on television). But if it is hard to bring film-makers to the students, why not take students to the film-makers through apprenticeships, as has long been customary in other arts?

Moreover, the existence of the Center has tended to distort over-all AFI budgeting. Heavy Center expenses (partly but not entirely connected with large and unplanned outlays on a feature being produced by one of the fellows, Stanton Kaye) have drained away funds that should have been spent on archives, research, and education on a national level. In the state of the theatrical industry today, production of features is extremely risky; it will be extraordinary indeed, despite Stevens's optimism on this score, if the Kaye picture actually produces income for AFI. In any event, feature production on this financial scale ($250,000 or more) is clearly something that needs to be undertaken by normal venture capital; when a production goes this enormously over budget, it should stop until further venture capital is secured. (The AFI is not the Swedish Film Institute, with its large tax-derived production funds.)

It is difficult to venture compact recommenda-

tions concerning the Center, but part of the difficulty is precisely that the Center is so heavily implicated with the rest of the AFI. Therefore, I propose that the principle of many-small-organizations-are-better-than-one-big-one be applied:

The Center for Advanced Film Studies should be spun off into an entirely separate organization, with its own Board of Trustees and Director. If the Ford foundation is, as Stevens maintains, interested in supporting a film conservatory, by all means let it do so. Greystone is now equipped for the purpose, and can evidently be maintained physically at a cost of something like $70,000 per year. But let the Center exist on its own, so that the AFI will be free of its weight—organizational, administrative, and financial. The policy of having one man attempt to run both organizations seems clearly mistaken. It is charged by his critics that George Stevens, Jr. pulls down $60,000 per year: it is replied by his friends that he works hard. What is needed, however, is not one man struggling to do a $60,000 job, but two men doing $30,000 jobs without stretching themselves as thin as Stevens has to. The necessity to try and manage the Center as well as AFI as a whole, it seems to me after extensive talks with him, has meant that Stevens has not been focusing proper policy-making energy on general AFI priorities since he went to Los Angeles. Greystone has, it seems to me, been far closer to Stevens's main personal interests than his work in managing the AFI's other areas; certainly it connects more directly with his prior experience as a film producer with USIA and earlier, not to mention his family background in the feature industry. It may be, therefore, that both he and his constituency would be happier if the AFI and Center are split, and he directs the Center. It seems clear, at any rate, that Stevens has little taste for trying to turn AFI into an aggressively national organization in wide and direct contact with film-concerned people on every level.

The disparity between Stevens's approach and what is needed becomes clearer if we turn to an examination of other areas of AFI work, but before doing so let me list a number of recommendations concerning the spun-off Center itself:

An apprenticeship period should be required of all resident fellows, and a nationwide apprenticeship program should be established, not only with theatrical feature directors but also makers of documentaries and experiemental films of every kind. An expanded fellowship program should also be established for scholars and critics, and this program too should assist both resident fellows and fellows who wish to carry out programs at established centers of film study, whether universities or such institutions as the Museum of Modern Art, the Cinémathèque Française, etc. The program for resident fellows should not be confined to beginning scholars as at present, but should be partly (*only* partly) modeled on research centers in other fields, where established scholars are offered a year in a "hothouse" atmosphere.

Second, *the staff of the Center should be expected to develop a theoretical rationale for their work* which relates to the general situation not merely of the American film but of film as a worldwide art form. This rationale should not denigrate theory and criticism or be otherwise intellectually provincial.

Third, *there should be a minimum of special showings at the Center* and what there are should be publicized; instead fellows should be encouraged to participate in the general on-going life of exhibitions, discussions, and publications in their city. (As explained further below, AFI should, once it is rid of the Center, undertake an active regional role and do some screenings itself in convenient central locations.)

Fourth, *fellows should have a voice in management of the Center,* through some democratic mechanism, particularly as regards allocation of production budgets; this would impel them to develop skills in articulating their proposals and developing principled arguments on their behalf, through being involved in a real social process.

REGIONALISM

Since some of the recommendations which follow are not within the power of AFI as it is presently organized, let me first outline how it seems to me AFI should function in its national role. It has been recognized by all, since the first discussions of an institute, that the geography of this country is a terrible obstacle. If our culture and our film industry were centered in one place, as is true of London, Paris, and indeed most capitals, the Institute could be located there and centralized functions would be appropriate in many areas (though the British Film Institute, for example, is now engaged in a regional theaters program). As a creation of the federal government, AFI found itself in Washington, a singularly unfilm-minded city. An abortive branch office was opened in New York; then the Center was established at Greystone, and the center of

gravity of the organization shifted to the West.

It seems crucial to recognize that a successful AFI must be dedicated to promoting the film interests of *all* regions of the country, and must be in close touch with the varying problems of those regions. Thus, *regional offices should be opened in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and perhaps other cities as well.* Unlike Greystone, these offices should be located in easily accessible places; they should provide modest screening facilities capable of being opened to the public, with a public coffeeshop adjacent thereto where film people could meet, informal events and presentations could be held, etc. Compact office space should be provided for a small staff, whose primary responsibilities would include coordinating work on distribution problems, aiding and advising educational programs, and reporting events and developments to the national office and *AFI Reports.* This staff would encourage the development of a network of advisory and ad hoc committees drawn from the local film community (broadly conceived to include educators, film-makers, students, critics, industry members, and persons from the general public who care about films). The staff would also be concerned to develop a general public membership program. In short, they would act as gadflies, inspirations, stimulators, troubleshooters; they would go out and *engage* with the film problems of the country, and attempt to bring AFI's prestige, influence, and money to bear in solving them.

One important task of the AFI regional offices would be the development of regional theaters, either directly under AFI auspices like the one in Washington, or through assisting local museums or other groups in the manner of the BFI. Unfortunately, the Washington theater has been so expensive that its experience will tend to frighten off those interested in beginning other theaters. After modest and quite successful beginnings, the Washington theater was moved to a high-rent shopping center where its losses have been spectacular (on the order of $100,000 per year). Next year it goes to the Kennedy Art Center, but expensive outfitting is involved there too, and Stevens foresees another $100,000 deficit. Instead of working toward other regional theaters directly, however, AFI policy is now to put on "spectaculars" in collaboration with big department stores, as has been done in Minneapolis and Houston. These operate through high-powered hoopla of stars and big names; they garner a few memberships, but it seems extremely unlikely that the Official Culture types who attend them will constitute the backbone of a repertory theater audience, while it seems all too likely that this kind of show will alienate the young people who in fact constitute such a potential audience.

The AFI Theater in Washington should be returned to its former modest level of operation, with expenses kept relatively in line with income. It should be operated as a conscious pilot program to explore how self-sustaining theaters can be maintained in cities lacking large film-mad populations. The essentials should be modesty in "image," active and daring programming (as has been the case in Washington), and active attempts to connect the theater with community interests and needs.

Presumably, if AFI must continue to rely on government funds, its headquarters office should be in Washington, despite the cultural disadvantages of that city.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Returning to the other main areas of AFI activity, what has been happening in the past six months is a cutting back of programs as AFI has run out of money. Stevens claims that production people have been fired too; but the ire of the education and critical community was most directly raised by the firing of the Center research staff; shortly thereafter, not only Education Manager Ron Sutton in Washington, but also Stevens' administrative assistant Kay Loveland resigned; and a petition of protest was then signed by a large number of people still remaining on the staff, on both coasts. In such circumstances bitterness is natural. Stevens claims that just as much research and education work is going on now as before. But what he means is the oral history program; and as far as participants at the recent educators conference in St. Louis can tell, AFI is hoping to cast them loose as soon as possible. It seems clear, then, that an important change of emphasis *has* taken place. But it is not easy to evaluate the past or present contributions of AFI in the research or scholarly area.

Skepticism is inevitable, because scholarly work is one thing that institutions are never good at; they serve best by providing libraries or similar facilities and leaving the scholars alone. Judging by the evidence of our American universities, the "community of scholars" Robert Hutchins spoke

of cannot be willed into existence simply by hiring scholars and putting them in one building; it springs up sometimes in some places through a happy concatenation of circumstances. What was going on at the Center seems to have been preparatory in nature. Seminars were held; discussions were carried out; books were envisioned. One project bore on the nature of visual style in film, hoping to develop a suitable vocabulary for analysis. A study was afoot on animation, and several on historical aspects of Hollywood film-making and filmmakers. The role of the paid staff was to assist the fellows doing these projects through discussion and advice; and there was some overlap with management of the oral histories projects. Some of the work planned may come to publication stage in due course, when it can be evaluated by all. On the other hand, those staff or fellows who have in fact published critical work (Jim Kitses, Paul Schrader, Steven Mamber, Bob Mundy, and others) would doubtless have gone on producing whether the Center existed or not, and whether or not they happened to be in Los Angeles, London, or New York.

The oral histories program, which is continuing after the firings (management of it is not, after all, a terribly complex job) involves both experienced and published interviewers and beginners. We can confidently rely on the knowledge and interviewing skills of Gavin Lambert on Cukor, Albert Johnson on Wellman and Leroy, Charles Higham on Garmes, Peter Bogdanovich on Dwan, Walsh, and McCarey, or Kevin Brownlow. But only later will we be able to assess the 30 other projects now underway. It must also be remembered that although oral histories serve to preserve the memories and opinions of important industry figures, they are only the beginning of scholarly work, and certainly do not constitute film history in themselves. There is a tendency to think of tape-recording as fulfilling the duties of a scholar; but the tapes only provide a partial basis for the difficult process of sorting out truths, exaggerations, falsehoods; for seeing through the opacities of events and films to what actually happened and what it meant. If the oral history program results only in tapes, and not in the writing of history, it will be a failure.

Partial support was given to *Filmfacts* magazine, and various bulletins were published, plus a guide to college film courses.

For the rest, no scholarly or research publications have been issued by the AFI itself. A series of transcribed guest discussions is now planned; but judging from the first, with Fellini, these will be pleasant conversations but hardly significant contributions to film thought. (The Fellini booklet has the attraction of being modestly printed, though apparently its cost was far from modest.)

If we assume that AFI policy should be directed toward furthering the highest levels of research and scholarship in film, it is clear that a drastic reordering and rethinking is required. AFI has spent something like $450,000 in the "publications and research" area. Aside from the above-noted items, this has bought some extraordinarily expensive rumination about the problems of putting out a general film magazine that would appeal to everybody, which is now acknowledged to be impossible (as those of us already active in the field have always maintained). As Kay Loveland notes, "It is hard to believe that this much money has been spent with so little result"; and those of us who work in more rigorously administered organizations can hardly help concluding that a great deal of extravagance and carelessness have been involved. While it seems that no actual malfeasance has occurred, the AFI has evidently been run by the loose standards usual in the big-money world of foundation grants, where "image," plentiful assistants, and insulation from accountability are the rule, and count for more than mere humdrum work. $450,000 is a modest number in this world, but consider what it might have bought (after deducting 10% for overhead and administration): it is enough to provide royalty advances (part of which could have been regained and recycled to further projects) of $5,000 for 40 books plus $10,000 for 20 more; or enough to subsidize the entire printing costs of about 50 film books; or enough to pay the deficits of all America's film magazines for a least a decade; or enough to commission, edit, print and distribute gratis some 135 modestly printed scholarly monographs of perhaps 100 pages each.

Further developments in this area could obviously become very complex, but for a beginning we could recommend that, in an AFI from which the Center has been spun off:

A program of grants and royalty-advance funding should be established to aid researchers who cannot secure regular commercial royalty advances for their projects. One special area where heavy commitments of time and energy are involved is history; attention should be given not to committee-style work in history, but to backing ma-

ture scholars capable of undertaking large-scale synthetic histories, both of American film and film worldwide. Scholars and critics should be encouraged to utilize the oral history materials for what they are: raw materials toward the writing of analytic and historical works.

AFI should itself publish some special-interest works of too limited an audience to interest regular publishers, whether these are by AFI-supported writers or not. (The decision to publish should always be a separate decision from research-grant decisions.) Some examples of useful materials which cannot at present find a market are: short monographs—longer than articles, shorter than books; certain types of scripts; studies of organizational problems in the film field.

AFI should continue and expand the AFI Reports publication so that it becomes a truly national newsletter, not merely about AFI activities, but about all film events of more than purely commercial or routine interest. It should be very rapid in its publication schedule and modest in appearance, rather on the lines of two worthy predecessors, *Canyon Cinema News* and *New Canadian Film.* This is particularly important because of its great usefulness in building a national membership organization. Such a publication, if modestly staffed (one person) and aggressively edited, would be virtually self-sustaining.

A research and reference service should be maintained in connection with the National Film Catalog; for practical reasons, such as the great concentration of archive and library resources (and writers) there, a reference officer should probably be located in New York, although the Library of Congress makes Washington a possibility. This service should, like its excellent counterpart at the British Film Institute, assist scholars and critics doing research, film-makers and industry people needing information, and AFI staff who need assistance.

EDUCATION

The research staff at the Center assisted the education staff (based in the East) by various kinds of consultation and advice. In an AFI from which the Center has been spun off, the education department should be responsible for its own research work.

There are two levels on which "education" is a proper function of AFI. The most crucial is assisting the development of the widespread ferment of screenings, discussions, publications, and beginning film-making which must exist as the compost from which major artists and films will hopefully grow. Work on this level, as carried out by the regional offices, should be democratic in the best sense, taking no account of official qualifications or social distinctions: it would be excessive to expect that a juvenile delinquent, deserter, and general no-good like the young François Truffaut would be appointed a Fellow but we must demand that he would be admitted to screenings and discussions like anybody else—just as he was, in fact, at the Cinémathèque and at the cinéclubs around the Latin Quarter in Paris.

The other level is assistance to formalized education, which practically speaking means chiefly high schools, since colleges tend to be jealous of their prerogatives. British film teachers on both secondary and college levels (aided by their own association and now the BFI) have been exploring this area for many years; our problem is to recapitulate their experience as quickly as possible, and to push ahead with our own. AFI has worked hard to bring us up to date: holding seminars for teachers, providing guidance, teaching suggestions, reassurance, and information. In general, this program went forward well, and laid the foundation for regional groups of teachers who are now, with the cutback in AFI funds, contemplating formation of their own national organization—surely a useful development, for which AFI should provide seed money. (The educators also propose to elect an AFI Trustee from their membership, and this would provide a bit of leavening to the co-optation process by which the Board members are now selected.)

As in the research area, we can here only suggest a few basic aims for the education department, which should be funded as a major AFI effort:

Experimentation with teaching methods, as was done in the "model curricula sites" program, should be resumed, and their results published.

A quarterly journal written by and published for film teachers should be established, along the lines of the British SCREEN.

Regional and national seminars should be held periodically for the exchange of ideas, until such time as these can be replaced by conventions of the national teachers association.

Education officers in the regional AFI offices should hold meetings, seminars, showings, and other events useful in developing film education in their areas.

CONTROL AND ADMINISTRATION

The Board of Trustees which controls AFI evolved through a series of committees appointed by the federal Arts Council; key people in the early stages were Gregory Peck, William Pereira (a former art director and now architect), George Stevens, Sr., and an actress named Elizabeth Ashley. In due course George Stevens, Jr. became involved; the Stanford Research Institute was hired to produce a report on what a film institute ought to do; and by the time the actual first Board was constituted, basic policy was set. Thereafter the Board has been a self-perpetuating body (its members pick their own successors, on a staggered schedule). It is a heavily Establishment board, with a token independent film-maker or two. But since this is an Establishment-run society, there is perhaps nothing to object to about this *if* the board delivers the goods. Two kinds of "goods" are required, before we can conclude that the board is doing its job: money and aggressive policy-making.

The money question will be resolved, one way or the other, shortly after this issue of *FQ* appears. Funds for the next fiscal year are being sought from the National Endowment for the Arts and from private sources (mostly in the industry); some Ford Foundation funding will carry over. In future, *Board members should be expected to actively support fund-raising work.*

As far as policy goes, the Board's central mistake has been to ignore the distribution area—and the potential for nationwide involvement and support which lay in regional offices and regional theaters. A "commission" to study distribution problems is now being proposed by Stevens; but this seems too little, and it is unquestionably too late. Parallel to this fundamental distortion of policy are the developments associated with the Center: if the education, research, information, and publications programs should look outward, involving themselves with film people everywhere, the Center looks inward, spending very large sums that touch only a handful of people.

Since the Board controls the balance of AFI outlays, it is the Board's responsibility to lay down firm program outlines for Stevens and the staff. The Board, however, is a large and unwieldy body; it meets rarely. Real responsibility rests with its executive committee: Gregory Peck, Arnold Picker of United Artists, Arthur Penn, Jack Valenti of the MPAA, John Culkin, David Mallery, and John Schneider of CBS. It is to these men, along with Stevens himself, that responsibility for AFI's performance falls.

Part of the problem in the administration of AFI, and therefore in evaluating its performance in different areas, lies in the amorphousness of the organization. As far as I can tell, everything of any importance (plus a great deal which is not) is decided by Stevens personally; there are not even really any official "departments," though people have been sometimes appointed "managers"; outlays of money have remained tightly in Steven's hands. During the financial crisis of the past year or so, a great deal of budgetary reshuffling seems to have taken place, with the over-all result being a relative transfer of resources so that the Center has prospered and the other aspects of AFI work have shrunk. It seems to me that the Board's responsibility could be fulfilled thus:

The Board should establish plain and explicit policies in the various areas of AFI operation (after spinning off the Center as a separate organization). *Each major area should have a fixed and public yearly budget,* and it should be administered as a Department, with a manager who meets occasionally with trustees to discuss the Department's problems and needs. The Board should also employ a comptroller to supervise budgets and expenditures, and the general outlines of AFI expenses should be routinely publicized to maintain public confidence.

Many charges have been made by fired staff members and their supporters concerning financial waste and general mismanagement by Stevens and his associates. Kay Loveland, Stevens's former administrative assistant, has written that "Not all these administrative expenditures taken individually are unnecessary, but as a whole they add up to a life style more appropriate to a successful profit-making movie studio than to a struggling young non-profit organization. So often needless expenditures were made because the lack of a guiding vision resulted in too much money being spent in too few areas." She also charges that "Throughout AFI's existence, staff morale has been very low and employees have remained almost continually frustrated and dismayed at management policies and practices, both toward individuals and departmental programs. Confronted with gross salary inequities (the AFI Director made $75,000 [cut to $60,000 in the crisis], the education manager $13,000), negligible fringe benefits (in California employees were not protected by unemployment and disability insurance for almost two years), and management's failure to develop clear and fair

employment and severance policies, staff have felt used and dispensable."

Devotion to a good cause does not excuse an organization from its obligation to provide rational personnel policies, and both the recent uproar and earlier staff grumbling indicate that *the Board should require management to develop explicit procedures and standards in the personnel area.* The staff should also realize that, despite their professional status in many instances, they also play the role of employees, and need some kind of organization through which they can represent their interests to management.

It was characteristic of the process by which such organizations as AFI are formed that Colin Young, who had led the discussions that first mobilized sentiment on behalf of a film institute, and who had more ideas about what such an institute should do than anybody else around, was not invited to sit on the Board of Trustees. When I asked Stevens why, among all the people who had done scholarly, critical, or university-level film teaching in this country, only Arthur Knight (who has excellent high-level industry connections) was on the Board, Stevens allowed that he just couldn't understand how such an oversight had occurred. Knight has of course been an extremely valuable member of the Board; but the persistent exclusion of all others who have done serious intellectual work in the American film world is perhaps the major "symbolic" reason why AFI so lacks friends among those people who loved film before it came to the attention of the big foundations; and it goes far to explain certain biases of AFI operations. *The Board should include several additional members who have done original and important thinking about film as an art (historians, teachers, critics) and can help redress the balance that has tipped so far in the direction of production.* This indeed seems to me the most crucial recommendation that can be made; without such a move, support for AFI will continue to erode almost everywhere outside the walls of Greystone.

As far as I can tell, very few people in the film world want the American Film Institute to die. Too many high hopes have been attached to it for anyone to write it off easily; and it has accomplished its tasks of archive and film-maker support with distinction. Its potential for helping to develop a national film culture is large. However, many people are troubled by what seems to them an imbalance in AFI priorities, and by the signs of internal personnel difficulties. What is needed, therefore, if AFI is to successfully regroup after its present financial crisis and go forward into a second phase of existence, is a wholesale reexamination and reordering of AFI priorities. If a new consensus can be achieved on what AFI ought to be doing, this could serve as the basis for a genuine constituency that could help AFI survive in the long run—both through direct membership support and through political pressure aimed at fuller government support, which is the source of money for all other film institutes in the world. (The BFI gets some $1,800,000 yearly, and BFI income from publications, admissions, etc. is almost as great; the BFI, however, also operates the national archive, which here is a responsibility of the Library of Congress.) If the Center can be spun off and AFI policies turned around, AFI will only have begun to fight on behalf of the art. If that cannot be accomplished, the struggle is already over, and we can begin preparing inscriptions to be engraved somewhere at Greystone.

Reviews

THE CONFESSION

Director: Costa-Gavras. Script: Jorge Semprun, based on the book by Lise and Artur London. Photography; Raoul Coutard.

Melodrama is usually a grossly inadequate form for treating political subjects. It renders historical experience subjectively; it makes a few individual consciousnesses the sole perceivers and final judges of events. Social circumstances which a single consciousness could barely encompass generally escape melodrama's scope; so that historical movements, the detailing of which is indispensible to a full understanding of history and of personal experience, are dealt with scantily if at all.

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What melodrama retains are the self-concerns of single minds; the structure of the narrative follows from this. The opening suspense sequences of *The Confession* are good examples of melodramatic structuring of political material. Director Costa-Gavras uses the film frame to isolate the hero from his surroundings, then to bring the secret police pursuing him into prominence. When the hero goes to visit his old comrades from the International Brigade and warn them, the camera goes for one man's face, then another. The frame isolates objects, faces, and figures of direct personal concern to the hero. It stresses those things which threaten him, which affect him sentimentally (a photo from the Spanish Civil War, a boy running through a park), which relate to him as an individual perceiving consciousness. The frame emphasizes these personal percepts by excluding all physical context, except that which relates them directly to their perceiver—the rear-view mirror of a car, a window-frame. *The Confession* adopts the dominant trend of melodrama by centering on a privileged consciousness—a hero whose high social position makes him more sensitive, more detached from his surroundings, more articulate therefore about his experience, and generally a better subject for a dramatic mode which has to describe social situations *through* the mind of its protagonist.

The body of the film follows the breaking of a Czech government official and Communist Party member in 1952. Acting on Stalin's paranoia, the Czech secret police and their Soviet Advisers force Artur London (Yves Montand) into confessing a treason he never committed. As the day-by-day narrative proceeds, it describes more and more events from the hero's perspective; when he's blindfolded and taken to prison the camera goes in tight on his head and refuses to show the passing streets he cannot see; when he is locked in his cell, the camera invariably stays with him, never showing him from a guard's perspective. He is present at every moment of the film, and no event is shown which he does not experience.

THE CONFESSION

Up to halfway through, the film describes a haywire police machine from the point of view of an individual caught within it. Then the script-writer, Jorge Semprun (also the scenarist of *La Guerre est finie*), cuts to the year 1968, finding the hero seated on a terrace over the Riviera, slightly aged but otherwise undamaged, talking with a bourgeois intellectual and a member of the French CP (an organization Daniel Cohn-Bendit aptly termed "a bunch of Stalinist creeps.") The function of this flash-forward is to take the audience's concern away from the melodramatic question, will the hero survive his torture, and place its concern more firmly on the film's central subject: the hero's relation to his party. Stalin overshadows the Czech CP; his anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and general anticommunist paranoia has made the Party's centralism undemocratic. Yet the hero remains loyal to the idea of a communist party through the grueling spectacle of historical truth being replaced with the lies most comfortable for Stalin's insanity.

Beyond this, the flash-forward gives Semprun the means to include some awkward historical commentary, and this at a point where the movie could have turned to pure melodrama, dealing only with the plight of this individual. London on the Riviera talks about the historical circumstances of his trial and later rehabilitation; he makes somewhat clearer the relationship between Stalin, the Russian CP,

the Czech Party, and his own situation. Both the functions of this flash-forward are laudably antimelodramatic; they move away from an exclusively private rendering of experience and toward a dealing with the relations between persons and social forces, relations which shape social history.

Even Semprun's treatment of memory, a topic central to the most subjective fiction, helps describe the social relationships and objective historical experience behind London's true story. In the middle of interrogations, London begins to remember images from the Spanish Civil War, from Party conferences, from talks with other Party friends. These clipped scenes begin to build a structure: the structure of the hero's relations to his Party. Unfortunately there is very little memory-material and the structure is sparsely elaborated, leaving the hero's final statements of allegiance to the central Party rather surprising.

Here we arrive at a flaw in the film, at least for American audiences unfamiliar with European history and socialism. *The Confession* attacks Stalinism: excellent. In this attack it avoids anticommunism by letting the hero state truly communist ideals and act like an ideal communist: better yet. But it shows only sentimental reasons—a few photographs, a few friendships—for his adherence to communism. In the absence of more concrete social reasons for his beliefs, the film becomes a spectacle: the spectacle of Stalinists torturing an upright man to the point where he tells lies in public. Audiences "informed" by the bourgeois press will fit this spectacle into an anticommunist world-view, missing the point that the hero they admire makes the film not anticommunist but anti-Stalinist and, indeed, procommunist.

Which is an aspect of the film's larger problem: the relation of London's historical experience to the historical situation and the audience-consciousness of the present time. Stalin is long dead, yet Stalin's Russian imperialism continues to shackle progressive socialism in Eastern Europe; the film, in the rare instances when it assigns specific blame, places it on Stalin, which does not help us understand the contemporary Stalinism with which the film ends. At the end the hero returns to Prague to get his story published; the same day he arrives, the Russians invade and replace Czechoslovakia's progressive government with a Moscow-ruled one. The film cuts freeze-frames of London against documentary footage of Czechs attacking Russian tanks and rioting in the streets. Rather than situating London within the riots, this cutting gives him the detachment of a viewer. What is his relationship to the anti-Stalinist demonstrations? What is the relationship of his personal story and his Party allegiance to the political events of now? What are progressives supposed to do with this anti-Stalin lesson?—MIKE PROKOSCH.

GIMME SHELTER

Directed by David Maysles, Albert Maysles, Charlotte Zwerin. Cinema V.

The short history of rock 'n' roll festivals is circumscribed by three singular events: the Monterey Festival, the Lake Bethel Festival, and a day-long concert at the Altamont Speedway. Each event's claim to singularity is by this time a matter of commonly received opinion: as our commentators have it, Monterey marked the apotheosis of the San Francisco-based flower culture, the Bethel concert (Woodstock) was the great coming together for, in its advertisement's words, three days of Love, Peace and Music, and Altamont the death of flower-power, the death of Love, the death of Rock, depending on whom you read. How each of these affairs became elevated to the status of a major event, dwarfing even Newport in its heyday, is a question of some interest, especially since both the monied press and the so-called underground press (that press, you will remember, which grew up in opposition to the established press) subscribe to and share an interest in essentially the same apprehension of all three experiences. The difference between the *Life* magazine extra on Woodstock and

the Czech Party, and his own situation. Both the functions of this flash-forward are laudably antimelodramatic; they move away from an exclusively private rendering of experience and toward a dealing with the relations between persons and social forces, relations which shape social history.

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Rolling Stone's Woodstock issue confines itself to details of taste and description; the broad interpretative outlines are the same, though *Rolling Stone's* hosannas are perhaps a bit more shrill and self-promoting. This confluence of such ostensibly antagonistic perspectives extends to the Altamont concert; from *Newsweek* to the *Berkeley Tribe*, Altamont, in the *Tribe's* words, ". . . like the massacre at Song My, exploded the myth of innocence."

Both the festival at Altamont and the one at Bethel are events identified as places, or, as those not yet embarrassed about the whole charade will tell you, states of mind. The interrelationship between the two events is so directly drawn by so many people that one can't help but nurture some suspicions. The formal integrity seems extravagant—Woodstock's tacky dreams shimmer a little too loudly, while Altamont's function as some sociological reality principle is dramatically too neat. It seems like we've been treated to some show in which one character has been introduced only to be demolished by another's appearance, both acts completed to concerted applause.

After all, what distance could possibly separate two occasions whose circumstances are so similar? In each, hip producers intent on fantastic publicity hurriedly chose an inadequate location, threw up a scaffold, and invited hundreds of thousands of white middle-class kids to enjoy themselves. At Woodstock, the performers received exorbitant salaries, for which the multitude was to pay, but the promoters' hasty greed overstepped the bounds of efficiency, with the result that the fences weren't up at showtime and the music became "free." Altamont's stars—the Stones, the Dead, the Airplane, *et al.*—performed free, but the Stones' generosity at least was clearly predicated on the bad publicity garnered by their tour's seven-dollar-a-seat demands. Comparing the footage of Altamont in *Gimme Shelter* with that of Bethel in Michael Wadleigh's *Woodstock*, it's hard to see any difference in the crowd's composition or their activities; the former looks like any other mass concert to me, and it's photographed like Woodstock or Monterey for that matter: idyllic scenes with babies or dogs, shots of breasty women, exotic clothing, close-ups of people getting high, a freak-out, a few nude scenes, some unashamed embraces, more drugs, more exotic clothing, another breast, etc. But then there's the Angels,

GIMME SHELTER: MICK JAGGER

some clubbings, and the death of Meredith Hunter.

Woodstock would hardly seem to deserve its luminous aura. There were beatings; hundreds took bad acid; at one point at least 75,000 people screamed "Jump" to some kid on top of a 300-foot scaffolding; all "natural for a city of 400,000," said the papers. There were deaths at Woodstock also, three of them, but along with two births they were attributed to the "life cycle." A boy without a place to sleep lay down in unknown fields and was run over the next morning by a tractor. Now no camera crew was present then, or when a girl died of a burst appendix before receiving medical attention, just as no photographer recorded the deaths of Mark Feiger and Richard Savlov, two kids killed at Altamont when a driver trying to find the freeway slammed his car into their campsite. No one saw some guy fall into an unlit, unfenced irrigation ditch near the Speedway either; he drowned. And of course for none of these fatalities was there upbeat musical accompaniment, nor were they the subject of Mick Jagger's attentions.

I hope all of this isn't mawkish, but the point is simply that institutional negligence (under which I would classify the callous transgressions of promoters like Michael Lang or Melvin Belli) does not make good copy or flashy movies. When thirty-eight miners suffocate in a mineshaft which doesn't even meet the government's lax specifications, that "tragedy" is accorded the treatment the press gives to earthquakes and other natural disasters, but New York film-makers aren't about to fly down to Kentucky or wherever and compose a film around it. Instead it's the front page one day, then the last bodies are dug up the next day on page seven, and two days later finds a press release on the official enquiry at the bottom of forty-two.

No, when the world goes wrong and we demand that someone pay for it, when *Life* needs a demon for our collective exorcism, we and *Life* look to the powerless (or occasionally to those that have fallen from power, reading that economic demise as testament to some moral failing). Denying one of the central facts of our social life, namely that the most chilling barbarities are fomented in committee, we isolate villains who cooperatively identify themselves by being members of the economic periphery in the first place (non-whites, "criminals," "drug addicts," the "insane," etc.). By assigning responsibility for our own uneasiness to individuals rather than to structures we reassure ourselves that the world has a human face, that if we only could root out the bad guys, vote in our own people (elect a new president), the harmony of our situation could be restored, life would attain once again its manageable shape.

Hence everybody loves murders; they have real human villians, and the good ones have "helpless" victims (women, children, old people), or at least valorous ones (police, prisoners of war). Unsafe assembly lines, malconstructed bleachers, badly made cars can claim lives every day, though we'll hear little about it; but let some psychopath carve up a group of nurses, or someone shoot a cop over in Brighton, and we'll never hear the end of it. Journalism consists in the substitution of an event's dramatic elements for the event itself; newspapers and magazines are drama by other means. Let me entertain you.

Gimme Shelter was directed by Charlotte Zwerin and the Maysles brothers, Albert and David; these last have been two of the most important film-makers to come out of the direct cinema movement. The direct cinematographer is a special kind of film journalist who, rather than creating (or reconstructing) events, attempts to situate himself in the midst of them. Though he cannot transcend his subjective viewpoint, his object is ostensibly an *objet trouvé*, a "real life drama," and the structure of his film is to be determined by the nature of that object in action. Thus Albert says of *Gimme Shelter* that "we structured around what actually turned out to happen"; "what comes out of it is a surprise to us as well."

But *Gimme Shelter,* unlike their earlier *Salesman,* is elaborately contrived, intercutting no less than six numbers (one by Tina Turner) from the Stones' Madison Square Garden concert with short tour episodes, preparations made by Melvin Belli and others for the Altamont concert, two press conferences, the aforementioned crowd scenes, and five numbers from Altamont (one each by the Flying Burrito Brothers and the Jefferson Airplane). We close, to the tune of "Gimme Shelter," with an insipidly lyrical exodus into the rising sun by the Altamont hordes.

Given their direct cinema background the Maysles were undoubtedly uncomfortable with such disjunct segments; there they were with gobs of stage performance footage, an exclusive on Meredith Hunter's murder, and no way to integrate the two. Then someone hit on the bright idea of showing the footage to the Stones, of filming their responses to themselves, to Tina Turner, to the Altamont arrangements, and of course to the stabbing itself. Throughout *Gimme Shelter* the Maysles cut from a filmed event to a shot of that same film running through a viewer, and then cut to one of the Stones' vacant faces—a vacancy, you understand, which is supposed to read as shock, or grief, or incomprehension. When Jagger finally sees the murder footage, the big moment has all the spontaneity and excitement of that astronaut's first words from the moon; stagily concerned, Jagger mumbles, "Can you roll back on that, David."

The device serves two functions. First, it gives *Shelter* an intellectual gloss: Mick or Keith's contemplation suggests the burden of self-consciousness, a filmed discourse on the relation of self to representation, etc., etc. Naturally this is all glitter; what such a schema really does here is allow the film-makers to cut another slambang rock 'n' roll number in every four or five minutes without risking a stylistic break. That way the sequences of Melvin Belli negotiating for the Stones, virtually the only explanations tendered in the entime film concerning who is responsible for what, are not permitted to drag on at "unnecessary" length, a few shots of Belli in his perposterous office deemed sufficient to reveal all, and then again, it's the Angels who are the pigs, right? But most importantly, the device is real Teen Scene stuff: given the Indochinese War, racism, a murder, or some other tragedy, the big question in all the fans' minds, becomes: How do the Stones react to all this?

Well, not very interestingly, but then what's interesting about the footage in the first place? You learn that Richard identifies with Jagger, that both of them have seen the Beatles' movies and aspire to their brand of self-conscious humor. You see the Stones at work and at play. On stage and off, but the latter sequences are brief, unrevealing, and have sound-overs to help them go down easier. You get two new Stones' songs, one called "Wild Horses," with lines like "Wild horses couldn't drag me away/ Wild horses, we'll ride them someday," and the other a derivative "Brown Sugar." And you get lots of live performances, but frankly the cloying, infatuated photography renders even these tedious after three or four songs; the Maysles seemed to have realized this, and *Shelter's* nadir comes when they try to jazz up their presentation of "Love in Vain" with rapturous slow-motion and fancy opticals (an idea handled infinitely better, by the way, in Peter Whitehead's *Tonight Let's All Make Love in London).*

Its practitioners have always claimed that direct cinema's presentation of experience remains faithful to the complexity of experience itself. That faithfulness derives, so the argument runs, from an "innocent" approach to the world, an attempt to capture involuntarily and without predisposition the nature of a chosen subject. Albert denies that he is guilty of any "contrived attempt to take the talent of the Stones and then structure events or a movie around it in some kind of fake way. The life of the tour, which is what the film represents, is a natural happening . . . [the film] raises a lot of questions about what Amer-

ica is all about, but in a way that's not a lecture or anything of that sort."

What's most refreshing about the Maysles' naivete is its sustained self-serving obtuseness. Of course Altamont was a complex event, and it is charitable of the Maysles to help us deal with that complexity by ignoring a number of its main actors, the better to appreciate the intricacies of the remainder, I'm sure. But once you've excised John Jaymes of Young American Enterprises, Sam Cutler, the Dead with their bright ideas, once you've reduced Belli to a harmless comic figure, and the Stones to unwitting spectators of their own spectacle, who's left but the Angels, and what's left but another melodrama, one in which beefy Alfred Jarrys play the villains, and everyone else the innocents? A self-defined outlaw gang, but not the kind of outlaws that sign million-dollar contracts, the Angels are denied appeal. Though Grace Slick says, "People get weird and we need the Angels to keep people in line"; though a member of the Dead says, "Beating on musicians? Doesn't seem right"; though the Stones and their entourage hired the Angels as guards because they were cheap and because they added a little genuine street-fighting class, no tribunal will acquit the Angels on the grounds that they were just following orders (the man charged with Hunter's death *was* acquitted, but for other reasons).

Like the Altamont myth on which it feeds, *Gimme Shelter* is the product of slick, tabloid sensibilities, which is not to say that the filmmakers may not be sincere. But what remonstrance is possible to someone capable of saying, as Albert did, that "I think we would have been disappointed if everything had stopped just at Madison Square Garden." If not for the Angels, and if not for Meredith Hunter, described to me by David Maysles as being dressed in a "nigger zoot suit, straight out of the nineteen-fifties, you wouldn't believe him if you saw him in a fiction film," the Maysles would have had just another promotional film on their hands. But above all credit is due the American press, without whom the entire shadow-play would not have been possible.—JOEL HAYCOCK.

WHERE'S POPPA?

Director: Carl Reiner. Produced by Jerry Tokofsky and Marvin Worth. Script: Robert Klane, from his novel. Photography: Jack Priestly. Music: Jack Elliot.

During the first surgery scene in *M*A*S*H,* the woman sitting behind me began to squeal and gasp, and her beer-bellied husband (or boyfriend) turned to try and comfort her: "It's all right. See, it's a black comedy." She seemed to relax, accepting his explanation. With the concept of "black comedy" so comfortably absorbed into the idiom of the mass audience, it is not difficult to understand the emergence of a bold new style in American film comedy, popularized by *M*A*S*H* and more perfectly achieved in Carl Reiner's *Where's Poppa?* Screwball comedies in the past (for example, *Nothing Sacred* or *His Girl Friday)* have sometimes touched on morbid and grotesque and disturbing social realities; but the new screwball black comedies are more extreme in their mixture of moods, more anxious to offend us, brazenly forcing laughs from graphic scenes of violence and degradation. The anarchic spirit traditionally embodied by screwball comedy is fiercer, more unstable than ever before in American movies, and that too must be a sign of the times.

Some of the key cinematic moments in this new comedy of cruelty and humiliation are those bloody surgery scenes in *M*A*S*H,* with the doctors cracking sex jokes as they saw legs and try to stop the spurting of a punctured artery; the wild car chase and shootout in *Cotton Comes to Harlem,* with comedy and violence running together unpredictably—a pickpocket in the ghetto stops to cut a hole in a woman's skirt and pulls her wallet from her garter, then a moment later is splattered and blown sky high by a speeding armored car; the surgery-castration scene at the start of *Myra Breckinridge,* John Carri-

ica is all about, but in a way that's not a lecture or anything of that sort."

What's most refreshing about the Maysles' naivete is its sustained self-serving obtuseness. Of course Altamont was a complex event, and it is charitable of the Maysles to help us deal with that complexity by ignoring a number of its main actors, the better to appreciate the intricacies of the remainder, I'm sure. But once you've excised John Jaymes of Young American Enterprises, Sam Cutler, the Dead with their bright ideas, once you've reduced Belli to a harmless comic figure, and the Stones to unwitting spectators of their own spectacle, who's left but the Angels, and what's left but another melodrama, one in which beefy Alfred Jarrys play the villains, and everyone else the innocents? A self-defined outlaw gang, but not the kind of outlaws that sign million-dollar contracts, the Angels are denied appeal. Though Grace Slick says, "People get weird and we need the Angels to keep people in line"; though a member of the Dead says, "Beating on musicians? Doesn't seem right"; though the Stones and their entourage hired the Angels as guards because they were cheap and because they added a little genuine street-fighting class, no tribunal will acquit the Angels on the grounds that they were just following orders (the man charged with Hunter's death *was* acquitted, but for other reasons).

Like the Altamont myth on which it feeds, *Gimme Shelter* is the product of slick, tabloid sensibilities, which is not to say that the filmmakers may not be sincere. But what remonstrance is possible to someone capable of saying, as Albert did, that "I think we would have been disappointed if everything had stopped just at Madison Square Garden." If not for the Angels, and if not for Meredith Hunter, described to me by David Maysles as being dressed in a "nigger zoot suit, straight out of the nineteen-fifties, you wouldn't believe him if you saw him in a fiction film," the Maysles would have had just another promotional film on their hands. But above all credit is due the American press, without whom the entire shadow-play would not have been possible.—JOEL HAYCOCK.

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dine brandishing his scalpel enthusiastically as Rex Reed sings "I've Got a Secret Place" and looks squeamishly toward his crotch; and almost all of *Where's Poppa,* for example the scene in Gus and Grace's Old Home, with the poor helpless, senile old folks being herded into the moldy diningroom for the brutish proprietor's special homemade lunch. These films are not made with "good taste," but at their best moments they are abrasive and hilarious. These films may appear to be satiric, but it is hard to know exactly what they are satirizing; they certainly contain little original social criticism. Their most pointed barbs are fired directly at *us.* The sick jokes may not always have an obvious target, but they ruthlessly mock the sensitivities of the audience. What is most astonishing about them is simply the ease with which they draw laughs from subjects like war, mutilation, poverty, senility, and the neglect of the aged; the triumph is, first and most important, a triumph of style, a successful attempt to appropriate real anguish and horror to a highly *imaginative,* often surrealistic comic vision.

Carl Reiner, it must be remembered, first came to public attention as a television writer in the fifties, and although *Where's Poppa?* is shocking and highly contemporary, it also seems slightly nostalgic; it is the most perfect film approximation of fifties-style sick humor, one demented sign of life during those somnolent Eisenhower years. *Where's Poppa?* concerns a middle-aged man's relationship with his aged, senile mother. The opening establishes the mood: Gordon wakes up to a radio barrage of bad news, music, disc jockey baby-talk—only slightly more bizarre than the incoherent babble on our own clock radio—that *should* drive anyone insane; but Gordon gets up, shaves and showers, then casually, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, puts on a gorilla suit and goes into his mother's room to scare her to death. Throughout the film Reiner uses the same basic technique, to devastating effect. By heightening and exaggerating the madness of ordinary life that is usually a little too subtle to catch, and simultaneously underplaying and humanizing the characters' desperate, outrageous responses to the intolerability of their predicament, the film disorients us; the effect is of a weird, distorted X-ray photograph, with the taboo wishes of unconscious life in clear focus, and more banal "reality" obscured and obliterated. The movie has been attacked by the guardians of morality as infantile and dirty, and it does take a liberating childlike relish in exposing the obscene truth of our fantasy lives without defenses, without apologies.

What makes the film unsettling is not its cruel mockery of old age and senility but its assault on our belief in reason and compassion as the basis of a civilized life. To Gordon's awful problem of surviving while he has his senile mother on his hands, the only solutions that seem at all viable are extreme and insane fantasy solutions—scaring her to death, throwing her out the window, imagining that she has shrunk to the point where she could be eaten by a dog. In dealing with the minor characters, Reiner uses similarly grotesque hyperbole to point up the inadequacy of the liberal-humanist complacency that traps us into accepting what should appall us. When Gordon's brother Sid tries to leave his apartment, and his wife blocks the door, screaming about her neglected social life, Sid knows better than to attempt a reasonable discussion; instead, he begins strangling his son—quite in earnest—until his wife has let him out the door. Or to take another example, the young hippie whom Gordon is defending in court on a charge of attacking an army officer tells the judge that he wanted to protest the army and the war in Vietnam, and that is why he cut off the big toe of a jingoistic colonel he found sunbathing on the beach. These solutions may not be sensible, but neither are the problems; some problems *defy* a rational, "decent" solution.

Although *Where's Poppa?* is modest and limited in scope, in scenes like these it economically implies an entire world gone mad.

The brief excerpts from radio and television that run in the background of other scenes—news reports, a panel discussion of pornography, rock music—often serve as absurd counterpoint to the action, almost subliminally underscoring the insane incongruities at the edges of our everyday lives. The two courtroom scenes—the second of which we hear only in fragments, a crazy accompaniment to the hero's hallucinations about his girlfriend and his mother—impressively allude to the pressures of the larger social and political world that intrude only occasionally on the private dilemmas of people like Gordon, but undeniably contribute to his disorientation. The monologue of Barnard Hughes as the quietly fanatical army colonel in the first of these scenes is masterful; the casual, cheerful, undramatic way in which he describes his murder of "gooks" ("I blew their fuckin' heads off," he reports placidly), and the bodies' curious death spasms, may be the definitive film portrait of the banality of evil. With this kind of confession part of the "normal" progress of contemporary American life, one can be forgiven for freaking out, going to the opposite extreme, and embracing everything society considers "abnormal." In this Feiffer-like urban nightmare world, where a cabbie would sooner stop for a gorilla than for a Negro woman, traditional moral values seem pathetically irrelevant. How can we judge Gordon harshly for trying to murder his mother? At least his responses have a measure of honest outrage and disgust.

In spite of its apprehension of the extreme pain of life all around us, the film is rarely painful to watch. In exaggerating and abstracting grim social and personal problems, the film highlights their essential horror, but it also provides the aesthetic distance that enables us to laugh at things more tragic than comic. The film has a kind of purity, a consistently sustained fantasy level, a beautiful screwball style that is all the more impressive for being perched so perilously close to terror and despair. (Anyone who wonders about Reiner's contribution to the film should read the Robert Klane novel on which it is based—Klane is also credited with the screenplay—to see how Reiner has lightened the material without compromising it.)

There are some inevitable psychological distortions. We may have trouble accepting the fact that Gordon has stayed with his mother for so long considering how thoroughly he hates her. Maybe the film wanted to suggest a Portnovian ambivalence in Gordon's relationship with momma, but most of the incestuous longings are imparted to mother (as in the highly publicized scene when she pulls down Gordon's pants and kisses his "tush" in order to scare off his girlfriend). Any residual sexual feelings or even simple guilt feelings on *Gordon's* part are overlooked. Only a few moments suggest more tension, for example when Gordon tries to tell his brother that he intends to put their mother in a "h-h-h-home," but cannot quite utter the forbidden word; otherwise the film seems evasive on this score. But I'm not sure the comedy would work if the film were more psychologically astute and Gordon's responses were more tortured. Similarly, Ruth Gordon plays the mother as such an eccentric loonybird that we have trouble connecting her with real senile parents or grandparents from our own experience (she also looks slightly too young and vigorous for the part); but again this was probably the only way to keep the film from falling into unwanted pathos. Miss Gordon may not be exactly believable, but she creates her character with so much rich, almost-Dickensian inventiveness that one would not *dare* evaluate her performance in naturalistic terms. She is completely unlike any old woman I have ever seen, but her characterization has a mad, unchallengeable logic all its own.

Malicious and perverse though it is, the film is also surprisingly gentle. Reiner's sympathies may at first seem slightly askew—he is concerned for the abused son, not the senile mother—but we feel the presence of a twisted sense of humanity throughout the film; and given the manic picture of modern life that

the film sketches, we feel grateful for even this small a gesture toward sanity and compassion. It somehow seems more than we have any right to expect. George Segal, in his finest screen performance, perfectly embodies extreme vulnerability, befuddlement, and helplessness, and he gives all the sick jokes a rather touching center. The film is on Gordon's side, on the side of aging children trying to free themselves from the tyrannical burden of parental responsibility; the film's values may be unconventional and incomplete, but at least *Where's Poppa?* knows what it does value, and this is what gives it its peculiar clarity. Gordon's growing rage against the sentimental lies that have made him a servant to his senile mother is a truly explosive sign of life; and the film as a whole exhibits the same spirit of rage against pieties that usually seem too intimidating to challenge. The simple shock value of a movie like *Where's Poppa?* should not be too quickly derided. Shock treatment is sometimes the only kind of therapy that works. None of these unstable screwball black comedies is comfortable to watch, but their cruel, obscene humor can be seen as a gesture of defiance against what is false and humiliating and oppressive in our lives.

And on the subject of obscenity, one final note on *Where's Poppa?:* It contains the wittiest, most pertinent and exuberant use of profane language since American movies began to acknowledge the existenec of four-letter words.

—STEPHEN FARBER

Short Notices

Dodeskaden takes place in the country of an old man's mind, and it is expectably eccentric. The country is, in fact, a dump-like slum in the outskirts of some ill-defined Japanese place; its inhabitants include a deranged youth who spends his days conducting an imaginary streetcar with meticulous attention to detail, a beggar and dreamer and his son, an honest artisan, a businessman with a horrible tic, a grey-faced man living out some inscrutable and to him unforgivable betrayal, two raucous young working couples who cheerfully exchange drinks, blows, and partners, and assorted others plus a chorus of local housewives who gather at the central water spigot. The slum extends to the nearby horizon; there is no outside world visible, and there are no outside people except restaurant employees the boy meets as he begs for leftover food. Like some demented parody of industrial civilization, the living quarters in the dump are constructed of every kind of rusty metal, salvaged scrap wood, plastic—a combination that, in the ripe colors Kurosawa has used, takes on a wierd and unsettling beauty. Although the locale is almost claustrophobically confined, Kurosawa uses a picaresque structure to build the film—making transitions from episode to episode by following one of the characters who then interacts with others in some other event. The episodes themselves tend to be tightly organized, rather allegorical, somewhat aphoristic; a single viewing does not suffice to sort them all out, but they appear to constitute some kind of spectrum of human failings, ranging from the relatively cheerful to the absolutely heartbreaking. As Donald Richie has remarked, the ensemble is a little like Saroyan; and it dangerously skirts a kind of simple-minded sentimentality. But, as Richie suggests, it is a relaxed and personal film, and Kurosawa is surely a director we can tolerate having a little fun. —E. C.

Mad Dogs and Englishmen. Advertised as an intimate, *cinéma-vérité* peek at a rock star, this is actually a 114-minute plug for Joe Cocker, a scraggly young English rock singer whose concerts have the clamor, fury, and maniacal joy of revival meetings. For 57 days last year, Cocker and company travelled around America on a fatiguing concert tour. Imaginatively titled Mad Dogs and Englishmen, this merry mob included several

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dozen musicians, singers, wives, girl friends, and one deadpan canine. Pierre Adidge, who is largely responsible for assembling this film, exhausts the arsenal of cinematic tricks (fast cutting, split-screen shenanigans, etc.), probably because rock film audiences have come to expect such excesses. The leisurely sequences about their off-stage life—the plane and bus rides, the bull sessions, the horseplay, the awkward chats with rapturous fans and mindless groupies—are strictly for Cockerophiles and rock cultists who care about how their heroes amuse themselves. Regrettably, Adidge's film reflects the shallow, fan-magazine approach to rock music. When Cocker is on stage, though, the film perks up considerably. Audiences writhe along with their idol, who thrusts himself into a song so mercilessly that his body quakes and lurches like one racked by palsy. He agonizes through a dozen or so numbers—several of them former Beatles' hits (he seems ready for a stretcher following his strenuous rendition of "With A Little Help From My Friends"). Stacked against the gems of the rock tour film genre—*A Hard Day's Night* and *Gimme Shelter*—this film is, incontestably, a pebble. It offers only Cocker, who is bland off stage, and Leon Russell, the surly musician who, since this film was shot, has ascended from Cocker's shadow to stardom. There is little footage of Cocker in conversation, and what there is certainly doesn't whet one's appetite for more. Following a short session of inept philosophizing, he blurts out a line that is a masterpiece of self-assessment: "If I hadn't been a singer, I probably would have murdered somebody." —DENNIS HUNT

My Girlfriend's Wedding, by Jim McBride, is a portrait film based on a pleasantly feckless conception: the film-maker's British girlfriend marries somebody else in order to foil the Immigration and remain in the country. The girl is well worth filming (though perhaps not quite at this length)—charming, nutty, sad; the story ends happily after an accelerated-motion camera trip across the continent. But aside from this rather trite coda, the impact of the film depends almost entirely on talk. And McBride, like many low-budget film-makers, won't recognize that it's crucial to spend what money and energy you have on getting a decent sound track, especially for 16mm projectors—in this day of gorgeous emulsions and fast lenses you *can* sometimes get away with letting the picture take care of itself, but badly recorded sound is just a damned drag. In this case, since McBride is filming his girlfriend in straight-on TV-interview style much of the time anyway, not using a lavalier seems simply perverse; and he could easily have used FM mikes for the rest. As it is, offhandedness has gotten out of hand, and ruined a nice film. —E. C.

Ramparts of Clay describes memorably the existence of a primitive Tunisian village, but it does not stop at documenting. The description is also meant to serve both as a political statement like Buñuel's *Land Without Bread* and as a Bressonian study of the human spirit. The most distinctive aspect of the three elements, however, is their incompatibility. The visual description is austere, dirgeful in pace, and the plot correspondingly simple: the village men hew rock salt, a merchant cuts their wage, and they go on strike. Rima, a girl sensitive to the promise of the outside world (the time is after colonial independence), helps win the strike then falls morose when nothing changes. A ceremonial cure does no good and she concludes the film by fleeing across the bleak, dessicated earth. For an epigraph Bertucelli quotes Fanon to the effect that the bourgeoisie have no real impact on a colonial people: remove them and nothing will have changed. But Bertuccelli has selected a situation where the bourgeoisie have not even interacted with the tribal culture. To be sure marketing replaces trading, but the villagers have always exchanged their labor for commodities while they have never truly experienced the violence and indoctrination of the colonial bourgeoisie. Hence, Bertuccelli's aspirations to political relevance, like his reference to Fanon, seem at best, inappropriate and at worst pretentious. Bertuccelli's reflective study of an isolated village, uninfluenced by any outside currents, bourgeois or otherwise, undercuts the possibilities for political ramifications while the use to which he puts aesthetic distance impedes an effectively Bressonian portrayal of the one character developed in any depth, Rima. Whereas Bresson pares his films down to the essential in an attempt to evoke the unfathomable mysteries of personhood, Bertuccelli restricts the flow of information so that even the essential is precluded. Rima relates to no one; she has no significant interactions, but neither the etiology nor the psychic effects of this state are elaborated. Bresson takes great care to establish a vantage point for the viewer that allows him to assess the importance of acts and situations for his characters, frequently by the use of voice-

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dozen musicians, singers, wives, girl friends, and one deadpan canine. Pierre Adidge, who is largely responsible for assembling this film, exhausts the arsenal of cinematic tricks (fast cutting, split-screen shenanigans, etc.), probably because rock film audiences have come to expect such excesses. The leisurely sequences about their off-stage life—the plane and bus rides, the bull sessions, the horseplay, the awkward chats with rapturous fans and mindless groupies—are strictly for Cockerophiles and rock cultists who care about how their heroes amuse themselves. Regrettably, Adidge's film reflects the shallow, fan-magazine approach to rock music. When Cocker is on stage, though, the film perks up considerably. Audiences writhe along with their idol, who thrusts himself into a song so mercilessly that his body quakes and lurches like one racked by palsy. He agonizes through a dozen or so numbers—several of them former Beatles' hits (he seems ready for a stretcher following his strenuous rendition of "With A Little Help From My Friends"). Stacked against the gems of the rock tour film genre—*A Hard Day's Night* and *Gimme Shelter*—this film is, incontestably, a pebble. It offers only Cocker, who is bland off stage, and Leon Russell, the surly musician who, since this film was shot, has ascended from Cocker's shadow to stardom. There is little footage of Cocker in conversation, and what there is certainly doesn't whet one's appetite for more. Following a short session of inept philosophizing, he blurts out a line that is a masterpiece of self-assessment: "If I hadn't been a singer, I probably would have murdered somebody." —DENNIS HUNT

My Girlfriend's Wedding, by Jim McBride, is a portrait film based on a pleasantly feckless conception: the film-maker's British girlfriend marries somebody else in order to foil the Immigration and remain in the country. The girl is well worth filming (though perhaps not quite at this length)—charming, nutty, sad; the story ends happily after an accelerated-motion camera trip across the continent. But aside from this rather trite coda, the impact of the film depends almost entirely on talk. And McBride, like many low-budget film-makers, won't recognize that it's crucial to spend what money and energy you have on getting a decent sound track, especially for 16mm projectors—in this day of gorgeous emulsions and fast lenses you *can* sometimes get away with letting the picture take care of itself, but badly recorded sound is just a damned drag. In this case, since McBride is filming his girlfriend in straight-on TV-interview style much of the time anyway, not using a lavalier seems simply perverse; and he could easily have used FM mikes for the rest. As it is, offhandedness has gotten out of hand, and ruined a nice film. —E. C.

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Report from China (Radim Films, NYC) was shot by a Japanese team during the Cultural Revolution in 1966–67. It is one of the few film windows we have into contemporary China, and like Felix Greene's film it is basically a travelogue, shot in the rather bleak northeast: visits to factories, long shots of villages, occasional tantalizing glimpses of family scenes or meetings, with dialogue politely summarized by a narrator. But it's better than nothing, and it does convey something of the immensity of the Chinese quarter of mankind. The only pingpong players shown (in a hospital) are terrible.—E.C.

THX 1138, George Lucas's feature-length expansion of his well-known short by the same title, is surprisingly scary considering the sparseness of its plot development: THX is a citizen of an underground state who has a forbidden love affair, an encounter with a rather creepy rival, and finally escapes from his jail-without-walls when cop-robots go over their computerized budget in attempting to catch him. Lucas has given *THX 1138* a powerful visual style by simplifying his images so overwhelmingly that they are virtually hallucinatory (and by intermixing electronic images with film images he further destroys our faith in the direct reality of what is shown): actors and actresses are all shaven-headed, wear very plain, uniform clothes, and move against almost abstract orchestrations of machines, blank modernistic corridors and spaces. Lucas's' city is like one of Soleri's, but underground—and how we long, after a while, for a natural-light shadow, or a tree, or a vista not circumscribed by man-made surfaces! The film lacks psychological characterization in the usual sense; we get some vague sense of personality from the actors' sheer stripped-down presence, but what they do is dreamlike and what they say is not only muffled by the sound track but not very coherent in the first place; we grasp mainly that these are people whose minds are no longer their own because they have been taken over by electronics, officially required drugs, and the ant-hill psychological pressures characteristic of very large-scale technological societies. If sound often carries "moral" information while vision carries "factual" information, as some theorize, in *THX 1138* our ears are constantly telling us, "Look out!"—the track is a horribly unsettling mix of whirrs, grinds, wheezes, bumps, whines. The escape of THX has strong emotional components not because we empathize with THX as a full and interesting character (we would empathize with a rat in the same predicament) but because Lucas also takes pains to make his dreadful future-present world so self-contained; outside it are only dwarfed, bearded "shell-dwellers," savage and stunted, while inside there may be tyranny but with it security. This is why the last shot of the film, with THX finally popping out of a shaft into the baleful light of a huge red sun, is so numbing: he must now begin to survive on the prickly, mysterious, forbidding surface of the planet. Lucas makes films like a watch-maker, and he is a very good one; he is thus able to get past thin spots by pouring on the visual power. He takes the view that we are already living in the future; and what he has basically done in *THX 1138* is to select, compress, and organize elements of social relationships and architecture that already exist among us. This too is not lost on young audiences, who seem to find the film at least as relevant, if not so space-age-educational, as *2001*. *THX 1138* is the first San Francisco-produced feature to do well at the box office; but, characteristically for these times (Melvin Van Peebles's *Sweetback* is another current case) the distributors thought they had a disaster on their hands and didn't even have a poster ready when the film first opened. They probably still don't understand it.—E.C.

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