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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK 2

ARTICLES

New Wave—or Gesture? COLIN YOUNG AND GIDEON BACHMANN 6

Adaptation or Evasion: *Elmer Gantry* GEORGE BLUESTONE 15

Toward an Objective Film Criticism IAN JARVIE 19

New Films from Poland DAVID STEWART HULL 24

NEW IMAGES: A SPECIAL SECTION ON EXPERIMENTAL FILMS AND OTHER NEW DEVELOPMENTS:

Creative Film Award Winners, 1959 and 1960 WALLACE THURSTON 30

Outside the Frame HARRIET R. POLT AND ROGER SANDALL 35

Going Out to the Subject: II ERNEST CALLENBACH 38

The Nontheatrical Film, 1960 HENRY BREITROSE 40

REVIEWS: 43

Have You Sold Your Dozen Roses?: ERNEST CALLENBACH
Night and Fog: ROGER SANDALL *Circle of the Sun*: MICHEL RÉGNIER
The Films of Stan Brakhage: ERNEST CALLENBACH
A Cold Wind in August: BENJAMIN T. JACKSON

REVIEWS OF FILMS IN GENERAL RELEASE 51

Breathless: ARLENE CROCE *The Misfits*: LAWRENCE GRAUMAN, JR.
Exodus: GIDEON BACHMANN

BOOK REVIEWS 59

Four Screenplays by Ingmar Bergman: R. H. TURNER
Antitrust in the Motion Picture Industry: ERNEST CALLENBACH
Film Notes: ERNEST CALLENBACH
The Fifty-Year Decline and Fall of Hollywood
Il Film Cecoslovacco: LETIZIA CIOTTI MILLER

PRODUCTION REPORT

THE COVER: Linda Lawson in Curtis Harrington's *Night Tide.*

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Editor's Notebook

New Images

Under the above title we presented, two years ago, a special group of reviews of experimental films. In the present issue we include several articles as well as reviews, dealing with films that do not fall into the categories of the usual feature film or the usual documentary.

Once outside those neatly conventional forms we find an amorphous mass of new work. There are film-makers who teethed on documentary or conventional experiment (if such a term may be allowed). These—Shirley Clarke, the Sanders brothers, Curtis Harrington—are now entering the world of the theatrical feature. There they will join film-makers who have gone directly into that world, hopefully on their own terms, such as John Cassavetes, Irving Kirschner, Alex Singer, the Mekas brothers. In "New Wave—or Gesture?" Colin Young and Gideon Bachmann discuss forthcoming films from some of these directors; we will have further coverage later.

There are also film-makers who attempt, in various kinds of shorter films, to explore new territory. Some of these take routes first charted by Flaherty; Henry Breitrose reports on developments in this line. Others stretch the formal conventions of the medium; Harriet R. Polt and Roger Sandall discuss two such innovations. Some seek to use the devices of documentary in more personal and poetic forms; Michel Régnier and Roger Sandall write of such films made by Alain Resnais and Colin Low. Ernest Callenbach reports on three films made by Ricky Leacock with novel techniques that elude many usual limitations of documentary. Also covered are films that fall into the familiar "experimental" category: the films of Stan Brakhage and a collaborative effort, *Have You Sold Your Dozen Roses?*

Various labels have been propounded for the new film-making that has begun in the United States, none of them very satisfactory. However, what is common to the new film-makers is that they have lost their faith in "Hollywood." They may sometimes make films in Los Angeles, but their allegiance is not to the industry. They may sometimes make films in New York, but their allegiance is not to any east-coast ethnocentrism. (In fact, we rather like the proposal of one of our correspondents, who wanted to name it the Provincial film movement. He lives in Hollywood, as it happens; but he called correctly for a new, small-scale, lively cinema in every corner of the land.) The means of film production have become diffused enough, and can with ingenuity be made cheap enough, that anyone anywhere can make short films on a professional technical level; what is needed, as always, is the nerve and the talent. There ought to be short, personal, nontheatrical films made all over, as paintings and poems are made—films for modest purposes, films for no "purpose" at all; films for the growing specialized audience but also films for the film-maker himself, taking the usual risk of true artists that somebody may after all be watching and listening.

Many such films *are* being made, and we hope more will be. They are too often fugitive and do not receive the critical attention they deserve. We hope to deal with an increasing number of such films in *Film Quarterly*, with sympathy and without indulgence.

Censorship

Censorship is like the Hydra: chop off the head biting Pennsylvania, as was recently done, and another seizes Chicago—in this case with the blessing of the United States Supreme Court.

The decision of the high court is a heavy blow against the forces that have little by little, in the past decade, reduced the monster to manageable size. Only a few cities and four states still enforce censorship laws. Most of those could have been struck down through legal challenge in the next several years; for censorship statutes have regularly been found

vulnerable on grounds of vagueness and unenforceability as well as unconstitutionality.

Now, however, a new lease on life has been given to such statutes, posing a threat not only to the cinema but to newspapers, magazines, and conceivably every other communication medium. Police boards and other bodies(the personnel who do the actual censoring are almost always grotesquely unqualified for the job) are to be allowed to require licensing in advance.

Such procedures are very different from prosecution under obscenity laws. Any exhibitor may be prosecuted under such laws, which are plentiful everywhere, if the authorities wish to allege he has exhibited an obscene film. But this is troublesome; it requires evidence that can be sustained in a court of law; it requires definable standards of what constitutes "obscenity." So the censors would much prefer to avoid these difficulties and simply gain the power to say, on grounds satisfactory solely to themselves, that such-and-such a film may not be shown. This puts the burden of legal action on the exhibitor, who thus has to pay heavily to win the chance to exercise free use of the medium.

Frederick M. Wirt noted in his article, "To See or Not to See: The Case against Censorship" (*Film Quarterly*, Fall 1959), that "Since censor laws never define precisely what is prohibited, the interpretation of the administering censor fills the empty generalities of the law with morality by fiat." We hope that the recent 5-4 decision in the Chicago *Don Juan* case will be superseded by a future decision giving the full protection of the First Amendment to the motion picture medium. It has been the prey of the Hydra for far too long, to the advantage of no one and to the harm of all those who regard the film as more than "entertainment."

Freer than "Free"?

Pay television is about to be tried on a significant commercial scale in the United States, in the Hartford, Connecticut, area. Like many things in the history of the entertainment industries, it is a gimmick; but since it affects the economic relationships between producers and consumers, it is one that might have considerable influence. The struggle over it before the F.C.C. has been long and vicious, reflecting the immense sums that the commercial interests on either side conceive to be at stake.

When it was first proposed, pay television was described as a panacea that could solve all the ills of mass communication, bringing Culture into every home at the drop of a quarter. It has become clear by now that if it comes into widespread use it will be controlled and operated by the same sort of people subject to the same sort of forces that have debased the familiar programming we get "free." (Actually, of course, advertising costs are included in the price of a product, whether you have been subjected to the ads or not.) *Potentially*, pay TV might be used to create diversity, excitement, even art—since it could reasonably exist by appealing to smaller audiences than a soap company wishes to bother with. Practically, however, there are few businessmen so altruistic as to prefer small profits to large ones. The pressures toward junk, or at the higher levels kitsch, already appear formidable. And, ironically, it is by no means certain that pay TV will carry no commercials. The promised land may well turn out to be nothing but another real estate swindle.

All this is, or ought to be, of more than passing interest to partisans of the film. We may get headaches from the grainy TV image, or turn homicidal at the commercials, or squirm at what happens to the forty per cent of the screen image which gets cut off around the edges of the TV tube. (This loss is greater even than that caused by theater projectors masked to cut off the top and bottom of films, making them look as if they were "widescreen" pictures.) For one thing, it is already feasible technologically to produce a flat, rectangular electronic picture on a wall screen. Such screens can be quite large. Electronic images, if produced through systems having more lines than the American standard (such as many other countries have adopted) can be virtually

as sharp, delicate in contrast, and optically steady as film images. The electronic image, in short, is capable of the aesthetic precision, beauty, and power of the film image; and it can be produced by cameras that are pocket-size, completely portable, and incredibly light-sensitive. Although this too is gimmickry of a sort, it pushes toward real novelty; elsewhere in this issue, for example, we describe some films made for TV which create genuinely and conscientiously some of the immediacy viewers are alleged to expect after experience with impromptu TV coverage.

Pay television *might* create a few more opportunities for the wide showing of independent films. It might escape, at least for a while, the control of program content by advertisers which has been the fundamental cause of the artistic decline and fall of American radio and "free" television. It might thus enliven the present dreary routine of westerns, mysteries, sports, and family drama. Its opponents charge, as their most crushing argument, that the extension of the open cash market to TV entertainment might destroy television as we now know it. This delightful risk we accept with glee.

About Our Contributors

GIDEON BACHMANN is president of the American Federation of Film Societies and editor of *Cinemages* magazine. He conducts a radio interview program, "The Film Art," which is broadcast by stations coast to coast and is now available, at nominal cost, to additional stations; inquiries should be directed to Mr. Bachmann at WBAI, 30 East 39th Street, New York 16, N.Y. His discussion of *Exodus* is based on his experiences as a reporter and photographer for Israeli and European newspapers and as a functionary of the Israel government.

GEORGE BLUESTONE is a poet and critic whose work has appeared in many journals. His *Novels into Film*, the best extended study of the metamorphosis fiction undergoes in filming, has just been published as a paperback by the University of California Press.

HENRY BREITROSE teaches film at Stanford University. He participated in the last Flaherty Seminar and was one of the judges of the 16mm competition at the San Francisco Film Festival.

ARLENE CROCE has written many film reviews for this journal and other publications; they have won her a reputation as one of the best critics writing in the United States today.

LAWRENCE GRAUMAN, JR. teaches literature and composition at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. He has published short stories and written on politics and music for Chicago newspapers.

BENJAMIN T. JACKSON studied film at UCLA and now works for an animation studio in Hollywood.

IAN JARVIE teaches philosophy at the London School of Economics. He has contributed to the Australian *Film Journal* and to *Film*, the British film society magazine.

HARRIET R. POLT has contributed reviews to this journal; her fiction has appeared in *transition.*

MICHEL RÉGNIER is one of the group of critics in Montreal who have begun publishing *Objectif*, a French-language journal described elsewhere in this issue.

ROGER SANDALL is an anthropologist who has made film his major interest. He is making an ethnographic film of his own, and works at the Museum of Natural History in New York.

WALLACE THURSTON teaches at Cooper Union in New York and has organized film showings there.

R. H. TURNER is a frequent contributor and former president of the Documentary Film Group at the University of Chicago.

Periodicals

For readers wishing a means of keeping up to date on film without the time-consuming (and depressing) necessity of following the trade press, we call attention to the British monthly *Films and Filming,* published by Hansom Books, 21 Lower Belgrave Street, London S.W.I., 27s. per year. The journal, while not maintaining the sober critical demeanor of a quarterly, contains much current information, interviews with and articles by film-makers, reviews and notes on recent pictures, a variety of features, and lots of illustrations. While the contents range down to "I'm Old-Fashioned—and This is Why," by William Holden, which might have appeared in one of the better fan magazines, they also range up to articles by Antonioni, Visconti, Fellini, and others.

Oddly enough, another publication which serves to keep one current without pain is published in Tokyo (by an American): *Far East Film News.* While this is a trade paper, and moreover one devoted to the Asian film industries, it also contains capsule summaries of worldwide production developments, festivals, and other events of interest. Subscriptions are $12.50. Box 30, Central Post Office, Tokyo.

Objectif, C. P. 64, Station "N," Montreal 18, P.Q., Canada is a new periodical, entirely in French, inexpensive in format but reflecting the intelligent interest in films that has enabled the Canadian film-society movement to put ours to shame, as well as the energy that resulted recently in the organization of a major film festival in Montreal. Early issues have contained articles on Nicholas Ray producing *The Savage Innocents* in the Canadian North, on Shirley Clarke's films, on Jean Rouch, on the "Cinéma Total," on the films of Kenneth Anger, and other subjects; the editorial columns have dealt with the familiar problems of Canadian identity as they appear in the film world, and with censorship (a curse which French Canadians, especially, seem to oppose far more cautiously than we would like). A sample of the work appearing in *Objectif* may be found on a later page of this issue of *Film Quarterly,* where we reprint, by permission, a review of Colin Low's *Circle of the Sun,* by Michel Régnier. *Objectif* appears ten times a year; subscriptions are $3.50.

Imagery, published at 616 Colusa, Berkeley, California (60c per issue, $2.00 per year) is a new quarterly edited by Albert Johnson, who writes in the first issue that *Imagery* is intended to bridge "the wide chasm between the gossip-monthlies and the scholarly quarterlies." The first issue contains articles on Gavin Lambert's *Another Sky,* Marlon Brando's *One-Eyed Jacks,* and *West Side Story,* together with reviews of *La Dolce Vita, Spartacus, Weddings and Babies, A Bout de Souffle,* and *The Misfits.* Mr. Johnson's aim seems to be to produce a kind of American *Films & Filming.* There is as much need for such a magazine here as there is in England, and we wish Mr. Johnson success in his enterprise.

The Art Film is not a periodical in the usual sense, but an occasional publication designed primarily for distribution through art theaters. Numbers prepared to date deal with *Shadows, Virgin Spring, Throne of Blood, L'Avventura, Rocco and His Brothers,* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning.* Published by Jerry Weiss at 1335 S. Third Avenue, Los Angeles 19, California, *The Art Film* is available in bulk to interested theater operators and by subscription at $1.00 for a minimum of twelve numbers. The format is that of a theater program.

COLIN YOUNG
GIDEON BACHMANN

New Wave–or Gesture?

The French New Wave may not have existed save in publicity, but it was a useful gambit on that level: it convinced potential moviegoers that films without stars, without "production values," might still be well worth seeing. No comparable American phenomenon yet exists. But the rarity of active, independent American film-making is traceable more to systems of distribution and exhibition than to paucity of talent, imagination, or initiative. Unusual American films do somehow find financing and get made—though often they quickly disappear, as did TAKE A GIANT STEP, THE SAVAGE EYE, WEDDINGS AND BABIES, ON THE BOWERY, *and some film-makers find they must rely on European festivals and personal roadshowings to get their films before their intended public. (John Cassavetes's* SHADOWS *is only now being released in the United States—by a British distributor.)*

A convenient label for independent American film-making would be a help. So would be the existence of theaters with the stature of the National Film Theatre in London or the Cinématheque in Paris. So would be a flexible attitude on the part of the film unions, whose rigid crew requirements, while understandable as an outgrowth of studio industrial relations, sometimes irrationally restrict young film-makers. No low-budget producers wish to wreck the unions; but they too often find themselves budgeted out of promising projects, largely by high crew costs.

The film-maker seeking to make personal films needs time above all—time for imagination, time for invention, both of which may in the end save money. But in Hollywood time IS *money, and the effects can be frightening: to the Sanders brothers, for instance, facing $800-per-hour charges for overtime, desirable retakes and additional camera angles became an impossible luxury. This pressure of time seems ridiculous to most independent film-makers, and many of them, like Irv Kerschner, seek some new basis (perhaps resembling that which prevailed on Cassavetes's* SHADOWS*) where patience, improvisation, and ingenuity were allowed scope—through reshooting, of course, is never cheap. At any rate, there is a desperate need for some way to escape the present situation, in which the first things an independent film-maker asks another are: How many days did you have? and How much did you go over budget? Meanwhile, much work goes on.*

In the following pages Colin Young and Gideon Bachmann report on current production by a variety of new film-makers. We also call attention to the review of Alex Singer's COLD WIND IN AUGUST, *elsewhere in this issue.*

JOHN CASSAVETES

A whole school of criticism and perhaps of film-making is being built around the minor (although not insignificant) success of Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie's *Pull My Daisy* and the first version of *Shadows*, which Cassavetes himself disowns. These films undoubtedly contain qualities markedly absent in the contrived supermarketed romances produced in Hollywood. But when an unusual film works without relying on traditional form, it can scarcely be imitated without repetition. Thus it is interesting that the critics' enthusiasm for *Shadows* often leads them to make claims for its methods and its style which mystify the author of the film. It is possible that a film-maker does not see the implications of his work as clearly as others. But Cassavetes knew what he was doing with *Shadows*. In a recent interview at Paramount he told me:

"When we shot *Shadows* we rarely had rehearsals for the camera, even though Erich Kollmar the cameraman likes rehearsals. I encouraged him to get it first time, as it happened. Now he likes it that way. I seldom used master shots as we know them [in which the entire action of a scene is covered from one all-inclusive angle] . . . The first week of shooting was just about useless. We were all getting used to each other and to the equipment, but it was not because of the camera movement that we had to throw footage out. In fact, when you try it, you find that natural movement is easier to follow than rehearsed movement, since it has a natural rhythm."

The actors they were using were from a class in an actors' school in New York which Cassavetes founded some years ago with Bert Layne. The film "grew" out of class exercises.

"*Shadows* from beginning to end was a creative accident. We got the things we did because we had nothing to begin with and had to create it, had to improvise it. *If we had had a writer, we would have used a script.* . . . I invented, or conceived the characters of *Shadows*, rather than a story line. A lot was written down about the characters, and before shooting began the actors went out to do life study on these characters. The boy who plays the part of the singer (Hugh Hurd) went around trying to get a job, and finally got one in Philadelphia in a third-rate night club.

"The script, as such, did not exist until after the film was over. Then we made one up just for copyright reasons.

"*Shadows* shot ten weeks the first time around, and to make the second version we shot again for ten days and replaced about three-quarters of it. The first version was filled with what you might call 'cinematic virtuosity'—for its own sake; with angles and fancy cutting and a lot of jazz going on in the background. But the one thing that came at all alive to me after I had laid it aside a few weeks was that just now and again the actors had survived all my tricks. But this did not often happen. They barely came to life. That's why the first version was a mess. When it was shown at the Paris Theater in New York the audience was helped along by a large group of my friends—but I guarantee that 90% of them didn't like it."

However, some people liked it enough to create a brouhaha in its favor. Jonas Mekas and Gideon Bachmann ran it at the Young Men's Hebrew Association in New York for about six performances to packed houses. When the second version came out this was attacked as an emasculation, as a commercial sell-out. "This is very insulting, of course," said Cassavetes, "because as I think you'll discover when you see the film, it is not a 'commercial' film in the usual sense. And I just did not think the first version was very good."

The shooting was in every sense a coöperative venture. Much of the original money was "contributed" (following a radio appeal) and from time to time when they ran out of cash other people would give them enough to carry on for another day—$100 from Josh Logan, something from Jose Quintero, Wyler, Robert Rossen, Sol Siegel, Hedda Hopper.

"All this was terribly exciting, of course, but it is not something I am likely to do again. It's like doing summer stock; it's a good experience

SHADOWS.

to *have had.* I couldn't do it again because, for one thing, I just wouldn't have the energy."

However, Cassavetes has allowed certain working methods to stay with him, and it is likely that they will influence his later work.

"I would, and I will continue to talk for hours with actors. In *Shadows* this was important. Dreams come out in improvisation, not only the exterior things. Furthermore, an actor is concerned with his dignity as a person—he wants this to show in the characterization. The director has to service his actor in this way. And again reality is important to movies in a way it is not to the theater. A theater audience compensates for the lack of reality—they do not expect to see things in gestures, or in the face. They expect to listen more. Movies have to get them to see, as well as listen."

Cassavetes is a young director settling down, but trying to do so on his own terms. This became quite clear when he was talking of his present project, a story called *Too Late Blues* (formerly *Dreams For Sale*) which he has written with television writer Richard Carr and which he will direct for Paramount starting in late March. Bobby Darin and a television actress Stella Stevens are in the cast, otherwise the actors are new. "Some of them are from Hollywood," Cassavetes said, "some I have known from my acting school contacts in New York. The man who plays drums in the band (Bill Stafford) I have known since we acted together in the army. Another of the actors was a fashion designer.

"I have been given the control I need over casting. We had the money (about $375,000) to shoot independently, but there was some risk with this capital as one or two of the investors were questioning the commercial appeal of the story. However, I chose to shoot in a major studio because of the facilities and the technical help. It seemed to me that these facilities are not always as well used as they might be and if I had the opportunity to make what amounts to an art film in a major studio it would be foolish of me not to. However, when you work in a major studio, when the studio owns the story (as they do now), you have to be very clear in your own mind why you are here. If you are here primarily to make money, then compromise is all right, in fact it becomes obligatory. In my case, I have to know when to draw the line, and I have to be prepared to quit at any time. If I am prepared to quit rather than give in to changes, then I am safe. It is only when you are not prepared to do this that you are in trouble. . . .

"Of course studios like Paramount exist to make money, so why shouldn't they admit it? I know where the studio stands on this film of mine and I intend to make it as cheaply as possible, so that I hope it will make money for them. . . .

"But, other things being equal, I will prefer in future to work in a studio to working on location with real sets, especially as in the case of *Too Late Blues* when 98% of the film is interiors. There is a certain excitement you get from location shooting that is sacrificed on the set, because although nothing cannot be built, it remains artificial. But the battling that location shooting involves I am happy to give up. Especially in this case. It is a picture about people, not places."

Too Late Blues is a story of disillusionment. The characters are jazz musicians who play well together, live well together, but had had little commercial success. They play in parks "to the trees and some children on the baseball diamond," they play for charities. It is a free life. They play their own kind of music—no one really has to like it except themselves, and they

make their social life fit their emotional needs. Into their tightly enclosed life comes a girl. Ghost Wakefield, the group's leader, brings her in and then at a crisis lets her down. His friends become involved in a brawl and he cannot bring himself to fight. Losing face, he blusters his way out and offends everyone. The group disintegrates, the girl moves on, and Ghost becomes the protégé of a rich benefactress. Soon he is playing in all the correct clubs, at fancy prices, but he has lost his grip on the happiness he knew before.

"What am I up to in my new film?" Cassavetes said. "I am trying to show the inability of people to recognize that society is ridiculous. Hardly anyone obeys the mores, but they respect them. If they are exposed breaking the mores their lives can collapse.

"Our hero is not a coward, but when he is forced to fight he cannot. In covering up this failure he destroys everything else that is important to him until he ends on rock bottom."

Cassavetes began leafing through his script, selecting scenes to read from, and ending by acting out most of the film. His enthusiasm is infectious, he readily creates the atmosphere of his scene. It would be easy to take direction from him. He is aware of the risks of shooting in a major studio where the overheads are pressing. He believes that he has retained all the necessary controls. He believes that he can make "independent" films for a major studio. Thus he believes he can do something most of his contemporaries have failed to do. He does not put it this way, but it amounts to the same. He is enthusiastic about his cast, about his cameraman (Lionel Linden, who did *I Want to Live!* and part of *Around the World in Eighty Days*, and was cameraman on Cassavetes's TV show *Johnny Staccato*). "He is brilliant, imaginative, fast, knowledgeable." The studio thinks the film will make money, and that it will build on *Shadows*. Cassavetes thinks so too, but clearly, in making a decision to come to Hollywood for feature production, he has also decided to make films where the majority of technical and other talent is available.

IRV KERSHNER

This, substantially, is also the decision of the other independents being discussed here. Irv Kershner is planning a film from a script by Alan Marcus, suggested by the career of a New York psychiatrist who treated schizophrenic patients with "direct analysis." Marcus's script, whose preparation Kershner has underwritten, sets up a very complex time progression—developing a story with characters up to a certain incident, following first one character then another from the point of that incident, in such a way that the story-line is constantly doubling back and forth, filling in with information which could not have been presented by a method which confined itself to one character's point of view. "This is not a realistic story, in the usual sense. Realism is all well and good, but there are so many other possibilities!" Kershner sang out this protest, almost bellowed it, as he paced his living room. "We cannot limit ourselves to the straightforward plot film. We must move on. And we must take the time and use the talent that these developments require.

"One of the requirements, of course, is a professional cast. This is a very difficult script, and should properly be played by the people we had in mind when developing the characters." It is difficult to imagine Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* with an amateur cast, and Resnais's *Hiroshima Mon Amour* might have been helped by less inflexible performers in the leading roles.

DENIS AND TERRY SANDERS

The decision to work with stars or other actors with established reputations and/or styles is usually forced upon the independent producer working with Hollywood money. Some, like the Sanders brothers, have found it profitable (although complicated) to "discover" a new actor and sign him up for a long period in the hope that he will become popular. This is the case with George Hamilton, star of *Crime and Punishment, U.S.A.* Although not a very good actor, he has established himself as something of a favorite. The Sanders are now working on a

two-picture contract with United Artists; UA approached them last year, without seeing *Crime and Punishment*, but with the knowledge that they had Hamilton. When they decided not to use Hamilton, they went back with John Saxon for the first of their two pictures, *War Hunt*. That was acceptable.

In general, United Artists has script, major casting, and budget approval, but in the case of *War Hunt* (an original by Stanford Whitmore) only one person at the office had much to do with the script (Doris Vidor). They gave the Sanders $250,000, although this was later stepped up another $15,000. This is a typical low-budget figure for United Artists for a feature which they expect to give a general release. Since their recent tie-in with Lopert, they are moving into a lower budget level of $150,000, with the possibility of an art-house release. Denis Sanders said recently, "They are a marvelous company to do business with, from our point of view." Terry Sanders added, "We still prefer to work with lower rather than higher budgets, because you can afford to take more risks."

War Hunt (a working title only) has finished shooting, and will be ready for viewing about the end of May. Its leading character is a schizophrenic called Endore (John Saxon). He takes on other men's patrols, goes out without support behind the enemy lines (in Korea), and usually manages to kill someone. "A nightly murder keeps him from tipping over. He maintains his equilibrium only in a battle situation. Since he voluntarily takes on his companions' patrols they have no reason to cross him." The situation is complicated by the presence, in the platoon, of a young Korean orphan (Tommy Matsuda) whom Endore has adopted. A new member of the platoon, Loomis (Robert Redford), objects to his hold over the boy and tries to pry the child loose. This angers Endore, has little effect on the boy, and gets no support from the other members of the platoon, who are prepared to accept the status quo. The inevitable tragedy occurs. When a cease-fire is signed at Panmunjon, and an area between the two armies is staked out as a No Man's Land, Endore again goes out at night, this time taking the boy with him. They catch up with him in the morning, Endore stabs Loomis, the Captain shoots Endore and the boy runs off, deaf to their entreaties to stay. The film will end with him disappearing over the trenches and hills. The Captain turns to Loomis, concerned about his wound. "Are you all right?" he asks. Loomis, still looking after the boy, thinking of that and not the bleeding, replies simply, "No."

"The killing of Endore and the child's escape constitute an incident which most of the men will try to forget. They will wish it had not happened. But Loomis may never be able to forget it. We think the film takes a nonpedestrian view of courage. This in itself is refreshing. The story is not a record of something which actually happened but it is truthful. We are concerned with moral as well as physical courage. Loomis does not have the physical courage of Endore, but he has the courage of his convictions. He has the courage to be unpopular. Through him we hope to show the problem of retaining one's moral values in war.

"If people like Endore, who are crazy, can appear normal or balanced only in war, then it follows that war is an insane condition. Camus's description is appropriate—war is the rationalization of the irrational. The problem of a soldier is how to adjust to the impossible, the irrational, and the undesirable. Some make up a whole new reality, others simply block out the present

From War Hunt.

one. War is a condition in which insanity becomes invisible. We want to make the connection between neurosis in private life and psychosis in war."

This was a subject which they felt had a commercial application and yet was still something they could have a commitment to. The story for their second film for United Artists has not been settled on yet.

The question inevitably came up about their relationship throughout the production to the army. They had made a routine request, through the local representative of the Department of the Army, for Army coöperation. "But," Terry Sanders said, "it was a little embarrassing asking them for their support. Our film is not anti-army, but it does show the army in a very unfavorable light. In the end, anyway, they decided not to support us. This did not make too much difference to the budget, and it was probably better not to have an official army man on the set all the time. He might have had some sort of psychological hold on us, just by being there. We preferred to do it alone."

The results, so far as I have seen them, and what I have heard of the rest, seem convincing enough. There is little doubt that the occasional uncertainties of *Crime and Punishment*, particularly in dialogue scenes, will be gone here. And the action material is reportedly excellent. John Saxon as Endore has an extremely interesting quality. The editing is being done by John Hoffman, for many years an assistant and collaborator of Slavko Vorkapich. The camera work is by Ted McCord, who replaced Floyd Crosby after a few days of shooting.

CURTIS HARRINGTON

Curtis Harrington is completing his first feature, *Night Tide*. Unlike Cassavetes, who is planning to make an art film in a studio, Harrington intends his film for general release although, as he admits, "There are some esoteric things in it, including some unrealistic dreams, a performance by the painter Cameron as a mysterious Woman in Black, and a rather complete explanation by a fortune teller (Marjorie Eaton) of Tarot cards. I will be interested to see whether this scene holds the audience's attention. But, on the whole, I made the film as a story teller, not on an abstract level as in my experimental films."

The script, also by Harrington, was based on an unpublished short story written a few years ago called *Secrets of the Sea*.

The plot concerns a young sailor (Dennis Hooper), who falls in love with Mora (Linda Lawson), a strange girl who believes herself to be descended from an ancient race of sea people (sirens), and feels she is doomed to return to the sea. She has been adopted by a retired sea-captain who operates a side show at Ocean Park and employs the girl as a mermaid. The two young men who had previously known Mora both drowned "in mysterious circumstances." Whenever the Woman in Black appears, Mora becomes frighened and sad. In the end, at one level, there is a perfectly logical explanation of everything which happens, including the final tragedy, but the coincidental presence of the Woman in Black at key moments suggests there is more to it than chance.

"My audience will, I hope, identify with the young man," Harrington told me, "although his situation is fantastic rather than real in the usual sense. There are two dream sequences in the film. They work in much the same way as I think do Buñuel's, but I was not thinking of that at the time. And the film is not at all like Buñuel's—the things which preoccupy me are not those which concern him. *Night Tide* would be too tender for him, I would think. But the dreams are there—one of them is presented as such, and the other is less obvious. The line between dream and reality becomes very thin. The dreams are not unreal in the usual sense—I prefer the French *irréel*. They are not so much unreal as there is simply a shift in perception. These dreams represent the unconsciousness of the hero, so to that extent they are similar to Buñuel."

Considering Curtis Harrington's long expressed admiration of Josef von Sternberg, I asked him if he thought Sternberg would like the film.

"Well, he's god, and I admire him, but he would never indicate what he thought of my work, or speak of his own.

"I think it is not generally understood that it was not George Stevens so much as von Sternberg who first introduced the long lap dissolve [in which one scene gradually replaces another by superimposition]. Stevens did not use it before *A Place in the Sun*, and it is probable that when he was preparing it he looked at von Sternberg's treatment of the Dreiser story in his film *An American Tragedy*. Stevens used it again in *Something to Live For*, his next film, and of course he used it to a lesser extent in *Giant*. I think in a couple of places I have used the device extremely effectively."

To make the film Harrington took a leave of absence from his position as assistant to Jerry Wald at Twentieth Century-Fox. "I took about four weeks shooting, and about the same editing. I did the cutting with Jody Copeland. I benefited from his experience, particularly in the dialogue sequences."

"Directing this dialogue film was a new experience. All my experimental films were conceived as silent films, then had sound added. I have not directed in the theater, and did not have the benefit of practice in that kind of staging. However, this was a fairly carefully considered film, although the first scene involving a large number of people gave me some trouble. After this first day I knew in advance what I wanted, so I was fairly certain to be covered. It was only the first day that I was not, when I and everyone else forgot to cover one important line. I have had to do some pretty fancy cutting to get around it.

"I shot in master scenes for the benefit of the actors, not for my own taste. Dennis Hopper, being a 'method' actor, did not like working in truncated scenes. Thus more film stock was used than I had planned—a difference of about $2,000. I rehearsed the key scenes here in my living room for about a week before shooting, and this was of inestimable value for the performances. I also had one reading with the assembled cast, from beginning to end. From this I learned a lot about the pacing required, about the dramatic continuity which I was going to have to catch.

"The schedule was determined by exigencies, not by the script's continuity. But this did not bother me, with the reading behind me. I had the concept in mind. We struck to the script, only occasionally changing lines on the set, the only improvisation coming from the behavior of the actors." (Cassavetes had said that he was not committed in advance to his dialogue and would welcome changes by the actors, so long as the sense of the scene remained.)

Harrington's producer was Aram Kantarian, a contract negotiator at MCA. Pathé laboratory in Hollywood put up the principal financing, after a little encouragement from another independent producer, Roger Corman. Then some five or six other investors contributed money, in amounts varying from $1,000 to $12,000. Two of the largest contributors were regular film finance sources, but the others were friends. The money needed for completion was $5,000, and this was obtained from Harrington's family. (The directors of the French New Wave, Harrington pointed out, often had *all* their financing from family sources.) "We got our money without a distribution guarantee, and this is where Roger Corman came in very useful. We knew about Shirley Clarke's method of financing her film [see below], but I don't believe this method will work on the West Coast. We tried it at first, but failed to find enough interested investors. The type of person who backs plays in New York does not exist out here. We thought we might at one time have to go to New York for our money.

"Within the limitations of the budget, after the initial acceptance of the script by the backers, I was permitted complete freedom. I would doubtless have done things less simply if I had had more time—the camera work would have been more intricate. . . . But I think you will agree it worked out quite well."

OTHERS

Meanwhile, others among the independents have finished films. There is a second feature

by Stanley Colbert, producer of *Private Property*, this one called *Arena*, from a script by Joseph Landos and directed by Buzz Kulik. It was financed by United Artists. Michael DuPont and Newton Arnold have completed *The Answer* with private money, reportedly much of it DuPont family money. Alex Singer has released *A Cold Wind in August* and Tom Laughlin is trying to find distribution for the first film of a trilogy, entitled *Like Father, Like Son* (the general title of the trilogy is *We Are All Christ*).

This discussion has scarcely taken us near the motives and ambitions of the individual film-makers, but the pattern is clear. There is considerable interdependency and cross-fertilization within the various companies at the level of financing and technical help—*War Hunt* uses Roger Corman's assistant director, Floyd Crosby and Ted McCord are most often asked to photograph, David Raksin is doing the score for *Night Tide*, and a theme for *Too Late Blues*. But the companies are scattered in their intentions and their story material. There is no unity of style or approach to subject matter. There is only a shared interest in film-making. This is not the independence Jonas Mekas is talking about. But it is also a far cry from the so-called independence of the larger star-dominated companies who use studios only as facilities.

Marlon Brando's company is as good an example of this as any. His *One-Eyed Jacks* turns out to be a costly, competent period Western, with better than average playing and characterization. They shot for six months and cut for two years (recently reshooting the ending in a way more appropriate to the romantic fiction which precedes it).

But the way of Brando, Gregory Peck, Kirk Douglas, or Burt Lancaster (through Hecht-Lancaster) is not the way of the true independent. They are working within the safeties of large budgets, expensive supporting casts (sometimes better actors than themselves), and extravagant stories. They are also surrounded by the soft-mulch system of committee editing in which groups make decisions about story and performance and structure—few individual judgments are risked. This is not the way of the independent who wishes to take his own risks and make his own mistakes. To this extent Cassavetes might be thought to speak for the rest when he says, "Many artists fear that they will never make another picture. To avoid failure at their own hands they relinquish control to others, and then blame others for any mistakes which ensue. It is a cowardly way."

It is a common way, but it is not the way of the director discussed here. If they have made mistakes, they are responsible. If they learn and are given another chance, they will improve. But at this stage it is at least important that they should be supported in their attempt. In each of their films there will be something of value on which they might be encouraged to build. Until the distribution system exists which can ferret out the specialized audiences for special films, audiences must assume some of the responsibility—and the distinction—for making their own discoveries. This is the least the film-maker can ask.—Colin Young

SHIRLEY CLARKE

Occasionally a film is made because one person decides that it should happen. In most cases this one person is either a producer or at least someone who can make and carry through such a decision because he has either experience or material resources to fall back on. When Shirley Clarke saw the off-Broadway play by Jack Gelber upon which *The Connection* is based, she had neither of those, except that she had made some documentary films in 16mm and some experimental-poetic shorts. But in today's atmosphere of what might be called the new Expressive American Cinema, anyone with the guts to try and the talent to carry it off can make a film. And from all reports to date, *The Connection* appears to be one of those legendary "firsts" like *Citizen Kane* or *Breathless*, which not only excel filmically, but also set standards for other film work. In short, *The Connection* is *important*. There is no doubt that in many

ways this will be a pace-setting film, from the points of view of form, impact, and method of production.

The film cost $167,000 to make. This amount was raised—as money is raised in the legitimate theater—through the syndicate approach. A "limited partnership" is formed, which means that shares in the film are sold to a large number of small investors: in the case of this film, over two hundred of them. This type of financing has the advantage of allowing complete artistic freedom to the director, besides making it easier to raise the money itself, in smaller individual amounts than standard financing would have necessitated. The film was shot on a single, closed set, representing a loft, which was constructed in minutely realistic detail at New York's Production Center studios. The finished film includes no shots not taken in that room, and it utilized a unique mobile camera, shots of more than ten-minute duration in some cases, and lighting carefully simulating the falling dusk during the film's two-hour length, which represents two hours of actual elapsed time.

The Connection also breaks other, long-established movie axioms. For one thing, the camera plays a part in the film itself, and thus a new kind of audience identification is created, which borders on audience *participation*; the camera represents the viewer. This, in fact, is part of the intention of its appearance: the actors (most of them from the original cast of the play) are confronted by its peering presence, and begin to act for it, so that their reality is geared to the intrusion of the spectator. This is as close as film has ever come to providing the creative "feedback" which live performances often cause as a result of the interaction between actor and audience. The script for this unique method of film-making was conceived by Shirley Clarke and was written in collaboration with the play's original author. Jack Gelber was present on the set during much of the shooting, and conferences between the two took place daily.

The film was shot in nineteen days, and at this writing is still being edited. It has been invited to be screened at the Cannes Festival, *hors concours*, as the special presentation of the Association des Auteurs et Réalisateurs du Cinéma, which yearly invites one film because it believes it to be of great importance though it has not been otherwise submitted.

The film was shot with complete union crews. Some delays were caused by the fact that many of the camera movements and other technical things had never been attempted before, and more than once did the union men complain "You can't do that." In one case, Shirley Clarke finally had to shoot a scene herself with a handheld camera, and thus one more technical impossibility was made possible. However, she avows that as a general principle she found many of the union people ready to experiment with new ideas.

The importance of *The Connection* is not so much in the manner in which it was made or in its final quality. It is important primarily because it *was* made, and because it was made with a clear consciousness of audience participation. This is really a most important point, and one which ties in with the work of film-makers in Italy (Antonioni), Japan (Kurasawa), France (Godard), and Poland (Wajda), who are all working toward the establishment of a new, expressive cinematic syntax, the basic element of which is greater allowance for public intelligence and discrimination. All the films made by these people, and *The Connection* perhaps most of all, are antifilmic in the sense that they do not *explain* but *present*, and that only to the extent that nature presents itself to the artist to be moulded in his vision.

In this sense, *The Connection* is probably the most up-to-date work, culturally, that the United States has produced for some time, and its appearance at this time ties in with other cultural developments outside of the cinema. Objectivism in literature, the revival of alienation in theater, some of the best of beat poetry, all point to an increased transference of artistic-creative responsibility to the recipient. Thus *The Connection* cannot really be subjected to standard criticism, which tends toward the establishment of objective judgments on the perception level alone; rather, its final impact will actually depend on the degree to which each viewer is able to *give* to it of his own substance and his own life.—GIDEON BACHMANN

GEORGE BLUESTONE

Adaptation or Evasion: "Elmer Gantry"

In the past few years it has become a truism that film and fiction are autonomous forms. In the case of ELMER GANTRY *concessions to autonomy have been particularly easy for critics because Sinclair Lewis gave Richard Brooks carte blanche to make his own film; and Brooks's changes have been so extensive that one need hardly demonstrate formal and material distinctions between the media. The novel and film have the same title, but no one would confuse them as the "same" work. The following article traces the way in which film conventions forced ultimate changes in meaning, and in substance questions the assumption* that the film is an improvement over a weak novel.*

The famous "Production Code to Govern the Making of Talking, Synchronized and Silent Motion Pictures," adopted in 1934 by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, and recently amended, is quite explicit in its strictures on the treatment of religion. Article VIII, Section 2, reads, "Ministers of religion in their character as ministers of religion should not be used as comic characters or as villains." In spite of erosions in the letter if not the spirit of the Code (mainly through successful court suits over films like *The Moon Is Blue, The Man with the Golden Arm,* and *The Miracle*) Article VIII has remained unshakable.

Richard Brooks's alterations, operating within the spirit of Section 2, are particularly revealing examples of Hollywood tailoring. In a scene where Sharon and Elmer are trying to persuade the ministers of Zenith to accept the revival troupe's terms, Sharon groans, "Sometimes I wish money were not the third arm of the Church." The ministers are, on the whole, a well-intentioned lot. Reverend Gilliam, for example, makes a pious and honest complaint about empty churches and adds forlornly, "We don't have enough milk for our children." The burden of the commercial argument is carried not by any number of Lewis's available hypocrites, but entirely by George F. Babbitt, whose character has been prodigiously developed for the purpose. It is he who wants to make Christianity a "success," a "going concern"; it is he who represents institutional bigotry: "Every President," Babbitt warns, "has been a Mason and a Protestant. And now a Catholic is running for President." (The time has been conveniently shifted to 1928 solely, as far as I can see, to permit this line to harpoon the audience.) And when Reverend Garrison protests, "Religion is not a business," it is Babbitt who responds, "Then it ought to be." This moral maneuvering must have been deliberate, for Brooks, as screenwriter and director, has gone to great pains to establish the fact that neither

* On David Susskind's "Open End" TV forum last spring, Fred Zinnemann, Jerry Wald, George Cukor, and Mr. Brooks let go some timid barbs of self-criticism, but to a man they defended *Elmer Gantry* as a striking example of Hollywood's "new maturity."

Sharon Falconer nor Elmer Gantry is rightfully ordained. By attributing all the arguments for a huckster's Christianity to our old friend Babbitt, the Prince of Provincial Rotarianism, and to the pseudo-minister Gantry, Brooks has removed the Lewis curse from institutional Protestantism and permitted a sweaty, small-time real estate operator and an evangelical charlatan to function as scapegoats. He has made a major shift from one set of thematic conventions to another. The novel has always allowed—even required—a frank indictment of institutional sin; the Hollywood movie has always considered evil an individual aberration.

Take an even more provocative insight at the heart of Lewis's vision: the connection between sexual repression and orgiastic conversion.* There has been considerable disagreement on the merits of *Elmer Gantry* as a durable novel. On a recent rereading, Maxwell Geismar still considers it "one of the most ambitious, confused, and puzzling of Lewis's works." When the novel appeared, William Allen White said that, in *Elmer Gantry* at least, God had struck the artist Sinclair Lewis dead. Even today, reviewers who praise the energy or intentions of Richard Brooks's film take it for granted that *Gantry* is one of Lewis's weakest books. One of the exceptions is Mark Schorer, who describes the novel as a work of pure revulsion in the tradition of Swift. "This is a world of total death," said Schorer, "of monsters without shadows. It is, in my view . . . the purest Lewis." I am inclined to agree with Schorer's reading. The current critical formula, derived from Alfred Kazin, describes Lewis as a "superior journalist," a master of surfaces, all crust and no filling; in short, a man without a center who suffered the agony of outliving his usefulness. More recently there have been attempts to see Lewis not as a realist or satirist at all but as a congenial myth-maker who, under the pretense of attacking America, was carrying on a covert love affair with Sauk Center, Minnesota. It seems to me that neither emphasis catches that troubling spirit which has eluded us for thirty-five years.

Undoubtedly, in Geismar's terms, *Elmer Gantry* gives us "the sensation of another excursion into the Inferno, a nether-world composed of blind religious paroxysms, of a society that lacks all sense of religion." And I agree with Schorer that "of all the forms of relationship that the novel presents, the sexual relation is the most undilutedly brutish." I would also submit that what Lewis renders as well as any American novelist is the terror of sexual impotence in the muscular Christian, the athletic success.

Elmer is Huck Finn grown up, the adult sensual man, who swings endlessly between bodily pleasure and Puritan guilt, sometimes exulting in his hedonism, sometimes hiding beneath a brutal self-deception. Mark Twain knew precisely why he didn't want Huck Finn to grow up. Elmer Gantry, having no idyllic river and no territory to retreat to, is the monster created when Aunt Sally not only tries, but succeeds, in civilizing him. Leslie Fiedler may be right about the inability of American writers to confront, let alone create, mature, passionate, sexual love between men and women; in any case, it is surprising that in *Love and Death in the American Novel* he fails to discuss Sinclair Lewis. It seems to me that Elmer Gantry dramatizes the American male's neurotic fear of impotence. He is the bedroom athlete, the coldly seductive Don Juan who, by loving all women, rationalizes a murderous inability to love anyone.

In Lewis's novel, Elmer consistently treats his women as potential conquests. The sex act becomes a power struggle; tenderness and affection, strategies in manipulation. Again and again, in the familiar he-man pattern, Elmer satisfies a biological letch and quickly succumbs to post-coital disgust. What Lewis renders, finally, is a modern version of the romantic split between the illicit, sexual mistress and the frigid, respectable wife. In all cases, Elmer's

* In non-Hollywood films like Rogosin's *On the Bowery* and Maddow's *The Savage Eye*, the theme is in danger of becoming a cinematic cliché. When Lewis first explored it, the effect seemed novel, unbearable.

proof of masculinity is followed by revulsion. Women are made to be victimized, not loved.

The one exception, of course, is Sharon Falconer, the only woman with whom Elmer fancies himself in love. But in order to make passion satisfy, Lewis must work in one of the most bizarre sex-play scenes in modern literature. Sharon takes Elmer to Hanning Hall in Virginia, which "with its tall white pillars, white cupola and dormer windows" is literally "out of a story-book." After an elaborate game of teasing, Sharon finally comes to Elmer's bedroom, grasps his swart hair, and cries, "Come! It is the call!" She guides him through an insane Oriental bedroom to a special chapel she has constructed, presumably for emergencies like this. What follows, beneath a garish display of heathen and Christian idols, is every boy's fantasy of the erotic seduction. Lewis knew, of course, that fantasies always fail the dreamer. Two chapters later, Sharon Falconer dies in the tabernacle fire; Elmer will never be fulfilled again.

Given this familiar American equation between tenderness and weakness, brutishness and masculinity, it goes without saying that Elmer Gantry's wife—and it is frequently forgotten that he has a wife—will be sexually frigid. On their wedding night Elmer all but rapes Cleo Benham, dooming them forever to a loveless marriage. Like Fran Dodsworth after her, Cleo becomes the type of the sexless respectable mother.

At this point, one must qualify the uncontested assumption that Elmer Gantry is a monster, the incarnation of bare brutality. It seems to me that the relentless power of the novel derives, in part, from Lewis's fascination with Gantry, so reminiscent of Twain's admiration for Satan. It is frequently argued that the novel presents only feeble alternatives to Gantry's cynical public relations, his magnetic force, his circus tactics. But the very pallidness of ineffectual foils like Bruno Zechlin, Andrew Pengilly, and Frank Shallard (the tormented doubter who finally renounces his pulpit and is beaten blind by a contingent of Ku Klux Klanners)

Burt Lancaster as Elmer Gantry.

heightens Gantry's role as a Satanic embodiment of the naked will. The novel, in these terms, is as much a tale of devouring evil as it is a scathing exposé of the American Protestant clergy. Gantry becomes a kind of Twentieth Century rogue, a Till Eulenspiegel of the pulpit, whose very charm is an instrument of power. The difference, of course, is that Till was not guilty of what Schorer calls Gantry's "monstrous self-deception." Gantry is a primitive example of the organization man who works so hard and so long manufacturing an image that after a time he is nothing but an image. Lewis was bewitched by the type, being something of the type himself.

The conventions of Hollywood do not permit an equivalent rendering of Lewis's insights. Sharon Falconer is converted into a sunny, virginal true believer, who is never at home, like Elmer, in the hurly-burly of evangelistic success. "The difference between you and me," she tells Elmer, "is that I believe, I truly believe." And she spends a good part of the film persuading herself that she does. In a climactic scene, where Sharon (Jean Simmons) can no longer deny her sexual longing for Gantry (Burt Lancaster), she spirits him off in a car to see the tabernacle which Sharon, born Katy Jonas "from the wrong side of the tracks," has spent her life constructing. She stares ecstatically at a huge spinning crucifix, articulating her dream

of a church for all races, with soup kitchens and similar inducements. Finally, she hurls her challenge at Gantry: "And what have you got to compare with that?" The ambiguity is deliberate; for as Gantry draws her into the darkness under the boardwalk, cynically soothing her—"Nothing, I got nothing to compare with it; I'm just a hick from Kansas"—we realize that the spinning crucifix is, after all, a carnival phallus. Under this sign Sharon is seduced; under this sign she perishes by fire. The moral balance sheet—evasive rather than ambiguous—persists throughout the film. In a technically impressive fire scene, Sharon prays, "O God, reward us for our faith, and punish us for our sins." God and the film oblige. Sharon is indeed granted a small reward—she successfully heals a deaf man; and then an exorbitant punishment—a holocaust sweeps the tabernacle. Since the prayer is answered both ways, the audience is spared the agony of deciding whether God is in fact so scrupulous as to balance the ethical books of His true believers.

The same evasiveness is evident in Brooks's decision to write in Elmer's regeneration at the end. Standing in the rubble of the tabernacle, holding Sharon's charred Bible, he puts on a token performance in the style of the "old Gantry," which comforts his grieving followers. But when Bill Morgan urges him to start again, to carry on Sharon's work, he renounces his success: "When I was a child, I spake as a child. When I was a man, I spake as a man. And gave up childish things." What is Elmer renouncing? A careful note, at the beginning of the film, tells us that "certain aspects" of revivalism are open to criticism; that the freedom of religion is not the freedom to abuse religion. Elmer's renunciation, then, is not at all Sinclair Lewis's frontal attack on institutional fundamentalism. It is rather a much more self-congratulatory criticism of circus evangelism, a more obvious sitting duck.

Still, some revelations are perhaps entirely unconscious. Did Brooks realize that when Elmer and Sharon are sexually unfulfilled, they are most religiously fervent? As Elmer woos Sharon by proving himself at the pulpit, we are treated to a quick-cutting montage which includes the anti-Darwinian "monkey" ploy and the bizarre dog-howling scene. On the day after her seduction, Sharon is ready to chuck a hectic schedule for a picnic in the country. And when Elmer discovers that he is truly in love with Sharon (we know this because he refuses to be seduced by Lulu Bains), he asks her to leave the tabernacle and settle down to family life like "normal folks." The trouble is that Sharon and Elmer are not driven by these domestic impulses at the same time. Once again the lovers are victims of bad timing; once again, as mass culture analysts are fond of showing, the unstated assumption is a devastating self-deception: what the public success really longs for—charlatan though he be—is the drab bourgeois anonymity of kids and apple pie. One of the many confusions in Brooks's film comes from the implicit statement that what Elmer hopes to be, deep down, is a Babbitt who doesn't get caught. Since religion is a surrogate for the sexually deprived, the alternatives are equally bleak.

I do not mean to slight some genuine innovations in the film. In his autobiography, Ben Hecht gives us an astute list of Hollywood formulas which every screenwriter is taught to respect. Today, only half the list is pertinent. It is still true, in Hecht's terms, "that women who fornicated just for pleasure ended up as harlots" (as Lulu Bains does); "that any man who was sexually active in his youth later lost the one girl he truly loved" (as Elmer loses Sharon); "that any man who indulged in sharp practices to get ahead in the world ended in poverty . . ." (as Elmer ends with nothing but his suitcase and the clothes on his back); "that there were no problems of labor, politics, domestic life or sexual abnormality but can be solved by simple Christian phrases . . ." (as Elmer solves them by quoting from Second Corinthians).

On the other hand, it is no longer necessarily true "that any man who broke the laws, man's or God's, must always die" (Elmer does not

die); "that anyone who didn't believe in God (and said so out loud) was set right by seeing either an angel or witnessing some feat of levitation by one of the characters" (Jim Lefferts, the free-thinking journalist, who believes in Darwin, remains both admirable and agnostic at the end). These are refreshing innovations and they do indeed create an illusion of depth and seriousness.

However, by shifting the emphasis from institutional to individual aberration, Brooks has created a maze of social implications, each of which is carefully denied. When Sinclair Lewis's novel appeared, Billy Sunday is reported to have said he "would have soaked Mr. Lewis so hard that there would be nothing left for the devil to levy on." No such storm has greeted the film—but not because we have matured or because the institutional problem is gone. A recent editorial in a Hearst newspaper uses language which could have been concocted by any Elmer Gantry: "One thing the Communists should understand. They may try to boss Billy Graham around, but they cannot boss the Almighty, and Billy Graham, in his own way, serves the Almighty faithfully and well." Because Sinclair Lewis was telling the truth, reading him, even today, is almost unbearable. Richard Brooks, locked in the evasions of a different set of conventions, has rendered the vision harmless.

IAN JARVIE

Towards an Objective Film Criticism

It is always easier to say where criticism ought not to go than to say where it ought to go. The following article, written in cognizance of what has been said on these matters recently in SIGHT & SOUND, OXFORD OPINION, *and this journal, takes up this harder prescriptive task.*

What kind of film criticism do we want? What kind of things may a critic legitimately say about a film? What is the aim and technique of good film criticism? Every so often these questions possess us all. As a result of them Britain is presently in the grip of a revived commitment debate which, like the last one, grew out of a dissatisfaction with the existing state of film criticism here. The opening shot came from *Oxford Opinion*'s Victor Perkins criticizing the BFI pamphlet *Fifty Famous Films 1915–1945*.

"That is why *The Grapes of Wrath* 'must mark the highest peak of achievement in (Hollywood's) long traffic with the art of the film . . . For whatever other qualities this film may possess it is primarily a film about people, people who transcend the incidental evil and ugliness of life by their innate qualities of goodness and human courage. And when the meanness and malice of cruel men have done their worst it is the great spirit of Ma Joad . . . (et al.) . . . which remains. It is because of this positive affirmation of life that the film soars to greatness.' So there you are. Run out and get yourself a positive affirmation and, cinematically you're made. You'll have 'the greatest masterpiece the screen has ever produced' on your hands. Fine; but don't ask me to sit through it."

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IAN JARVIE

Towards an Objective Film Criticism

It is always easier to say where criticism ought not to go than to say where it ought to go. The following article, written in cognizance of what has been said on these matters recently in SIGHT & SOUND, OXFORD OPINION, *and this journal, takes up this harder prescriptive task.*

What kind of film criticism do we want? What kind of things may a critic legitimately say about a film? What is the aim and technique of good film criticism? Every so often these questions possess us all. As a result of them Britain is presently in the grip of a revived commitment debate which, like the last one, grew out of a dissatisfaction with the existing state of film criticism here. The opening shot came from *Oxford Opinion*'s Victor Perkins criticizing the BFI pamphlet *Fifty Famous Films 1915–1945*.

"That is why *The Grapes of Wrath* 'must mark the highest peak of achievement in (Hollywood's) long traffic with the art of the film . . . For whatever other qualities this film may possess it is primarily a film about people, people who transcend the incidental evil and ugliness of life by their innate qualities of goodness and human courage. And when the meanness and malice of cruel men have done their worst it is the great spirit of Ma Joad . . . (et al.) . . . which remains. It is because of this positive affirmation of life that the film soars to greatness.' So there you are. Run out and get yourself a positive affirmation and, cinematically you're made. You'll have 'the greatest masterpiece the screen has ever produced' on your hands. Fine; but don't ask me to sit through it."

Generally the argument has been between those who attacked all criticism, such as that cited above, which could have been written on the basis of the plot summary and involved no knowledge of the film medium, and the professionals. The latter showed a prickly sensitivity to this attack and tried to make out it was a matter of commitment, which it wasn't. It was a fact that

"British film critics have been forced to adopt this method because it is by far the easiest to practice; any fool can blather about positive affirmations. But in an art as new as the cinema it demands intellect, perception and sheer hard work to get to grips with aesthetic questions . . . the assumption [that a great film is made by the director's having his heart in the right place] . . . like the booklet, and like the criticism which it so accurately mirrors, stinks."

There is a good deal of sense in this; but there is also a lot more to be said. Perkins has failed to see the situation of the reviewer. Faced with the average movie output each week and required to say something about it the critic might find nothing of interest apart from the conventionally "dramatic" elements or the sociological interest of the milieu and its presentation. Being a good critic he doesn't just want to rail on about the length or the ineptitude of the direction all the time; he may feel his readers would prefer to hear about what is interesting in the film. Forced into this situation a person must either apprise himself of a minimum knowledge of drama and sociology, or else stop reviewing. Further though, this reasoning does not really apply to the highbrow critic. Sociopolitical discussions of Italian neorealistic films or juvenile-delinquent films still smack of a certain pretentiousness, a desire to say deep things. But a film cannot be great because it "speaks up for life." That could easily be an intolerably maudlin cliché. A newsreel of people starving moves us but not because it is a great film but because it is good *reportage*; we are moved by facts clearly put before us. Film art should create the required emotions with aesthetic means and in unrealistic concentration. Antonioni's *L'Avventura* conveys boredom and puzzlement but the viewer is never for a moment bored and puzzled. (This I think is the one silly thing in Noel Burch on *Une Simple Histoire*: he thinks boredom is conveyed by boring the audience. Nothing of the sort—Hanoun's complex cinematic means only appear so naïve because they come off so perfectly.)

Though Perkins and his colleagues are trenchant enough critics of criticism, their own attempts to write analytical criticism have not been particularly successful for obvious reasons. Among these are their rather woolly notions of analysis as being no more than the reading into the technical details of a shot the content it is intended to stress: they tend to concentrate on *explicating* the workings of a film, rather than getting down to actually *explaining* how it works. Their writing is far too descriptive. Thus they waxed ecstatic over the 180° rotary tilt in Nicholas Ray's ***Rebel Without a Cause*** as symbolizing Dean's relation to his mother. In examining the work of a director they fail to reconstruct his development and substitute instead lists of such characteristic shots, covering them with fulsome praise for their "beauty," i.e., visual delight plus meaning.

Presently . . . the Ethiopian called out, "I've caught a thing that I can't see. It smells like Giraffe, and it kicks like Giraffe, but it hasn't any form."

"Don't you trust it," said the Leopard. "Sit on its head till the morning—same as me. They haven't any form—any of 'em."

—**Kipling**, "How the Leopard Got His Spots"

At one time *Sight & Sound* did a very good job of analytical criticism, but there is little of it around today. However, *Film Quarterly* readers will be familiar with the attempts made in their pages to restate something on analytical lines. In particular I would instance Noel Burch's long study of Hanoun's *Une Simple*

Histoire; although his remarks were wrapped up in rather pretentious language Burch made a successful effort to get to grips with the problems of how and why this film worked, and of what light this threw on the relation between form and content.

Now while all such criticism is done by individuals, this does not mean that all judgments must be merely subjective. The first serious alternative offered to subjectivism was commitment. Burch's discussion, which is too long to quote, is clearly something quasi-objective to say the least, and in that it argues that form determines content, it would seem squarely uncommitted.

Here is a case then where objectivity has been achieved without commitment. But some people may even be surprised at the suggestion that some critics expected to reach objectivity through commitment. All values, they may say, are subjective tastes. It must be remembered, though, that in "Stand Up! Stand Up!" Lindsay Anderson said this subjectivity of morals was a thing to which he found himself "totally opposed." Let me try to show how he had come to think that objectivity in the arts as in morals could be achieved via commitment.

The commitment debate arises ultimately from the disappointment intellectuals experience when they first find out that it seems to be impossible to achieve objective judgments in the arts. The idea that there are true and discoverable critical principles has proved highly contentious. From this failure to find true principles some people inferred the nonexistence of any true principles. This seemed to open the doors to subjectivism and total relativism, a prospect which appalled some. Since all principles are equally undemonstrable, they argued, which you choose must be a subjective or irrational decision. However, once you have made that initial irrational choice the situation changes: you then have a set of clear-cut principles which are true-for-you and which can be applied objectively.

The answer to this is that criticism is written by individuals; it is not a dish for which there is a recipe, just as there is none for film-making. Therefore commitment or the lack of it cannot be a part of this nonexistent recipe. Moreover, the critic who pretends to objectivity cannot overcome subjectivism by shifting it back one stage to a subjectively-arrived-at commitment.

Now as I too dislike subjectivism and the sort of pseudo-objectivism achieved by commitment I shall now try to formulate a solution to this basic problem as *my* alternative to subjectivism. I believe we can have rational film criticism because we can *learn* and come to *agree* about the meaning and value of films. But I think such rational criticism can only be created within a tradition which institutionalizes *discussion* of critical interpretations and evaluations: rationality consists in critical discussion which needs to be institutionalized if it is to be promoted. The steps of my argument are these.

(a) In seeking such an objective criticism we must not be overoptimistic and demand too much. Criticism and creation are human activities which cannot be programmed or replaced by a set of principles to be mechanically applied. We are logically limited by the fact that no criticism can replace the art to which it refers: in the end only the film can speak. "What the . . . film says *is* how it says it, so that no textbook distinction between form and content is possible," wrote John Taylor (*Sight & Sound*, Winter 1956–1957, p. 164).

(b) But not demanding too much does not mean giving up the hope of objectivity. We often agree in judgments, especially adverse ones, and common sense tells us this is not a random matter. We should analyze our reasons for disliking a particular film and see how far we agree in reasoning; and we should see whether we dislike other films for the same reasons. This requires very detailed analytical criticism: what did *those* placements and *that* movement mean in the context of that shot; what did *that* shot mean in that sequence; do *those* sequences gel into anything coherent, and so on.

(c) Much turns on our setting up too strong adequacy criteria for objectivity. Surely the model of objectivity is science, and here it does

not mean "detachment"—which in any case is impossible to achieve. Philosophers of science argue that scientific statements are objective to the extent that they are intersubjectively testable or criticizable. That is, no matter who sets up or observes the test experiment they will agree on the results. There is no harm in film criticism copying science to the extent of making clear-cut statements about the way the film works, the effects it has, which the reader can easily test for himself when he sees the film. Since he has a clear-cut statement and the same film before him, he can argue about it: both as to meaning and, stemming from this, value. One man can laud *Umberto D* because of the way it stresses human values; another can reply that our pity is aroused by simply *presenting* pitiful situations rather than artistically transmuting them.

(d) Were such a tradition of analysis and discussion set up we should be clear about what sort of principles we can expect it to produce. They would be tentative canons subject to revision in the light of criticism. Above all they would be negative, not positive principles; good art like the good life is hard to legislate for, hard even to agree upon; but bad art, like moral evil, provokes a wide measure of agreement. Our principles can therefore be expected to be negative limiting principles stating what to avoid, what not to do, what is no good. They would also have to be framed in such a way that they merely outlined incompetence, and did not close off the way for such innovators as Welles, Hanoun, Antonioni—all of whose unorthodoxies could easily have been mistaken for ignorant rule-breaking.

In view of this argument the oracular tendencies of present critics must go. They must be more humble in putting forward interpretations and evaluations for discussion. They should stop pretending their colleagues do not exist and pay attention to everything published before their deadline and, *if they disagree, if they want to say something different, they should argue their case in terms of what has already been said.*

Take, for example, *Psycho*. Because of press show discomforts most of the British newspaper critics attacked it violently. Then the magazines came out and what did we find:

> A reprehensible affair, perhaps; but it is a bit late in the day to start moralising about what Hitchcock chooses to do, and how—in this case brilliantly—he chooses to do it. (—Penelope Houston in *The Monthly Film Bulletin*)

> *Psycho* reflects the disease that is currently riddling the whole Western Cinema, particularly Britain and the United States. It underestimates its audience; it turns something of human consequence into a fairground sideshow . . .
>
> Unlike the nauseating *Peeping Tom, Psycho* attempts no real depth of characterisation or any real analysis of motives. (—Peter Baker in *Films and Filming*)

Now of course they do read each other: one critic called the psychology at the end bogus and without exception they all retailed that line thereby demonstrating they knew nothing of psychology or Hitchcock. The psychology was actually immaculate and beautifully put over, as one might have expected with Hitch. They swallow what others say without admitting it and, in Baker's case, go so far as to make statements about *Psycho* and *Peeping Tom* which clearly disqualify all their film criticism. In *Oxford Opinion* we are led a little deeper but no time is spent on the statements of other critics.

> The style of the greater part of the film is a strange blend of lewdness and puritanism which betrays an attitude of scandalised amusement—the misanthropic attitude, indeed, of a gossip.

They then analyze the relish with which this is told, the juicy details with which it is embellished, and its theme, appearances, and respectability.

> How does a film which I believe is accurately described as a work of gossip attain the stature not just of a work of art . . . but of great art? The answer depends upon one further subtlety in Hitchcock's technique; the director has interposed between himself and the audience a second personality—that of the gossip. Once or twice in the

course of the film we are confronted with an image which questions our whole response to the picture and forces us to ask whether this is really so amusing. I am thinking in particular of Norman's tired and isolated silhouette stretching above the quicksand. In the last three images—Mrs. Bates, the skull, and again the quicksand—the director steps forward in his own person to give the question a definite negative. It is not a subject fit for a gossip; it is fit only for a tragedian. And that is what Hitchcock finally shows himself to be. (—Victor Perkins)

(e) It would probably also help critics if they abandoned the idea that a work of art is a product of inspiration with a clear-cut and decidable meaning and value. Better the more realistic working assumption that it is a product of time, thought, hard work, and often compromise, and that it nevertheless retains a certain ineffable mystery. The little evidence we have available, such as Lindsay Anderson's *Making a Film* (about Thorold Dickinson's *Secret People*), Cocteau's *Diary of a Film*, and Lillian Ross's *Picture*, suggests very strongly that trying to pin down from outside just who is responsible for what in any film is an extremely hazardous process. Those who talk boldly of the recognizable "style" of a director can point to things like *Garment Jungle* where Aldrich's idiosyncrasies can easily be spotted. But how to account for the similar finish of films photographed by Toland, Wong Howe, or Ballard no matter who the director; how to tell which scenes in *Song Without End* or *Gone With the Wind* were done by Cukor?

Film critics would do well to remember that a film is to its director far more like what a building is to its architect than what an action painting is to its artist. How the good film, like the good building, manages to retain a certain mystery and aesthetic value despite all this can only be discovered if we pool our analyses and ideas in discussion.

With this in mind we arrive at some interesting conclusions about the way criticism should be written. First, it is the critic's duty to see the film several times and to study it in as great detail as he can, if he intends to write seriously about it. Second, it is his job to read and absorb all available information on, and discussion of, the making of the film and the artist responsible for it. Third, he should clearly articulate his own prejudices, preferences, or tastes in matters political, aesthetic, critical, and so on and not reify them into "obviously true" theories. Fourth, the critic should not take for granted films of merit; it is amazing enough that anything good appears at all; we should not be jaded but grateful. Fifth and last, a critic should be a person who loves and enjoys the medium he is criticizing; who tries to communicate those occasional hours there in the darkness when one gets an almost physical thrill from the perfection and power of a *Citizen Kane*, a *Place in the Sun*, an *Ashes and Diamonds*, a *Death of a Cyclist*, a *L'Avventura* and who, in the end, wants to deepen and enrich the experience of those who, encouraged by his writing, go to see the film.

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946, AND JUNE 11, 1960 (74 STAT. 208), SHOWING THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION OF *Film Quarterly*, published quarterly at Berkeley, California, for October 1, 1960.

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[Signed] Barnard Norris, Business Manager

Sworn and subscribed before me this 5th day of October, 1960.

[Signed] Sally Hawkins
Notary Public, Alameda County, California

(My commission expires May 1, 1962.)

DAVID STEWART HULL

New Films from Poland

Some years ago the Polish cinema burst upon a surprised world, forcing all to admit that Polish films were among the best made anywhere. Although Polish films remain exciting, much of the original impetus seems to have been expended, and the question of the future is increasingly difficult. The recent Polish series at the National Film Theatre in London gave some basis for evaluation, and for speculation on whether the Polish film-makers will be able to surmount the limitations which they, like their countrymen more directly concerned with politics, have had to face in the years since the Polish revolution against Stalinist control.

Answer to Violence (Zamach) (1958). Director: Jerzy Passendorfer. Scenario: Jerzy Stawinski. Camera: Jerzy Lipman. Music: Adam Walacinski. With Zbigniew Cynkutis, Roman Klosowski, Bozena Kurowska, Andrzej May.

Cross of Valor (1959). Director: Kasimierz Kutz. Scenario: Jozef Hen. Camera: Jerzy Wojcik. Music: Andrzej Markowski. With Jerzy Turek, Andrezej May, Aleksander Fogiel, Bronislaw Pawlik, Grazyna Staniszewska, Zbigniew Cybulski, Adolf Chronicki.

Lotna (1959). Director: Andrzej Wajda. Scenario by Wojciech Zukrowski and Wajda from the novel by Zukrowski. Camera: Jerzy Lipman. Music: Tadeusz Baird. With Jerzy Pichelski, Adam Pawlikowski, Jerzy Moes, Bozena Kurowska.

Much Ado about Little Barbara (1959). Director: Maria Kaniewska. Scenario by Miss Kaniewska and Kazimierz Korcelli, from the novel by Kornel Makuszynski. Camera: Antoni Wojtowicz. Music: Lucjan Kaszycki. With Malgorzata Piekarska, Ewa Krasnodebska, Jerzy Duszynski, Roman Niewiarowicz, Mieczyslaw Gajda.

The White Bear (1959). Director: Jerzy Zarzycki. Scenario by Jerzy Broszkiewicz, Stefan Matyjszkiewicz, Konrad Nalecki and Jerzy Zarzycki, from a short story by Robert Azderbal and Roman Frister. Camera: Stefan Matyjszkiewicz. Music: Stanislaw Wislocki. With Gustaw Holoubek, Adam Pawlikowski, Liliana Niwinska.

A Place in the World (1960). Director: Stanislaw Rozewicz. Scenario by Tadeusz Rozewicz and Kornel Filipowicz. Camera: Wladyslaw Forbert. Music: Lucjan Kaszycki. With Stefan Friedman, Boleslaw Plotnicki, Kazimierz Fabisiak.

See You Tomorrow (1960). Directed by Janusz Morgenstern. Scenario: Zbigniew Cybulski, Bogumil Kobiela, Wilhelm Mach. Camera: Jan Laskowski. Music: Krzysztof T. Komeda. With Zbigniew Cybulski, Teresa Tuszynska and Grazyna Muszynska.

Undoubtedly one of the cinematic mysteries of our time is the question of why the already acknowledged classics of the Polish cinema have yet to be seen generally in America. It is true that there was a brief season of Polish films on both coasts about a year ago under official auspices, but these, naturally enough, reached only a small audience, as did those Polish films entered in the San Francisco festivals.

So the American viewer is left to wonder

when he will be able to see *A Generation, Kanal, Ashes and Diamonds, Eroica, Bad Luck, Eve Wants to Sleep,* or *The Last Day of Summer.* Not all masterpieces, certainly, but all worthy of the serious attention of anyone interested in the film.

And, in the meantime, the Polish cinema does not stand still; every year it turns out a number of the most fascinating and original products to be seen on either side of the Iron Curtain. In recent months, British audiences have been in the enviable position of being able to see a representative sampling of what the Poles had been doing between 1958 and 1960 in a special season at the National Film Theatre. Although the newer films were less startlingly magnificent than, say, the Wajda trilogy, there was still plenty of excitement generated in these off-beat examples.

The series was prepared with what certainly must have been loving care by John Minchinton, the local representative of Films of Poland, and each film was an individual example of some unique trend in the modern Polish cinema. Mr. Minchinton also provided a quite remarkable series of program notes which shed considerable light on the over-all picture of Polish production.

The audience attitude could only be called curious. It seems to be an unfortunate fact that Polish films are not "smart" at the moment and are snubbed generally by the arty elements that flock eagerly to anything bearing the label of *nouvelle vague.* One can only remark that it is their loss, for one has rarely been faced by such a fascinating, albeit often frustrating, group of films.

After seeing seven examples, one is struck by the curious atmosphere of the young Polish industry. There is an underlying controlled hysteria which is very reminiscent of the German theater, not so strongly of the cinema, of the last days of the Weimar Republic. Each filmmaker attempts to get as much as he can past the officials, and there is also a feeling of last-ditch desperation which is disquieting indeed. Admittedly the Polish industry is the freest of any behind the Iron Curtain (*vide* the Karlovy Vary discussions last summer), but there is an uneasy dividing line between creativity and government control that fluctuates in a most unpredictable fashion.

Someone remarked once that the difference between Poles and Russians is that the former can laugh at themselves, and a film such as *Bad Luck* (see *Film Quarterly,* Winter 1960) is an example in point. Yet that laughter is too hysterical at times to hold much conviction in it, but rather a let's-see-how-far-we-can-go attitude which can only be labeled as unhealthy.

Undoubtedly the youth of most of the directors contributes to their general dissatisfaction with their world, and gives them the energy to bang their heads against the wall as long as the government tolerates it. Although this implied resistance to the *status quo* is treated with some restraint, it can take bizarre forms such as a retreat into never-never land and a rather detached view of reality in which indeed "things are seldom what they seem."

The most interesting example of this is undoubtedly *See You Tomorrow,* an entry at the 1960 San Francisco festival which was reviewed in the last issue. Most of the pertinent points can be found in that review, but it is interesting to re-examine the opening sequence of that film. In this scene, underneath the titles, one sees a tragic little mime in which a pair of hands grope hopelessly for a ball of light. If this looks vaguely familiar, the last example (mercifully) was seen in Stella Adler's *Hands* (1929), a typical product of the dying days of cinematic expressionism.

The viewer learns some thirty minutes later that the hands are an element of student theater pantomime in Poland today. Yet this very first scene gives a clue to what will come later, *i.e.,* the film's escapism, its romanticism, in short, its debt to the worst elements of pre-1933 German theater.

This is not to deny the charm of Janusz Morgenstern's film, nor the sensitive acting of Zbigniew Cybulski, who also contributed the scenario. How much of the film's failure is due to official interference in the form of last-minute scenario revision will never be known. One

SEE YOU TOMORROW: *Zbigniew Cybulski and Grazyna Muszynska.*

would think that American audiences would find *See You Tomorrow* interesting and worth seeing, and undoubtedly it will receive general art house release.

A second form of escapism, or call it what you will, is into the film about World War II. This is not only certain of pleasing the government, but also does well at the box office if plenty of action is supplied. Jerzy Passendorfer's *Answer to Violence* is a good example. It could have been made in a dozen other countries, for it is the least uniquely Polish of the films under construction. Its story, based on fact, concerns the assassination of the SS Commandant of Warsaw. Given an unusally interesting set of circumstances, one is sad to see it given a curiously Hollywood cops-and-robbers treatment, however slick and expertly made. It is fascinating to ponder what the results might have been had the scenario, very well written by Jerzy Stawinski, been filmed by Munk or Wajda, as were some of his other scripts, notably *Kanal*, *Eroica*, and *Bad Luck*. On the credit side, the very young and none-too-professional actors perform their parts with enormous conviction, and Jerzy Lipman's harsh photography has its usual grim power.

THE WHITE BEAR: *Gustaw Holoubek, Liliana Niwinska, and Adam Pawlinkowski.*

Another safe escape can be found in the realm of literary classics, and on the lighter side of things, *Much Ado about Little Barbara* is probably the best children's film since *Emil and the Detectives*, although some of the subtleties of the newer film will be above the average juvenile audience. Directed by the talented Maria Kaniewska, the film is based on a popular children's classic of the early part of the century. In Poland it proved the box-office champion of the year, and in London even the most cynical viewer was impressed by *Much Ado*'s avoidance of the ever-present pitfall of the sentimental cliché. One is particularly intrigued by the occasional flashes of genuinely black humor: a guest appearance of the popular Bogomil Kobielka (hero of *Bad Luck*) as a twitching insomniac, and a marvellously designed visual joke in which the minute heroine, dressed to the tips of her tiny toes in crinoline, takes a pratfall in a muddy stream. Perhaps the most awesome tribute to Miss Kaniewska's talents is the fact that the heroine was but five years old when the film began, but "Basie" moves through her cleverly limited paces like the seasoned trouper she will no doubt become. It is doubtful how exportable this is, for it has a rather strong Polish flavor which might be too unusual for the average American audience. Yet, its humor is quite universal and the children in the London audiences seemed to follow every complicated, subtitled turn of the plot with rapt attention and identification.

The problem of the Jew in the last war is also

relatively safe material, and certainly popular with East European film-makers lately (for example, the Czech *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness,* and the Yugoslav *The Seventh Circle* and *Kapo*). Yet the Poles have managed to pull an unusual twist in *The White Bear,* about a Jew who managed to evade the Germans during the occupation by hiding in a bear-suit and posing with Nazi bigwig visitors at the ski resort of Zakopanie. Complications set in when the "bear" is bought by a neurotic young German officer to please his mistress. The hero is eventually unmasked, but at the end of the film, seemingly having evaded the Nazis, he lopes off into the snowy darkness, still wrapped in the bear costume. Unbelievable as it may sound, the scenario is based on a real occurrence in the winter of 1942. Jerzy Zarzycki's direction is at times uncertain, but the photography of Stefan Matyjszkiewicz (who also worked on the scenario) is brilliant, particularly in the stunning snow exteriors. For some peculiar reason, the final all-important shot seems to have been spoiled in laboratory processing, and considerably diminishes the impact of the film. The acting of Gustaw Holoubek as the "bear" is superlative, making one all the more anxious to see his highly regarded work in the as yet unsubtitled and unexported *One Room.* Certainly the fresh touches here do a lot to make what might have been a merely grotesque subject an often powerful study of inhumanity.

Perhaps no other recent Polish film has been as abused as Wajda's *Lotna.* Apparently it will be placed as the fourth film in that director's exploration of the last war, but it is sharply different in mood and style from the earlier *Generation, Kanal,* and *Ashes and Diamonds.* To those who were deeply impressed by the first three films, *Lotna* remains a perplexing problem, and reactions in Poland, Western Europe, and San Francisco (at the 1959 festival) were sharply mixed.

It is probably no exaggeration to say that *Lotna* is Wajda's most personal film, and his most enigmatic. At times it seems almost scriptless, drifting into the most diffuse symbolism and expressionism and dwelling at undue length on random picturesque objects in the camera's path. Yet in the long run this curiously romantic treatment seems right for the story of the last days of the Polish cavalry in the golden autumn of 1939.

"Lotna" is a white horse which brings death to each of its owners until it is killed by one of the last survivors of the regiment. The story has all the elements of a chivalric hallucinatory delirium, its half-real world exploding into pure fantasy at the turn of a road. Across the screen in both color and sepia (night scenes only) rush the gallant Polish cavalry, charging German tanks with sabres, and just as in a fairy-tale, no one is hurt, despite bombs and shells exploding everywhere. Then, very suddenly, death becomes *very* real in some memorable episodes. Lipman's camera catches such striking shots as a horse dragging the dead body of a soldier, a brilliant piece of bittersweet caught between his foot and the stirrup; two lovers munch apples stored in a coffin in the middle of a stable that looks for all the world like Andreiev's set for Polly's wedding in Pabst's *Dreigroschenoper.* One does not quite know what to make out of all this, but it is undeniably impressive and *Lotna* will undoubtedly become a cult picture in the years to come. It is safe to say, however, that it is certainly the *oddest* film to come out of any country in recent times. In the midst

LOTNA: *Jerzy Moes and Bozena Kurowska.*

of such baffling obscurities, the actors tend to become rather lost, but the leading roles are most convincingly played by some winning young performers.

It is unfortunate that the inevitable comparison will be made between *A Place in the World* and *Les Quatre Cent Coups,* which Rozewicz's film vaguely resembles. It is foolish to compare these two films, for their approaches are radically different, yet each is intrinsically honest in the same ways. The print shown in London was accompanied by an earphone translation and some nuances were undoubtedly lost, yet the small audiences responded well to the directness and touches of simple humor in the story. One feels American viewers would particularly enjoy the scene in which a befuddled bar patron carries on a baffled one-way conversation with a Louis Armstrong recording of "When the Saints Go Marching In" being broadcast on the house radio.

Cross of Valor is in many respects the most interesting film discussed here. It is a film in the tradition of the past Polish cinema, refusing to compromise for the most part, and taking a hard and often healthily satirical look at the overly glamorized immediate postwar period.

The director, Kazimierz Kutz, made his film from three unrelated short stories by the author Josef Hen, and if the results are uneven, it is nevertheless a formidable first effort from this young director. The first story, "The Cross," is the least successful, although reportedly the most difficult to film. It concerns a young soldier, unfortunately miscast, who receives the Cross of Valor for wiping out a machine-gun nest. He is also given leave to visit home, but discovers that it has been leveled by the enemy, and only a crazed old man is left to tell the sad story. Back at the regiment, the soldier's unwillingness to volunteer for reconnaissance work is misunderstood by his comrades, one of whom remarks, "I don't understand you . . . now that you have nothing to lose."

The second story is even more simple. "The Dog" is picked up from a desolate field by a sympathetic soldier in the area of the recently liberated Auschwitz camp. But it soon becomes

From the second episode of CROSS OF VALOR: *Aleksander Fogiel and Bronislaw Pawlik.*

obvious that the deserted animal was once a guard dog at that institution, and the soldiers decide to kill it. At the last minute they find they cannot, and leave it obediently standing on a lonely hill while they hurl mud and epithets at it. Here, Kutz is at the top of his form, and the grainy photography of Jerzy Wojcik matches some of his best work on *Eroica* and *Ashes and Diamonds*. The shots of the returning prisoners clogging the roads in all directions are particularly memorable.

The third tale is "The Widow," a comedy about the very young widow of a hero of the last war, who is made the unwilling heroine of an over-zealously patriotic small town, led by a ridiculous Communist. When the much idolized young lady falls in love with a stranger to the area, only to be thwarted by the locals, she runs off with her lover on the day that she is to dedicate the new House of Culture. Filmed in a charming rural locale, this episode has some riotously funny moments, although as a whole the joke fails to come off completely. What is perhaps most remarkable is the political daring of this story, in which a number of the sacred cows of communist ideology are scathingly ridiculed. Fine acting is contributed by the indefatigable Zbigniew Cybulski, this time without his dark glasses.

What has mainly gone wrong here is indecision of how far to go in what direction. And Kutz is too young to avoid some painful clichés. (As a paramount example, in the first episode the young soldier deliberately opens and shuts the gate to his ruined home—although the surrounding fence has been completely destroyed.) Yet such weaknesses are more than offset by powerful flashes of youthful daring and originality.

The seven films that have been discussed are remarkable for originality of approach if not always choice of subject matter. They are without exception brilliantly photographed, beautifully scored, superbly recorded, and above all, freshly directed despite their faults.

If these films are to be regarded as a form of escapism, and as a let-down from what one might call somewhat prematurely the "golden age of the Polish cinema," they are nevertheless worthy additions to the all too hackneyed repertoire of foreign films imported for American consumption.

The Art Film and Its Audiences

We regret that we must postpone our promised article on the outcome of the Antioch Symposium. Several encouraging developments are now taking place in exhibition and distribution, and we will wait to give a fuller report than would be possible in this issue.

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SMILES OF A VIRGIN STRAWBERRY. "Abysmal."—Welton Smith. "Incredibly bad." —James Orem. "Corny."—Nacho Bravo. "Magnificent."—R. W. Mann. SMILES OF A VIRGIN STRAWBERRY (A new oldtime silent comedy). Robert Mann, 47 Aura Vista Drive, Millbrae, California.

Would appreciate hearing from anyone having pertinent information about U.S. Film Service, its films, and related films of "social awareness" in the 1930's. Larry J. Logan, 309–10 Stanford Village, Stanford, California.

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WALLACE THURSTON

Creative Film Award Winners: 1959 and 1960*

The Creative Film Foundation joins with New York's Cinema 16 in making yearly awards to outstanding examples of recent work in the independent, experimental motion picture. The showing of the films on the evening of the awards has come to be an impressive and eclectic annual anthology. As one views the different films—and realizes the circumstances under which most were made—he can measure his gratitude, not only that so many are good, but that such movies get to be created at all. Indeed, many of these film-makers—often working with no other support than their incomes from their regular jobs – must respond with irony when we call them *independent.* They would agree that they certainly are quite free, in the main, from any outside resources, systematic means of distribution for their output, or even recognition. Each in his own way has maintained a dedication against odds, and we can hope that these Creative Film Awards are part of a growing awareness of their work.

Of the 1959 winners, one of the most arresting was Stuart Hanisch's *Have I Told You Lately That I Love You.* A bitterly sardonic comment on the mechanical impersonality which seems so often about to submerge all of us and to replace any actuality of human experience, it follows a California family through twelve or fourteen hours. The film concentrates on the machines and apparatus by which the day is accomplished until, at night when the husband returns home and moves in eerie wordlessness to set the automatic phonograph, human speech seems to have been abandoned as superfluous. In one scene, the wife consumes a heady draught of passion from the television set ("Have I told you lately that I adore you?") while her husband sits alone in the twilight kitchen over a packaged meal. His own involvements at this moment are obscure—some must be the memory of the avoided traffic jam, an event in his earlier hard-forged odyssey toward nowhere we can accept as particularly worth going.

The depiction of mechanical processes—so often used in film sequences to create suspense —is employed in this movie quite differently. As the camera portrays the turning wheels and dropping bolts, and the human content seems more and more to recede, there is generated a sense of grinding desolation and sad futility. Indeed, toward its end, the film consciously employs a slowed, deliberate tempo in the human movements which renders them strange—even, somehow, anachronistic. The people have become ghostly, marginal inhabitants of a world which properly belongs to the machines.

This was the longest—seventeen minutes—of all the works shown on the 1959 program. (Significantly, it was the only one to be made with institutional support.) The audience watched it that night with engrossed identification, recognizing faces of its world on the screen. A film, however, toward which response was more hesitant was Charles Boultenhouse's brilliantly promising *Handwritten.* If *Have I Told You Lately That I Love You* was a compelling treatment, essentially conventional in narrative technique, of a problem whose importance most will accept, the Boultenhouse film was a poet's effort to evolve a virtually new genre to express something which, for many, will remain ob-

* A complete list of the winners for both years will be found at the end of this article.

scure. He undertook, actually, to create a kind of poem which I do not believe has been before attempted—one in which verbal and visual aspects of a metaphor develop coexistently, of equal importance, each ramifying and completing the other. For example, at one point the spoken text says:

> Once I heard a white bird.
> I studied its speckled wings
> I deciphered its markings.

On the screen we see the poet turning the pages of a book. The metaphor—that the fluttering pages are the wings of a bird, and the print the speckled markings—only exists with both visual and verbal components present.

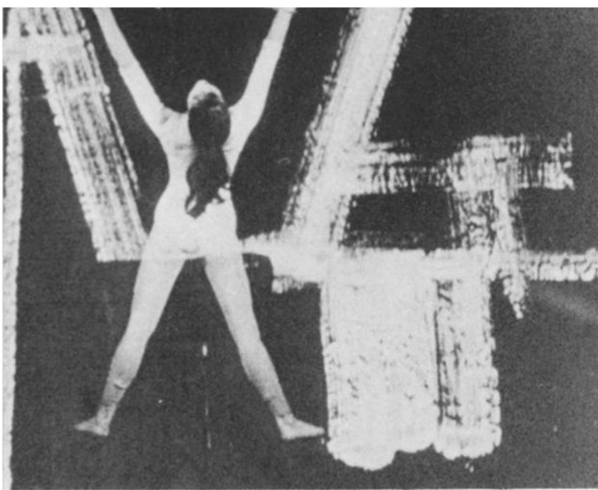
Handwritten begins with the poet's voice from a darkened screen, "The hand was man's first instrument of speech." And this is a literal truth: the extended hand—or perhaps still half-paw—clenched in anger or open in love was our first movement toward each other, our first declaration to each other that we mutually exist. Now, ages later, it is the hand the poet sees crossing the page, writing his poem, stating to the world his being. The earlier function lives on in the later, an inheritance, part of that primordial self we all carry under our accustomed clothes. The film develops this theme of all the prior existence to which the artist comes, the past which he must imaginatively recapture before he can intuit his own present. It uses not only live imagery, but paleolithic drawings and pages from a poem by Mallarmé, all synchronized with the author's spoken words and Teiji Ito's musical score. As a film-poem *Handwritten* needs to be encountered as fully and intently as any other poem, something, alas, which most audiences seem unprepared to do under the circumstances of a film showing.

HANDWRITTEN, *by Charles Boultenhouse.*

A quite different work, E. van Moerkerken's *Cuckoo Waltz*, a hilarious and irreverent prank, is quite literally a visual pun. The rhythm of strutting, pompous marchers (military, ecclesiastical, and the like) is cut directly into animal or bird movements so that tempo is unbroken and the juxtaposition absurd. The satirical effect is often heightened by some further pun —the white fronts of penguins for priestly surplices, for example. At one point, forward and reverse camera creates a mad ballet out of a parade of grimly uniformed women. Technically, the film is inspired by Len Lye's famed *The Lambeth Walk.*

Four of the works on the 1959 program were by painters who find in film a related but more various medium of expression. (Of the four, only Marie Mencken's charming *Dwightiana* did not make prominent use of animated painting.) Emshwiller's statement concerning his *Dance Chromatic*—sole winner of the highest of the three categories of award—suggests not only the spirit in which one of these painters approaches film, but also some of his conditions of work, and the expenses involved:

> "In *Dance Chromatic,* my first serious film, I wanted to try combining painting and dance in a number of ways. As a painter, I find that film, with its time dimensions, gives me a wider range of expression than plain painting. The ability to use change, sequence, and tempo provides a means to achieve intensities impossible in static work. I feel that the human figure, moving in dance forms, has a special significance, a basic appeal, which makes dance a particularly powerful visual art. This film



DANCE CHROMATIC, *by Ed Emschwiller.*

is the result of some of those attempts at combining abstract animated painting and the living figure, photographed and organized with a general overall composition in mind. It is a blend of improvisation and control.

"At times the painting was photographed first, at others the dancer, but all the combining was done in the camera. Since both were taken on the same film before processing, there was some suspense in awaiting each finished roll.

"The camera was a Bolex (used, $360). Film, processing, work print and a finished print came to $130. Music sound rights, re-transcribing, and soundtrack cost, $240. Other supplies (art materials, lights, backdrops, etc.) cost about $80. The total: about $450, excluding the camera—plus a good bit of time!"

Two other films on the program, *Bridges-Go-Round* and *The City*, though different in most ways, seem to require discussion together. Each projects some machine object into a created cinematic rhythm which is uniquely expressive. *Bridges-Go-Round* is, in the words of its maker, "a visual and tonal appreciation of the patterns made by bridges in space, their massive power, and the particular quality of motion that is given to bridges when moving in relation to them." The film builds out of the tense verticals and pure parabolas of modern bridges a semi-abstract pattern of lyrical and almost joyful movement. Of all the things of our age which surround us, none seem more susceptible of poetic description in terms of power become beautiful than the bridge and the airplane. The essential effect of Mrs. Clarke's film is an encounter with the inherent quality of one of these objects itself. *The City*, on the other hand, uses discs and other shapes of general machine derivation and synthesizes them into constructions of vaguely human shape. These rotate, pass each other, seem about to meet, fail of communication, and otherwise expend their energy in tormented and compulsive analogues of life. The movement of the mechanisms is incessant, for each is facelessly, mindlessly bound to its constellated way. The erotic inner action of some only enhances the sense of irony and hopelessness which this powerful film creates.

The evening of the 1960 awards utilized—in two discussion periods—ideas contained in a statement by the Creative Film Foundation concerning the American independent, experimental movie-maker. The Foundation felt it necessary to call attention to the fact that there is a substantial body of American film which, considered as a whole, has a character as distinctive and identifiable as that of any of the "waves," "movements," or schools of Europe. But perhaps the main characteristic of this body of work is that it defies any of the convenient means of definition and classification. The American artist has always been resistant to organized movements or defined schools, and his varied product in film defies comprehensive

BRIDGES-GO-ROUND, *by Shirley Clarke.*

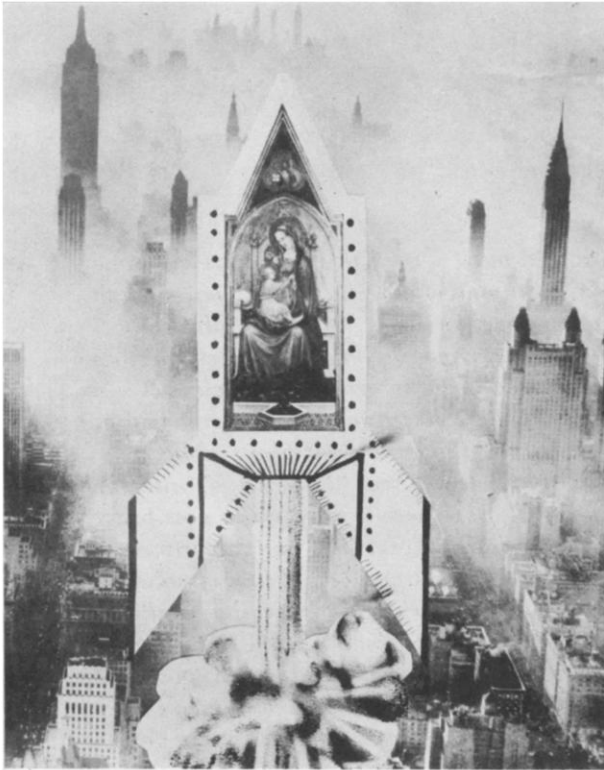
labels. There is no dominant, readily recognizable style, subject-matter, social or cinematic theory. Each individual, however, shares a determination to use the medium in a manner which would not be permitted within the conventions of the commercial entertainment film, whether the product of a large, established company or of a new "independent" producer. This mutual resolution, more than anything else, constitutes the identifying characteristic of the works for which the Foundation wishes to gain recognition.

The 1960 showings certainly exemplified this determination amid a diversity of content and approach. Richard Preston's *May 2, 1960* uses an animated collage technique to assemble cuttings from various New York newspapers on the date of Caryl Chessman's execution. The grisly suspense of that day is counterpointed against the repeated image of the chair which awaited Chessman in the death chamber. Other events are briefly represented in newspaper excerpts describing them, but the recurrence to the impending execution reflects the relentless pattern of attention of many people that day. The long delays over many years, and the establishment of Chessman as a conscious, feeling, intelligent being through his own writings, made him supremely accessible for a vicarious blood rite—were, indeed, almost a precise modern equivalent of the ancient preparation of the victim—and nothing could be more bitterly appropriate than to reflect the event through the mass prints in which the mass awaited and then experienced the ritual sacrifice.

Bruce Conner's *A Movie* maintains, for all its surface anarchy, sure command of one of the most powerful dramatic effects—modulation from the comic to a related seriousness. As we watch what we supposed to be merely uproarious gradually deepen into a significance we had not suspected, all our powers of response—both those we had summoned for the comic and those we now employ—operate to bind the effect upon us. The film opens with a succession of unrelated shots, mostly taken from stock footage—cavalry charges, ludicrous bicycle races, an angry elephant attacking. The principle is contradiction and juxtaposition—with the name of the artist held, like an omnipresent, mocking voice, on the screen for an unsettling length of time between some of the sequences. But even as the chaos seems complete, and the idea occurs to one that cinematic discontinuity is a technique without a future, the pace and character subtly change. Where formerly there was only paradoxical—if comic—succession, there is now an increasing gravity of pace as images of destruction or suffering follow one another. It is as if out of the unrelated welter of life itself a tragic principle were asserting its choices. And we now feel the uninterrupted force of this film's most powerful visual insight—that there is in certain dreadful scenes (the falling of the Hindenburg or the mushrooming of the atomic cloud) a kind of awful, deliberate grace. Unlikely as its beginning may make this seem, *A Movie* brings us to encounter as we may never have before the content of such shots as these, and one of the final sequences—a diver entering the hold of a sunken ship—is an appropriate symbol of retreat from the unendurable.

There were two films this year by Emshwiller. *Transformation* develops a series of visual abstractions into a compelling fabric of color and form. Not only do the shapes and tones evolve and change, but use is made also of the camera's ability to move in toward a canvas and away from it. His other work, *Life Lines*, like the 1959 *Dance Chromatic*, combines drawn or painted and live elements. Animation produces a labyrinth of variations on the linear qualities of a human hand and a nude model.

Science Friction uses the technique of animated collage for a satire on the rocket-infatuation of our time. Rockets impinge on the viewer through television screens, out of telescopes—indeed, all pointed objects, including the Empire State Building and the Washington Monument, become rockets and are dispatched heavenward. One of the best images of the film is a vast composite rocket made from many auto tail fins and ending in a coke-bottle nose. This, too, awaits its turn to blast off—as world leaders maintain nervous watch over each other through fantastic devices of long-range view-



SCIENCE FRICTION, *by Stan Vanderbeek.*

ing. The serious spoof of contemporary madness—and *Science Friction* is both an amusing and provocative one—is an area in which the experimental film can perform a service no commercial film would dare to undertake.

A Trip uses jazz to accompany semi-abstract suggestions of railroad tracks and a train. In its one minute of screen time it manages a rousing graphic impression on the spectator.

As a whole, the record of the two years of showings is extremely encouraging. Just as the most vital theatrical work of our time is done in the small off-Broadway house which presents plays no uptown manager will touch, so these films in their way are often more alive and important than much of the large commercial output. Each is the work of an artist who has come to film only for the reward of getting said something he feels no other medium can say as well—each is, in the words of *Handwritten,* "a scene of time held high."

The 1959 Winners

Have I Told You Lately That I Love You. (17 minutes) Special Citation. A University of Southern California production, directed and photographed by Stuart Hanisch. Scenario: Stuart Hanisch and Russell McGregor. Sound: Russell McGregor.
Dwightiana. (4 minutes) Special Citation. A film by Marie Mencken. Pictures: Dwight Ripley. Music: Teiji Ito.
Bridges-Go-Round. (3 minutes) Special Citation. A film by Shirley Clarke.
The Rose Window. (5 minutes) Award of Distinction. A film by Rubington.
Cuckoo Waltz. (4 minutes) Award of Distinction. A film by E. van Moerkerken.
Handwritten. (9 minutes) Award of Distinction. A film by Charles Boultenhouse. Camera: William Wood. Music: Teiji Ito.
The Room. (5 minutes) Award of Distinction. A FCI production by Carmen D'Avino.
The City. (15 minutes) Award of Distinction. A film by Wolfgang Ramsbott. Mobiles: Harry Kramer.
Dance Chromatic. (7 minutes) Award of Exceptional Merit. A film by Ed Emshwiller.

The 1960 Winners

Transformation. (5 minutes) Special Citation. A film by Ed Emshwiller.
May 2, 1960. (3 minutes) Special Citation. A film by Richard Preston.
Metrographic. (3 minutes) Special Citation. A Martin Toonder Films Production by Vittorio Speich. Camera: Antei Bolchorst. Music: Jan Walhoben.
Inner and Outer Space. (7 minutes) Award of Distinction. A film by Robert Breer.
Odds and Ends. (5 minutes) Award of Distinction. A film by Jane Belson Conger.
A Trip. (1 minute) Award of Distinction. A film by Carmen D'Avino.
A Movie. (7 minutes) Award of Distinction. A film by Bruce Conner.
Life Lines. (8 minutes) Award of Distinction. A film by Ed Emshwiller.
Science Friction. (9 minutes) Award of Distinction. A film by Stan Vanderbeek.
(The films are all distributed by Cinema 16, except for Mrs. Clarke's, which is handled by Contemporary Films.)

Outside the Frame

The temptation to burst out of the usual screen frame is not confined to Hollywood, seeking a commercial gambit sensational enough to counter the encroachments of "the little black box." The shape of the screen is one of the fundamental conventions determining many of the film's possible artistic strategies; it is a "limitation" in the sense that the conventions of any art, whether established or in flux, define its methods; a great film springs from the film-maker's ability to turn these "limitations" into the instruments of his art. But there is always the possibility that other conventions would be even more interesting; and experimental film-makers have thus from time to time looked to a dissolution of the usual screen shape. Griffith varied his frame by masking; Eisenstein expounded a theory of the "dynamic frame"; Abel Gance made his NAPOLÉON *for a triptych screen; at the Brussels and Moscow Expositions multiscreen arrangements were displayed. Two recent developments along these lines are discussed in the notes below.*

Vortex

Among the most revolutionary of experimental techniques is that developed by the San Franciscan Jordan Belson and shown in conjunction with concerts of electronic music as "Vortex," a series of programs which ran from 1957 to 1960 at the Morrison Planetarium in San Francisco. "Film technique" is really not an accurate term to describe the visual effects of Vortex, since film is only one of several projective methods used, and since, in contrast with film, Vortex is a "live" performance—that is, not one "recorded" on film or video tape.

Vortex, in Belson's words, is "a new form of theater based on the combination of electronics, optics, and architecture . . . a pure theater appealing directly to the senses." Essential is the use of the dome—it envelops the audience, who sit in a circle. Electronic music composed by Henry Jacobs, co-developer and audio editor of Vortex, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, Toshiro Mayuzumi, Henk Badings, and other leading composers in the field, was projected from a playback system consisting of forty speakers distributed behind the planetarium dome and in the center of the floor. By means of a handle, Jacobs was able to whirl the sound from one speaker to another; and a keyboard permitted him to bring in the speakers singly or in combination.

For the electronic compositions, Belson designed visual effects. Although no pieces were created expressly for Vortex, Belson hopes ultimately to work in direct conjunction with the composers. The visual images themselves are difficult to describe: they consist of non-objective symmetrical patterns which move and change, expand and contract; of color effects and black-and-white effects; of fade-ins and fade-outs; occasionally of the planetarium effects themselves—stars and comets; and of combina-

tions of all these. The images are projected by a dozen specialized devices, among them a standard film projector (though the audience does not get the feeling of a film on a screen, nor does it hear any sounds of machinery working); a flicker device; a zooming projector, which makes images loom down on the audience; a kaleidoscope projector; an irising projector to make areas of light or color expand and contract; a rotating projector; an interference-pattern projector, which from pin-point light sources reproduces the effects of intersecting patterns of grids. The combination of space, light, color, and sound creates an enveloping audio-visual experience in a completely controlled environment, in which the audience, once admitted, is not allowed to leave until the performance is over.

According to Belson, Vortex is the first proper setting for electronic music and nonobjective imagery, for the combination of which it was expressly created. The two media, Belson states, are related in the kind of equipment used to project them. He also believes them to be connected in their strong relevance to the subconscious mind and to basic psychological and physiological phenomena. Electronic music, he claims, makes use of reverberations of sound which are present in our perceptions when not blocked by repressions. Such reverberations are experienced by people under anaesthetic. Likewise, nonobjective images, Belson believes, can have an archetypal significance related to such phenomena as the symmetrical "stars" which one sees after a severe blow, and the moving color-design patterns created by LSD hallucinations. (Belson's interest in such aspects of visual experience goes back some years; one of his excellent abstract films was titled *Mandala*.)

Simpler and more direct evidence of the effect of nonobjective imagery was demonstrated in the pronounced audience reaction to certain Vortex devices: the production of vertigo, for example, or the inducement of anxiety and apprehension by use of the flicker device. (It is known that prolonged use of flicker can cause epileptic attacks: needless to say, the creators of Vortex did not try to demonstrate this.) Many of the effects, though almost subliminal, were still most impressive. The well-known influence of color on feelings of heat and cold, for example, was demonstrated when on one occasion the underheated planetarium was made comfortable for the audience by a simple change of color from gray to orange.

From the beginning of its run, Vortex was a huge popular success. About 60 performances were given to packed houses, and extra showings had to be scheduled to meet the demand. Vortex received international recognition when Belson and Jacobs were invited to give performances for the *Journées internationales de musique expérimentale* at the 1958 Brussels Fair.

Belson's other film work has also been shown at film festivals—at Venice, Edinburgh, and at last fall's San Francisco Film Festival. He has experimented with various techniques, for example animating by drawing on long strips of paper (rather than by the frame-by-frame method used in conventional animation.) At present he and Jacobs are working on a merging of electronic music and nonobjective imagery in a wide-screen process. Using an animation stand with color filters, slotted discs, and rotating devices, Belson produces some of the Vortex effects in his studio, and films them. He is attempting to pursue and develop certain effects discovered in Vortex.

And what about Vortex? The only reason it closed in 1960 was that the Morrison Planetarium found its own routine being too frequently disturbed. Belson and Jacobs want to give more showings, but not until their techniques are perfected: they regard the Morrison showings as experiments, just demonstrations that it "can be done." Rapid developments in electronic optics—oscilloscopes, computers, video-tape and the like—will undoubtedly provide Belson with further possibilities.

As to the ultimate significance of Vortex, Belson believes it to be, perhaps, a prefiguration of the theater of the future. Film, to him, is simply a transitional form between conventional theater and whatever theater will be in the future;

he does not regard Vortex as having much real connection with film: it composes in three dimensions, and produces a greater illusion of stereoscopic reality than any obtainable with film. Belson believes that its pure, nonobjective use of light, color, and sound make Vortex the most advanced form of theater yet developed.—HARRIET R. POLT

Atom

In a ten-minute color film made for the Atomic Energy Commission, Francis Thompson (*New York, New York*) has surveyed, and usefully sectioned off, the broad vistas of Cineramaland. On three 16-foot-wide screens, spaced one foot apart, an exciting triptych replaces the mural-like wall. Tentatively titled *Atom*, the film was made to accompany an AEC exhibition now touring Latin America: it dramatizes the drain on world oil reserves by mechanized farming, building, and transportation, and draws attention to the potential uses of nuclear power. This brief three-screen presentation offers a wealth of formal experiment, an achievement all the more remarkable in view of the bare three and a half months allowed for production.

The relation of the images on each screen gives, at one time, some of the visual effects and dramatic disclosures usually obtained serially by editing. The main kinds of relation displayed may be put down in terms of space, time, and conceptual level.

Space. (1) Width. A huge wheatfield filled with red combine-harvesters is seen in orthodox widescreen panorama, the machines passing elastically over the dark gap from one screen to the next. Or, to take another example, the two side images are faded out, leaving the haloed black eye of an eclipsed sun alone on the middle screen. (2) Depth. Here long, medium, and close shots are seen together. A long shot of a lab worker weighing crystals on the left screen complements a central picture of the pivot-arm and needle of the scales, while, to the right, materials lie in the balance tray. (3) Plane contrast. In the sequence on motor transport, cars stream along highways tilted upright on the right and left; in the center, they rush out at us upside down.

Time. (1) Unique action. Three earth-moving machines approach us over the brow of a hill; the nose of the one on the left is just visible, that in the center is rolling over the top, on the right a third rolls steeply down. The sensation is like watching a breaking wave: in the eye's right corner the wave has fallen, straight ahead it is crumbling, far off to the left it still rises to a crest. (2) Cyclic action. An oil pump at the head of a well is seen at the top of its stroke, at the bottom, and somewhere in between. This combination was made from a single shot, but because the movements are out of phase, this is hard to tell.

Conceptual level. Here animation and live action are combined. On the left screen is a whirling planetary system—a model of a nuclear fire. In the center a canister of radioactive material is moved from the fire through the tubing of a second model, and on the right screen a lab worker removes the canister from the actual tube.

Thompson's use of multiple screens differs sharply both from Charles Eames's seven-screen set-up—displayed at the Moscow exhibition—and from the three-screen arrangement of Abel Gance, who, to judge by report, used his lateral images as auxiliaries. *Atom* is tightly controlled (all sequence-changes, and almost all shots are cut synchronously) and suggests varied dramatic possibilities: it unites diverse "witness points" and "deployed views." To me, however, the absorbing visual richness of the show reduced the words of the commentary to scarce-heard murmurings at the edge of the mind. With this system used for documentary purposes, words will have to be used with far more restraint than hitherto.—ROGER SANDALL

ERNEST CALLENBACH

Going Out to the Subject: II

In FILM QUARTERLY *for Winter 1959, Colin Young and A. Martin Zweiback reported on films shown at the Flaherty Seminar of that year, noting their importance as indications that film-makers were seeking to use film as a means of escaping not only studios but also many of the preconceptions of "drama" and "form" that have been the studio rule. Another direction has recently been explored in three TV films produced for Time, Inc. by Robert Drew and made by Ricky Leacock.*

It is easy to feel that somehow it has all been slipping by. Hitchcock's camera at the beginning of *Psycho* makes a complete panoramic circuit of Phoenix, but it ends by disappearing into a hotel window. *The Angry Silence,* an oblique and farcial film, goes into a factory but does not notice what really happens there. And the usual Hollywood picture draws its images secondhand from novels and magazine stories. Nor are the documentarists much help, usually, forced by economics into the service of bureaucratic objectives or commercial chicanery. Meanwhile, however, back where we live . . .

It is this sense of missed observation, and the related sense of missed intensity, that new American film-makers hope to remedy. Some of them wish to do this through the story film, and we may expect to see films that approximate the new British and some of the new French films from these. But there are also film-makers who hope to breathe new life into the medium by nontheatrical means: by using the camera not to re-create but to *capture.*

Yanki No [sic]: the title too leads one to expect something related to *The March of Time.* And it is: a newsreel atmosphere, rough and real, even including still shots taken by news photographers. There is narration, also, but toned down now from the familiar Voice of Doom; and also, interestingly, simultaneously translated dialogue in the manner of political assemblies—we see lips speaking Spanish, and slightly behind them comes an occasionally halting impromptu translation.

The photography is a combination of improvised newsreel scenes and relatively contrived material. Ricky Leacock has assembled camera and recording equipment that is extremely small and light; and with it he is able to shoot scenes impossible for anyone working with the usual array of machinery. In *Yanki No* this is less important than in the other two films; nonetheless, he is able, for example, to film a discussion among a group of students without making them self-conscious.

Yanki No moves from an introductory sequence amid the shacks that cover the hills around Caracas: here, it says, is the problem. And then the film goes to Cuba, where a fisherman is moving into a small but nice concrete-block house with his family. We watch them, as we might if we were there: they are pleased, proud, a little embarrassed; there is a grand-

mother who doesn't like it a bit. Now politics hits us, like an operatic overture: the backdrops are shots of ordinary people, and in the distances advertising signs for American companies. Castro appears, at a huge rally; the audience (everyone is an extra in this revolution, if not a performer) is hysterically enthusiastic. The camera attends the rally, as it attends a smaller one for teachers being sent into the hinterlands; it watches, appraises. (Its appraisal is strangely favorable, for *Time*; but the film was made almost a year ago.) Intercut with scenes of the rallies are shots of the student discussion: and in this we begin to see one of Leacock's basic concerns and strategies. He wishes to use the camera to catch the tensions between the public and the private: the large gesture or official act, the private quiet statement or feeling. Castro plays with a pencil; he does his magnificent aria (we Norte Americanos do not understand Latin political style and it costs us dearly); the students attack and parry. The film goes back and forth, haphazardly but effectively. Finally the moral is pointed. But the effect is less "Now we've had the word," more "We were there, and they are human like ourselves, and what are we going to do now?"

Primary takes us to the domestic political scene: we follow Humphrey and Kennedy as they stump Wisconsin. The camera and microphone hunch back in big cars, and watch and listen. The candidates, weary, climb to the stages and do their acts: they smile, make small jokes, make different promises to different audiences. The farmers in the back country watch, impassively, wondering about parity; the kids in the urban Catholic centers sing. Then the cars move on to the next stop, through the lovely Wisconsin countryside, with desultory conversation, speculations. A TV show is staged, and Leacock relentlessly includes the technical preparations, the anxiety. Election day comes, and we watch the candidates listening to the returns. To both, it is an election in which victory will mean little, but loss much. The outcome wavers, hangers-on smile or frown; as people finally go to bed it appears Humphrey has won; in the morning Kennedy has it. In the last image an old car rattles away across the rolling farmland, and we all go on to other things.

It adds up to a dismal but fascinating picture, and a weird contrast with the first film. Here, in the paths laid down by hundreds of primaries, the candidates come to tread; they conform to a routine arranged by unknown functionaries; at the end, by the verdict of a mysterious impersonal network of communications, one of them wins and the other loses. The effects then impinge on other networks of wider scope; and much later, after many such primaries and the endless dealing that goes along with and behind them, one man is nominated, and possibly elected. Meanwhile, cries of *Yanqui no* resound through Latin America.

On the Pole is in many ways the most interesting of the *Time* films. It is a portrait of the life of a race driver, who wins the position "on the pole" at the Indianapolis speedway. We hang around with him for a week or so, just before the race. We sit in a stock car as he drives around the track, explaining just how he will drive the five-hundred-mile race itself. We watch him talking with fellow drivers, with newsmen, with his mechanic. He is a sports idol, of course, and he is given a good chance to win because of the position break. Little by little, we realize that he is phony and a fool; and the film, while remaining scrupulously documentary, becomes a kind of deadpan satire on American culture. There is the immensely developed technical base: the cars are masterpieces of design and construction, treated with intense, loving care. This technology is cynically at the service of a multitude of hicks, many of whom come to see blood. ("It would make Rome look sick!" declares our driver, but he is expressing pride at the huge crowd, driving in from hundreds of miles away, camping outside the gates.)

On the Pole is the most polished of the three films. The scenes of track life in the quiet days before the race are offhand but with a consistent note of tension. And when the mob finally

arrives the film becomes tighter, harder, with a faster pace. Our driver, settling into his shark-like car, prays for victory. The festivities include drum-majorettes and music, but soon all is blotted out on the sound-track by the roaring of the motors and the crowd (the sound is beautifully handled). The race begins. Much of it is endurance and continued high performance by engines; the cars go round and round. They make gas and tire-change stops. There are wrecks. A viewing scaffold collapses, and people are killed there too; ambulances come, but the cars on the track go on and on. Our man's car, in spite of all the precautions and rebuilding we have witnessed, develops trouble and he has to quit; another driver wins the race, the kisses, the photographs, the endorsements, while our man stands about. Then, with his relieved wife (he is still alive!) he goes on, to the next race. It is, the narration notes, a life that victory would also have ended—through retirement.

Thus summarized, *On the Pole* sounds like a documentary anyone might have made. What cannot be described is the casual yet powerful manner in which Leacock gets close to the driver, his fellows, and his wife. The observation is as acute as that of a fiction film or a novel. It is as if the film were entirely shot by candid cameras—though in reality Leacock is said to use this technique very rarely. He evidently has a gift somewhat akin to Lillian Ross's: he is able to make people go on being themselves even though he is there.

This is an immensely intriguing kind of break-through. For documentary as practiced in the classic manner has inevitably boggled at the impossibility of getting people to be themselves when surrounded by bright lights, confronted by an imposing camera rig, and dangled-at by microphones. This, coupled with a tendency toward sociologizing among the men who were drawn to documentary, has pretty well kept people out, leaving the field to machinery, landscape, lots of imposing narration to explain the significance of images, and the detailed portrayal of human actions only of the sort that can be "worn smooth by repetitions." Leacock escapes all these restraints, and manages to catch the human continuity and the moments of candor, hesitation, embarrassment, revelation as they occur. This is better than all but the highest acting, and certainly better than improvisation; and it is something that only film can do. It not only enables Leacock to get "out to" the subject; it enables him to get "into" it as well. And this is a great step forward. If other film-makers can follow his lead, it is entirely possible that a whole new documentary tradition will arise: a tradition of "meeting the reality of the country" in a more intimate, interesting, and humanly important way than any Grierson imagined.

HENRY BREITROSE

The Nontheatrical Film, 1960

During the halcyon days of the late Film Council of America, Paul Wagner, its president, noted that "16 millimeter is not a film width, it is a state of mind." After the Robert Flaherty Seminar and the San Francisco Film Festival "Film as Communication" competition, one is tempted to make a clinical interpretation of Wagner's statement.

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of course, than seemed to be humanly possible, but they were screened. There were more people than ever before, and the sessions were held in the Dummerston Grange Hall, rather than the Flaherty home. And there were probably more different varieties of film and semi-film people abounding than one could comfortably imagine. They ranged from those most concerned with the particular brand of 75mm lens used for a certain shot to those who cared little and knew less about film-making and were present merely to discuss the ideological content of the narrations or, in the language peculiar to film distributors, were there to "view with an eye towards purchase." Needless to say, but necessary to be correct, most people there were middle-ground, rational, honest, slightly awed, and decreasingly apathetic as the Seminar progressed. Speakers included Thorold Dickinson, recently of the United Nations Film Unit, whose comments made the incredible difficulties of producing meaningful films for the U.N. seem like the problems one would meet making a sponsored film, multiplying the number of sponsors by 90, and then having the sponsors all disagree, on various points, to varying extents.

Tom Daly of the National Film Board of Canada presented some new films from Canada. These included *Universe,* generally regarded as both an excellent film and a successful labor of love; two "Candid Eye" films done for CBC-TV, including *I Was a Ninety-Pound Weakling,* an amusing film about health faddism; *Blood and Fire,* a study of the Salvation Army and the strategies of religious conversion; *Back-Breaking Leaf,* a well-made film on the rigors of tobacco farming; and Guy Coté's *Roughnecks,* about oil-well workers, which passed the difficult test of being shown in the same week as an intensive study of *Louisiana Story.*

The *Louisiana Story* study occupied most of the mornings, and was led by Mrs. Flaherty. Nikos Cominos undertook, about a year ago, the compilation of all of the *Louisiana Story* work print into sequence, as first shot by Robert Flaherty and his cameraman Richard Leacock. The comparison between the material as shot and its final edited version, together with discussion of the various stages through which the film's conception progressed, was, for many, a revelation of Flaherty's extraordinary film-making abilities, for others a further disclosure of Flaherty's skill at translating personal moral and philosophical attitudes into cinematic terms. One would hope that the study materials become available for more general usage. It should also be noted, however, that this is not film-society stuff: the study film runs 95 reels.

Actually, it seems impossible even to attempt chronicling the Flaherty Seminar. In the largest sense what emerged from the experience at the seminar was an increased awareness of the fact that we really know very little about the communicative possibilities of the medium through practical experience. What did become clear was that films made for very specialized purposes can hold immense cinematic interest. There were, for example, more films made by the Puerto Rican film unit; scientific films by Roman Vishniac which integrate the exactness of medical science with the perceptiveness and poesy of a humanist; and some interesting films by the M.I.T. physics film group illustrating the relativity of motion and frames of reference. (The Vishniac footage, microphotography of living organisms, is especially astonishing. Strung together with impromptu narration, it does not constitute finished film, but it shows some extraordinary possibilities.)

The films received for the "Film as Communication" competition at the San Francisco Festival probably represent the most typical sample of American 16mm film-making assembled in recent years. The results, as it turned out, were either awful or disappointing, depending on one's degree of charity.

Various prescreening juries seemed to have succeeded for the most part in culling out the absolutely worst films, and the final jury (internationally famous photographer Imogen Cunningham; William Speed, director of the Los Angeles Public Library audio-visual services; and Henry Breitrose of Stanford University)

spent three afternoons searching in the dark among the remainders, like Diogenes, and with about as much success.

Of eight possible first awards, in eight categories, the (unanimous) jury awarded only two. Winners were David Myers' *Ask Me, Don't Tell Me*, a fluid and perceptive film about teen-agers, their needs, and how these needs can be turned toward positive ends by intelligent informal counseling.

The second Golden Gate award went to *The Hunters*, made by the Film Study Center of the Peabody Museum. It stood head and shoulders over most of the other films shown for a deceptively simple reason: it is an honest account, dispassionate for the most part, of an incident in the lives of a tribe of bushmen in the Kalahari desert of Africa, well edited and well written but unfortunately rather badly photographed.

An Honorable Mention was awarded to *A Number of Things*, made by Elektra Studios for *Woman's Day* magazine, a painless kind of salesman's readership report, pitched to media buyers: one part Hathaway eye patch, one part private secretary with English accent, plus a dash of the contempt for rationality of motivation researchers. There is much less there than meets the eye.

Also receiving honorable mentions were *Autumn*, from the Television Center of the State University of Iowa, which had good intentions, adequate photography, obvious and somewhat naïve editing, and no real sense of where it was going; *Ages of Time*, a super-slick MPO film for Hamilton Watch Co., whose major problem was trying to pitch the idea that electric watches were the greatest thing since He created day and night; and *That They May Live* by Pyramid Films for the University of Saskatchewan College of Medicine, which effectively tells one how to administer mouth-to-mouth artificial respiration, with infinite repetition. (The repetitions are strung together with a series of plot strategies, each a bit more preposterous than the one before.)

The problems implicit in organizing a truly representative nontheatrical competition are of course manifold, and while we applaud the San Francisco Festival for making the attempt we hope that many of the quirks in such an extensive undertaking can be ironed out next year. Rather than discussing such problems, however, I would prefer to speculate on why the films entered this year were, on the average, so awful.

One may suspect, first, that there are at least a few films of truly high quality which were not entered because their producers did not hear of the competition or didn't care about entering their films.

Second, however, it seems likely that the sad state of the 16mm field in this country stems from reliance on the excuse that a film which "does its job" should have nothing else asked of it. A film whose job is to teach someone to tie a knot is not a film, it is a *tool*, and the main thing that can be said about it, as about any tool, is whether it works. But this does not, surely, exhaust the potentialities of "the film as communication." The films entered in this competition in many cases had topics of immense promise: important industries, public services, science, nature, art. They did not seize these potentialities, in terms of the vital use of the medium, the sensitivity of their audiences, or the importance and quality of what there is to say about these topics.

And one may doubt whether the usual explanations—economic limitations, sponsor pressure, and so on—are by any means the whole answer. Too many of the film-makers represented here have obviously not fought against these pressures and have not used any artistic ingenuity to speak of. The nontheatrical world is, like the film-producing world in general, a hard world where money and power talk louder than good intentions. But it is precisely the good intentions and the will to carry them out in the teeth of obstacles that separate the film-makers from the tool-makers. Perhaps there is a special need, in the nontheatrical area, to remember James Agee's suggestion that when in doubt we consult both God and Mammon and see who has more difficulty coping with the servant problem.

Film Reviews

. . . NOT YET IN GENERAL RELEASE

Have You Sold Your Dozen Roses?

Produced by Philip Greene, David Myers, and Allen Willis, at the California School of Fine Arts Film Workshop. Narration by Lawrence Ferlinghetti. 9 minutes.

"Have you sold your dozen roses, in the flowerless fields of heaven?" inquires the voice of Ferlinghetti—over a series of dump scenes. And this abrupt, ironic, edgy contrast, verging on the facetious, is the tone attempted by the whole of this intriguing little film. It is not, as some have thought, just another dump film—though it could easily have been—aghast at the fact that our society produces huge heaps of rubbish that smells and looks most unpleasant.

It falls into the general category of the film poem, and it is beautiful in a weird and yet not arty way. Bums scavenging; garbage-seeking seagulls floating, slightly slowed-down by the camera, over the heaps of rubbish, like some plague. "O scavengers of love," intones Ferlinghetti, in his peculiarly monotone delivery, apt for sickening irony, offhand suggestions ("Sweet land of."), and jokes ("Swing low, sweet chariot," over a scene of bulldozers, or "So long—dad," to an old man). The images of the film vary from a kind of impressively sober documentary characteristic of the films of David Myers (people picking over the junk, mattresses, the visible remains, leftovers of lives) to traditionally "beautiful" documentary stuff (smoke rising from the dump fires). Oddest and most moving of all are several shots of a dog: a lean mongrel a little like a greyhound, but without style, comes and stands for a moment on a hummock, looking around him. He pauses, and then quickly turns and trots off. The camera—who knows, perhaps by accident—catches only his quick-stepping feet as they flick over the dust. It is one of those strange gestures that inexplicably bring everything to a focus; about here the music, which began as intrusive improvised competition with Ferlinghetti, then agreed to alternate "solos" with him, now becomes piercing, protracted flutes, over shots of flames rising from the rubble, and on these we end.

The film is thus an ironic allegory of redemption: scavenging, bitter redemption, and also partial. "O had I but the eyes to see—" says Ferlinghetti as men and women pick through half-usable items. A note of corn is briefly struck as a man finds a damaged horn, looks at it, throws it down. "Good-bye," says Ferlinghetti. (But in occasional passages like this, his putting of words into the minds of people on the screen is like Kerouac's in *Pull My Daisy*—and it is a fertile method for the experimental film-maker wishing to be able to switch points-of-view instantly, to escape the deadening control of the traditionally omniscient camera, microphone, or narrator.) For a stout Negro woman, standing by some ratty sagging mattresses: "And I lay down with my lover there—," and later, "I walked in the sun, I sang in the sun, in the first morning of the world—" The sun flashes on the bay, gleaming slightly sinister.

A thoughtful, well-paced film, *Roses* shows what may be done, even on a minute budget and even in a rather hackneyed subject, if some imagination is brought to bear.

—Ernest Callenbach

Night and Fog

(*Nuit et Brouillard*) Directed and edited by Alain Resnais. Based on Olga Wormser and Henri Michel's *The Tragedy of the Deportations.* Assistant director: André Heinrich. Commentary: Jean Cayrol. Music: Hanns Eisler. Camera: Ghislain Cloquet and Sacha Vierny. 32 minutes. Argos Films, 1956.

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Eichmann waits trial, Shirer's *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* is widely read, new spasms of

wall-scribbling in Germany suggest, to skeptics, less a new spirit than a reshaped face. These events give a sudden relevance to Cinema 16's recent first U.S. screening of the original version of *Night and Fog*. Sponsored by a French government agency concerned with the history of the deportations, using documentary materials from both East and West Europe, the film attempts to sum up the concentration camps in a way made possible only by the lapse of years.

In poignant alternation we inspect the documentary record of the camps in World War II, shown in blue-tinted black and white, and the modern ruin of Auschwitz, pictured in the tones and colors of a summer afternoon. Black, thorny boundary wires, tall stanchions, brick walls in orange and red pass by as the film opens on Auschwitz today. While somber, brooding chords sound an undertone of lament Resnais's camera makes a deliberate, passionless examination, trucking steadily past dark tiers of slatted dormitory cots, past the gaping holes of time-sweetened latrines, along rusted railroads, worn by a dismal freight, across concrete ceilings scarred by the countless clawing fingernails of the gassed. These mute relics seem pathetically neutral, mere anachronisms almost, seen detached from their incredible history. Imagination recoils, conscience falters, and (it is perhaps Resnais's central concern) men forget. Suddenly, dramatizing memory's deceit, the sunlit browns and greens of the railroad vanish, yielding to images in ghostly tones of blue. A transport is drawing in, the engine steaming in some remote December's air. Police dogs and S.S. captains stand alert. Wagon doors are opened. Gaunt faces of terror, despair, and apathy stare out. A "selection" is made from those who survived the journey. "Those on the left will work—those on the right . . ." Soon we move forward again to the colors of today, to the remains of the camp hospital, "The Dream House . . . where there was risk of death by syringe, medicines were make-believe and dressings paper . . ." Then, back once more to pictures from the gallery of the past, of "an S.S. doctor . . . a disquieting nurse . . . useless operations . . . amputations . . . starved patients who ate their dressings."

Written in the historic present tense to match the wartime footage, and in the past tense when commenting on the colored images of today, Cayrol's spare, graphic, bleakly ironic narration repopulates the shadows of the ruins and restores their past, building in detail the varied levels of a society "whose aspect was the image of terror." The doomed, awaiting their ration of poison and fire, are put to work in the underground factories of I. G. Farben, Siemens, and Krupp. While the commandant and his wife chat with guests in their living-room—"as in any other garrison camp, though perhaps she is more bored"—smoking pyres are fed. Remote clerks sign orders for new supplies of gas. Distant engineers design "shower-room" killing-chambers for its use. There is a strategy in this comprehensive view. It shows a chain of complicity linking the fanatics to the cowed, the incurious, and the inert. When, near the end, limp heaps of the 13,000 unburied Belsen corpses are bulldozed into pits, we see this not as an isolated spectacle of horror, nor the camps themselves as mere sociopathic freaks, but as parts of an organic system designed, run, and consented to by men—men, for the most part, of a common kind. Enormity rested on small virtues and petty frailties. The dark, poisonous bloom of nightmare grew in a soil of day-to-day routine.

At the Nuremberg reckoning faces gabble their innocence, and leaving them to return and survey a last time the haunted wastes of Auschwitz, Cayrol speaks in a grave poetry of warning. Can we be sure, he asks, that those faces are really so different from our own? And if not, then what may the future hold? "War nods, but has one eye open . . ." Rising above the confusion of cold-war allegiances, *Night and Fog*, a symbol of the modern conscience, ends on a note of disturbed self-questioning and anxious doubt.—ROGER SANDALL

Circle of the Sun

Director: Colin Low. Photography: John Spotton. Animal photography: Dalton Muir. Narration script: Stanley Jackson. Music: Eldon Rathburn. Editor: Tom Daly. Producer: Tom Daly. Canadian National Film Board.

Those who may in any way have shared some apprehension, on the basis of his *Universe*, that Colin Low might succumb to the fatal lure of the big commercial picture may set their doubts at rest by going to see *Circle of the Sun*, which clearly shows that Colin Low stands alongside MacLaren in the forefront of Canadian film-makers. Our pleasure in the film derives not only from its exceptional beauty, but also from the evidence it provides that Low, the artist, has attained maturity. Henceforward, the least we can say of him will be that between him and the world he so passionately loves, there clearly exists a complete and intimate accord. Every shot attests that his love for the Canadian west is as deep as was the love of Grémillon for Brittany, or of Flaherty for all his adopted lands. Though his ways may not be those of a Flaherty or of a Rouquier, and a preoccupation with the techniques of animation and the actual administration of that important department of the National Film Board have too long held him back, from the evidence before us we can now entertain the highest hopes of the maker of *Corral* (with Wolf Koenig), of the *City of Gold*, of *Circle of the Sun*.

Give Low the necessary financing and complete freedom to shoot in his own way, that is to say with a cast and a script of his own choosing, and Canada will at last have a full-length film of international standing. Length is a poor criterion of value, a purely commercial one, nor would we wish to underestimate his short films; but we would hope now to see him make a film of a certain scope which would add stature to the whole of his work and, at the same time, end what is a reproach to Canadian film production. From now on, the name of Colin Low may rightfully be inscribed alongside those of the great documentary makers, with Ivens, Flaherty, Van Dyke, Lorentz, and Rouquier—a list from which we omit Resnais and Franju, the special nature of whose films divides them off from the world of pure documentary.

CIRCLE OF THE SUN, *by Colin Low.*

Every year, usually in August, the Indians on the Cardston Reservation, the "Blood Indians," gather at the foot of the Alberta Rockies for their annual Festival and Dance of the Sun. The everyday life of these Indians in no way differs from the general white norm; some are cowboys on the vast ranches of the region, while others caught up in the brutally stultifying routine of industrial work are employed in oil-prospecting. In the course of the gathering, one of the Indians, Pete Standing Alone, brings up the question of the conditions under which his fellow Indians live now that they have passed from their former ways to those imposed on them by the white man and his concepts of life.

Colin Low comes from that part of Alberta and knows most of the Indians, including their chief Jim White Bull. Thanks to his patience and friendship with the Indians, Low was able to film the entire ritual of the annual festival.

Year by year the festival loses something of its impressiveness: fifty tents three years ago, then thirty, then twenty; in a few years there will be none. So it is that a race, an entire civilization, passes away, its descendants being rapidly swallowed up by the world of the whites. A lot of laborers in Toronto and Montreal have Indian blood, but no one is any longer aware of the fact; the race is dead. Nothing of it re-

mains now but the souvenirs that are sold to tourists.

The whole feeling of the film derives from this nostalgia for the past, stirred up by the fact that these people are gathered to celebrate once more the Festival of the Sun. Colin Low spares us the exotic side of the festival, on which nine-tenths of ethnographical films would have elaborated. He gives us instead its essence, its inner feeling. He shows us the joy these people have in being together again, the mutual delight they take in the happiness on each other's faces. The gap between the older generation and the younger is typified by the latter's sun-glasses and blue jeans. It is here, however, that this document transcends any ethnographic study. It shows us the Indian soul behind each individual face, as they sit in their tents round the ritual fire. The elders, mostly toothless, present their sagging, wrinkled skin to the camera without any attempt to play a part, but without any awkwardness. They simply *are*.

When you see this, you may as well forget once and for all the Hollywood Indian, the "Indian ways" of exotic story-books, all the wild tales. There can be no more "Lynx Eye" or "Eye of the Falcon," but only one single eye, the Eye of Man, deeply human, as it rests on you; the eye of the Indian race watching you, the white. Throughout the film, with that eye upon me, one thought alone possessed me; we whites, we Occidentals with our pretensions of superiority, bear on our consciences a great and hateful crime: to have destroyed a race—and this is not the first—what superiority indeed! This is what each sequence lays bare. The Indians pay homage to the sun, but the whites have extinguished it; they have destroyed Nature. That sun which went out of their everyday lives, the Blood Indians of Cardston find again at this gathering, among the tents ornamented with their tribal insignia. For them the sun is not dead; it supports them. They have taken it for their coat of arms. The film opens on this sun of the Indians, this circle of the sun within which their life is set, a life completely at one with Nature.

After *Corral*, after *City of Gold*, one should discuss the direction of Low on a technical and aesthetic level. This last film of his, let us say, continues the same standards of beauty. Here are landscapes employed with a perfection of tone and taste that, by contrast, place current Canadian films in the category of the picture postcard, or of cheap symbolism. The shots of the Rockies, especially, taken with a telephoto lens, are rich in poetry and feeling, as were the horses and abandoned locomotives of *City of Gold*.

The photography is by John Spotten, assisted by Broult and Koenig who make up the top trio of Canadian operators, unless we include Jack Long and call it a quartet. Spotten is the opposite of Brault and much closer to Koenig. He likes soft lighting and this softness is of considerable assistance to the film. There are no violently contrasted shots, nothing looks as if it were edited with a chisel; instead there are halftones and a use of color well under control. It is the best color shot in Canada to date. The animal photography is by Dalton Muir. It is the work of someone with the patience of a Benedictine monk, a patience that has been well rewarded. The shot of the coyote howling stands out as particularly remarkable.

There is nothing special to say about the editing; it is neat and faultless like all of Tom Daly's work and there is no question of his invaluable contribution to the work of Low. This comes as no surprise to those who know the kind of teamwork that exists in a Low unit. Low has a gift of conveying to those who work with him, his cameraman, assistant, cutter, composer, a feeling of personal responsibility which is offered, on his part, in all sincerity and good fellowship. He looks to everyone on his team for advice. This humility, this honesty serves to reinforce his already surely established talent. In the last analysis, however, the film is supremely the work of Low himself.

The music of Rothburn calls for no special comment. I do not think it contains the happy touches of the score of *City of Gold*; by the same token its very soberness serves more fittingly the purpose of a film that is an act of humility performs before the Indian people.

Circle of the Sun makes no new contribution to the technical history of the cinema, which is as it should be. The techniques it uses are entirely integrated, there are no eye-catching devices, only a sparingness characteristic of the best films. Low loves a thing and says so, in the language of love, namely honesty, passion, and observation. He looks before he shoots, even if it takes him three years. He can afford to do this, now that he has made other kinds of films and carried out his other responsibilities. But there are many who would not profit as he has from this experience. The time it takes to make a film is forgotten when one is face to face with the finished work, if it happens to be a film like *Circle of the Sun.*

After the success of *City of Gold* and the certain triumph of this latest film, Low should be given the wherewithal to make a full-length picture without any restrictions whatsoever. Let's hope so, and meanwhile let us salute *Circle of the Sun.*—Michel Regnier (translated by Hugh Gray)

Films of Stan Brakhage

Anticipation of the Night. Sirius Remembered. Wedlock House: An Intercourse. Cat's Cradle. Window Water Baby Moving.

Brakhage is probably the best known American experimental film-maker after Maya Deren. At the Brussels exposition he was given a special prize for the ensemble of his work during the past decade; his films have been much written about in film journals and occasionally other magazines.

All this shows, unfortunately, is that persistent attention to publicity and an air of dedication can suffice to build a reputation in the absence of talent.

For Mr. Brakhage's films are awful.

Now Brakhage has evidently glimpsed what is indeed a central truth: that film must mold and control and construct *with* its material, and not be molded *by* it. But he tries to carry out this intuition with very little talent (or, one suspects, care) and with one central idée fixe—that films made with shots of the real world may nonetheless be made abstract simply by cutting them so that the viewer cannot quite tell what the shots are of. He abjures the "story." Fine. He does not use his camera to reconstruct the conventional visual surface. Excellent.

What he does, usually, is to shoot a lot of thematic material and then sit down and cut at it. Some of the shots turn out to be recognizable objects and scenes; some of them turn out to be abstract shapes. Brakhage intersperses the two, and manages to create an intolerable sensation of strain by making it constantly apparent that he does not have any real feeling for the relationships and potential relationships between these kinds of shots. They are just strips of film to him, and he splices away energetically, evidently in the belief that by this process he is creating the first great "music" of the screen.

Screen images *can* be treated as if they were musical notes, and everyone who does any film-making or editing realizes that in certain kinds of films editing *is* an art analogous to musical composition. But the composer, whether using traditional tonalities or more recent schemes, does not only make one note follow another, long or short, and then in time according to some principle or some feeling repeat itself; he must create organic relationships among the notes. (The composers of musique concrète have mostly suffered from precisely the difficulty Brakhage's films illustrate: knowing in principle that music might perfectly well be made of such sounds as tape-recorders can produce, they attempt to do it additively and mechanically.)

But the appeal of music is the appeal of structure. This is not to imply that Brakhage's films have no structure; they have one, but it is not interesting enough. The structure is that he throws in first one shot and then another and some others; then after a while he begins

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throwing in ones we have seen before; and so on. This makes it possible for sympathetic critics to talk of reprises and *raccords*; but it does not make it possible for even a sympathetic viewer to enjoy the films. In order to make associative film (or poetry) "work," it must be inwardly associative, bearing out the hidden connections of things. Very rarely—only in an occasional series of three or four shots—is Brakhage capable of this. His films are *collections*, not organisms.

Anticipation of the Night is the largest collection so far. Brakhage has remarked (his statements about film-making are extremely pretentious) that in this film he has "pushed silent technique about as far as it can go." Pauline Kael has more accurately called it "the subtle manipulation of nothing." What Brakhage is doing in it is to display and play with light and transformations of light, in the general spirit that the representation of the visible world is not the thing. It contains fleeting images, as they say, of trees, water, children, the moon, shadows. But the net effect is like a Mahler symphony—the material appropriate for a delightful song has been pumped up into nearly an hour of maundering repetitions with no real sense of pace (Brakhage likes to play with camera speeds, however), and no precision of impact or emotion.

Sirius Remembered is built from shots of a dead and decaying dog, shot from many angles in various seasons; we return repeatedly to the dog, creeping up on its remains for similar and negligibly different shots. The camera, shakily hand-held,* circles about the carcass, sniffing, watching the flies. This is all cut very frantically, however, with fast tilts (soul of dog rising?) and other variations. The effect is jittery, perhaps like the effect of a 33rpm record of Webern being played at 78rpm.

Wedlock House: An Intercourse has human action—love-making, introspection (an interminable and highly comic scene of smoking and coffee-drinking), and acceptance (smiles). There are occasional nice movements in this film, but the hammy acting ruins it irreparably. (It is like nothing so much as the Nichols-May "Bach to Bach" routine.)

Cat's Cradle and *Window Water Baby Moving* are further exercises in bricaBrakhage—odd filters or exposures to give quite strong color values, odd shapes some recognizable some not, cats, nude bodies glimpsed, cut very rapidly, but without grace, without what would correspond in film to "musical ideas." (Anyone who thinks they might be there but unrecognized is recommended to look at Brakhage's films two or three times.)

Brakhage's films have a curious air of haphazard and stinted work, almost of laziness; they impress as pretentious "home-movies." This peculiar lack of intensity, of artistry, is not a matter of ideas or of dramatic sense in the ordinary connotation of the term. It is the absence of a rare quality which critics refer to, mystically perhaps, by saying such-and-such a film-maker has an "eye"—film-makers like Bergman or Ray, who both (though in almost diametrically opposite realms) have the gift of creating a debonair surface beneath which some kind of structural or associative logic binds like iron. This in a way is everything. It is Brakhage's bad luck to be working in a genre of film where the presence or lack of this peculiar gift is glaringly obvious. If he was making Hollywood features, nobody would ever notice.—Ernest Callenbach

* There is a view among some tyro film-makers that the jiggling, bad framing, and other results of holding the camera by hand while shooting contribute to the "spontaneous bop prosody" (or something) of the footage. We might agree that the rocksteady cameras of Hollywood can seem chained to the earth—one can certainly long for something to come along and push them over so that a cut would *have* to ensue. Even a slight lurch in the image might refreshingly show that a human foot had touched the tripod, reminding us that film-making is not an impersonal automatic process, that the artist's hand had better be upon the typewriter, the camera, the splicer, the mixer. But there are better ways to get this desirable personal quality than by giving the hand palsy.

A Cold Wind in August

Director: Alex Singer. Producer: Phil Hazelton. Screen play: Burton Wohl. Photography by Floyd Crosby. With Lola Albright, Scott Marlowe. Troy Films.

HOLLYWOOD! It's a magic word. A few syllables that conjure up haunting images: cowboys with towering moral stamina, gangsters with hearts of gold, eternal triangles with happy endings, and Bible heroes with Brooklyn accents. Through a haze of bee smoke one can see an almost fluid mass of tap-dancing, smiling Meglin Kiddies with lacquered hair—dressed in American flags singing Tin Pan Alley medleys. Nostalgically one recalls Frank Sinatra in a white silk tuxedo, ascending slowly on a hydraulic pedestal, singing "Old Man River."

The film-makers themselves are more fantastic than their works. These are the real heroes (imagine Buzz Berkeley arranging all those beautiful legs into complex geometrics). Every cliché and stereotype is still applicable, yet none can do full justice to the men who built Hollywood. But unfortunately they are as American as Tom Swift and they make movies as simply as he built dirigibles and electric cannons. They constructed a bewildering machine out of human beings, cameras, film, and myth; self-starting, self-nourishing and self-perpetuating. Today this movie machine is grinding onward, a little slower perhaps but unchecked by time or the forces of reality.

The machine leaves marks on people. It is not easy to break away. It takes an unusual human being to survive the challenges of the entertainment business. The strains of political intrigue and endless artistic compromise are enough to cloud the dreams and ambition of most. Now and then someone comes along to buck the system. He makes one or two films and vanishes. Others endure various degrees of self-delusion.

The Hollywood muse is still recruiting and finds determined spokesmen, willing to accept the challenge of the machine. The director of *Cold Wind in August* is one of these men. He did not grow up in Hollywood. He comes from New York.

"I've not yet become a Hollywood character," said Alex Singer, and continued in his New York accent to explain that he could converse equally well about Pudovkin, "Eisensteen" or any of those "guys." He compared himself to Vigo. "I'm very close to egomania; that's what it takes to be a director." He smiled. A few moments later he explained that "you either work within the reality of the industry, or you have to get out of the industry." *A Cold Wind in August* is his first solo as a feature director. It is also a good example of what can happen "within the reality of the industry."

His film begins in the apartment of a burlesque stripper (Lola Albright). Her husband has asked her to fill in for a while in his burlesque show. She says she'll think about it. As the burlesque tout exits the janitor's son (Scott Marlowe) arrives at the door to fix her air conditioner (whence the title). She decides to seduce this innocent lad and squeezes into gold-lamé pants, dabbles perfume about, and begins to breathe heavily. Unaware, he begins to work on the air conditioner. Her first lure is the offer of a big bowl of ice cream. The kid falls for it and we see them together in the kitchen: he's gulping down the vanilla and she's on a tall stool rubbing her legs on the side of his head. Being young and embarrassed, he leaves.

Luckily for the sake of the story, he returns the next day to finish repairs. This time she snares him with gin for breakfast, and we fade out as she is unbuttoning his clothes, whispering, "listen to mama." A few scenes later we find them in bed together sighing "I love you" to one another. She exclaims that "this wasn't supposed to happen." He asks her to "go steady."

Deep in mid-film we observe them bickering, copulating, and anxious. The stripper's husband comes back and repeats his request that she do a little stripping to help him out. She agrees and leaves for the runway. The janitor's son has pals and they discover that the lady with

the broken air conditioner is a stripper who is taking it off, downtown. Our youthful lover does not believe them, so the gang takes him down to the strip show. It's true. There is his love, in the flesh. He is shattered. The lovers fight. He says, "It's *dirty*, what you do." She tries to explain that it is just a job. He won't accept this, and the affair comes to an end. He goes back to play with girls his own age. The stripper is left alone, crying. The camera lingers on her for a long time as she cries, trying to emphasize and reinforce her grief.

At the film's conclusion I had a few distinct impressions. The film was bad. It was an awkwardly contrived and unconvincing story. But at the same time I was quite taken as I watched Lola Albright's performance. It is her acting alone that leads one to believe there is really something to this film: that it might be telling us something about an adolescent boy and a neurotic, unhappy woman.

I asked Singer what it was he was trying to do and if he thought he had succeeded.

"Iris is a perverse mentality," Singer explained. "The woman is a destructive, emasculating, frigid creature . . . she has had many affairs and lots of just plain screwing . . . she is very bright, a phrase maker . . . her husband Harry is castrated and empty . . . she's a frigid woman who's had no orgasm until she met the kid . . . she doesn't know what she wants . . . I suspect that she's guilt ridden, there are too many testicles in her closet for her not to feel guilty . . . the kid presents to her a very juicy fantasy . . . the world of femininity is very new to him . . . he's an innocent young man . . . he's shocked by the rape . . . he's bursting with seminal activity, women can smell it . . . it's like plucking a flower . . . but his latent male ego asserts itself . . . she's vulnerable to him because she knows in her bones that she is a mechanical sex-object . . . he grows up with no sense of the havoc he has wreaked . . . commercially it's very sound . . . obviously saleable . . . art houses . . ."

Mr. Singer's explanation of his film shows quite clearly the way he conceives his heroine. His allusions to psychological motives and the pseudoclinical approach to characterization are fashionable but cover up more than they reveal. An extension of this thinking would lead one to believe that a glimpse at some external manifestation of a neurosis would be dramatic in and of itself. *Cold Wind in August* pretends to be a "problem film," concerned with the growth and decay of human beings. Dramatically it is trivial because there is no significant human problem for the audience to come to grips with and therefore no working conflict. This failure is pointed up clearly at the end of the film. We see the woman alone and crying. Why is she crying and what effect is this supposed to have on the audience? As Singer explains it, she has lost her one chance for continued orgasms. One might feel sorry for her, but our stripper's orgasms or the lack thereof are not going to interest any audience, let alone move it. The story is an amalgam of psychological clichés and soap opera. It skirts around dramatic reality by showing a series of emotion-laden scenes in chronological continuity and implies that there is something important going on. Like a comic strip, it is moving through time; a situation is being examined but there is no vertical development or depth. We get no insight. We see no growth, no decay. Even within this banal plot it could have been possible to develop some point of view. Certainly the theme is legitimate enough; the story of an older woman seducing a young boy has been beautifully told (one thinks of *Le Blé en Herbe*) and will be again. But we never know why Singer brought these people together and we care less.

Cinematically the film is of very little interest. Floyd Crosby has produced an unswervingly dull and textureless piece of photography. The few scenes which bear exception to this are not enough to lift the footage above the level of an average television melodrama. A choice of uninteresting exteriors and vapidly decorated interiors, static and repetitious camera setups, and an over-all lack of visual imagination contribute further to the lifeless quality of the film.

Mr. Singer has been in and around the mo-

tion picture "industry" for fifteen years. Among other things, he worked with Kubrick on *The Killing* and did a little of the pre-production planning for Leslie Steven's *Private Property*. In conclusion one might think of *Cold Wind in August* as a vehicle for Singer's personal advancement: a portfolio piece to show men like Jerry Wald, who rejected Singer at one time, that he can make the grade in the celluloid jungle. If the film makes money, Mr. Singer will have a chance to make more films.—BENJAMIN T. JACKSON

. . . NOW IN RELEASE

The Misfits

Director: John Huston. Script: Arthur Miller. Producer: Frank Taylor. Music: Alex North. Camera: Russell Metty. Editor: George Tomasini. With Clark Gable, Marilyn Monroe, Eli Wallach, Montgomery Clift, Thelma Ritter. United Artists.

Before the first print had reached the distributors, *The Misfits* was already regarded as a signal event in the film world. As everyone knows, it was Clark Gable's last movie, which if for no other reason is noteworthy because he made, both literally and figuratively, so many, and was for so long the personification of Hollywood and the star system. Moreover, *The Misfits* was written by Arthur Miller; it is his first screenplay and the first play of any kind from him in several years. The film is being touted by the pulp-head psychiatrists as a kind of public requiem for the marriage of Miller and Marilyn Monroe. These social footnotes are almost distracting enough to obscure the fact that *The Misfits* is a John Huston film, which for many people is a kind of event in itself.

This strange combination of talent and circumstance could reasonably be expected to produce an intriguing film, if not a successful one (obviously, I am not talking of buck-success, which is assured). Unfortunately, such is the case: the film's fascination is heightened, if anything, by its artistic failure. It is a manifestly serious attempt to treat most of the social and psychological conflicts that have engaged American writers and critics for more than a century. It is so strainingly serious, in fact, on so many different levels at once, that it ultimately collapses under its own ponderous weight.

In the first place, two-thirds of the work is not film at all, merely a photographed melodrama written by a playwright who is obviously sensitive to the requirements of the theater: exaggeration, dependence on dialogue, avoidance of visual or verbal understatement. The script is for the most part as ill-suited to the medium as the characters are (intentionally) misfitted to the vague and wholly implicit society to which they presumably belong. In this particular case Miller has curiously incurred a

Misfits all: a publicity still. Montgomery Clift, Marilyn Monroe, Eli Wallach, Arthur Miller, Clark Gable, John Huston.

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Misfits all: a publicity still. Montgomery Clift, Marilyn Monroe, Eli Wallach, Arthur Miller, Clark Gable, John Huston.

problem just the opposite of that which generally prevails: not even a director as skilled as Huston can suggest the presence of a contrasting force, when no substance of that force has been indicated by either characterization or setting. Every single character is so conspicuously and unrelievedly a misfit, and the scene itself (which encompasses the conventional slices of Reno, Nevada, and the vast deserts that surround it) is so completely inconsonant with familiar experience, that one has a hard time relating this misfit world to any other (the notion that there may not be another kind is philosophically, but not dramatically, acceptable), and eventually one comes to regard this world as almost tediously regular.

Marilyn Monroe, as Roslyn, a former nightclub dancer from the East who has come to Reno for her divorce, is given more or less the same lines for the first third of the picture. She begins by explaining the circumstances of her marriage to Thelma Ritter, who is her sweet, cynical landlady and temporary confidante: "You could touch him, but he wasn't there . . . ," and later, ". . . nobody was ever there." Still later, when the concept of death-as-life becomes a manifestation of conflict, Roslyn broods, "We're dying all the time . . . all the husbands and wives, without ever touching each other . . . anything." Early in the film Roslyn and her landlady retreat to a flashy bar following the court hearing; it is here that she attempts to analyze her inadequate childhood, coming almost to tears before blurting, "I miss my mother." In a later scene Roslyn, who is tipsy and melancholy after a long evening of serious drinking, does a weird, weaving dance across a moonlit field, and falls against a tree and embraces it. Now both of these scenes come very close to being dramatically effective; they are almost sufficiently astonishing in their very artlessness to elicit the appropriate emotional response. The relevance here though is that the dialogue so belabors the point, that what might be our compassion for a sensitive person searching for love and fulfillment in personal relationships instead becomes a kind of embarrassment, an embarrassment which is not relieved by characterization and direction that is subordinate to the dialogue.

It is in the bar that Roslyn is introduced to Gay (Clark Gable) by Guido (Eli Wallach) whom she had encountered earlier. Gay is one of the last of the genuine itinerant cowboys, an easy-going, assertively independent man of seemingly great inner resource. Up to this time he has been successful in resisting both the pressure of organized society and the blandishments of the many divorcées he has temporarily serviced over the years. His *Weltanschauung*, repeatedly offered, is "anything's better than wages." Guido is his pal, a frustrated garage mechanic and former war pilot who is suffering from a strange mixture of guilt, boredom, and rootlessness. Both Gay and Guido are moved by Roslyn's beauty, and soon Gay becomes surprisingly serious about her. They convince her to stick around Reno for a while, and Gay and Roslyn become domestic in Guido's house in the desert, abandoned since the death of his wife; it is a crazy, half-finished structure, an effective symbol for the common condition.

The serenity of their idyll is ultimately interrupted by the return of Guido, with a suggestion for mustang hunting. The conflict which is the result of Roslyn's inability to accept death as an assertion of life has by this time been suggested; however, she does not realize that Gay and Guido intend to hunt the wild horses for dog meat, to be sold to the metropolitan packing houses. In order to find another cowboy to complete the expedition, the three agree to drive to a rodeo downstate. On the road they encounter a familiar cowboy, Perce Holland (Montgomery Clift), who is bumming a ride and the price of an entry fee in the rodeo. Since by this time we know that everyone is some kind of misfit, it is not surprising to find Perce in a roadside phone booth, having a strained and bitter conversation with his mother in Wyoming. It develops that the cause of his rebelliousness is his stepfather, who has connived ownership of the ranch that was rightfully Perce's. Perce is a bronc-rider with more

guts than skill, and later while Roslyn is anxiously caressing his wounds he poignantly opens up to her, in language that has become all too familiar: "I don't have anybody to talk to. . . . I don't know who you depend on, maybe you just wait for the next thing. . . ." Gay's dependency and unrequited love are also revealed in this scene, when his children by a lost marriage mysteriously appear and then disappear, leaving him sobbing in the middle of the street. It is not the ubiquitousness of the malaise which flaws *The Misfits*; rather it is the lack of subtlety in treating it, the emphasis upon mere rhetorical phrasing instead of the *acting* (which is frequently distinguished) and the direction (which, when it has a chance, is superb).

The last third of the film is all Huston's and, working with Miller's ideas instead of his dialogue, he succeeds in partially fulfilling the enormous ambitiousness of the story. The mustang hunt itself is magnificent: Guido flies his ancient biplane into an immense valley where a small herd of wild horses are grazing, then drives them out of it toward the vast plains where Gay, Perce, and Roslyn await with lariats and a truck. Somehow Huston manages to work out most of the many dramatic themes simultaneously within this one long scene. There are so many epic conflicts being resolved that one is hardly aware of some of them: the archetypal struggle between man and beast, and, consequently, nature; the determination of justice in the wanton destruction of life; man's proud refusal to accept change on terms other than his own; and the closing of the frontiers, bringing the "end of innocence"—an idea that has obsessed writers from Fenimore Cooper to Leslie Fiedler.

The obvious and serious flaws of *The Misfits* should not obscure the distinguished treatment of much of the material, a treatment so rare in American cinema that one is almost convinced this film is better than reason suggests. The long-shot of Roslyn alone out on a sand flat, writhing and stomping as she denounces her companions for their inhumanity, is cinematically perfect. Two fine scenes: one in a bar after the rodeo, where Roslyn hits a bolo ball 100 times consecutively as the cowboys are frantically passing bets on her and a small boy is becoming unintentionally plastered; the other, splendidly symbolic, where Guido is drunkenly trying to finish building his house in the middle of the night, though as he throws the boards up he steps on the heliotrope which Gay had tenderly planted when he and Roslyn were living there. The film is memorable for its characterization of the American cowboy, which is devoid of the conventional aggrandizements. It is equally memorable for the performance of Montgomery Clift, who is fluent and touching, devoid of the expected woodenness. His work here is almost enough to restore the hope he occasioned by his beautiful and now-forgotten portrayal of George Eastman in *A Place in the Sun.*

Eli Wallach's performance is somewhat typical of the film itself. The role is a choice one, offering great range, and he brings to it depth and sensitivity; however, the character of Guido is so overburdened with conflicting motivations (the death of his wife and their uncertain marriage; his regretted military service as a flier who bombed nine cities; his lust for adventure and senseless cruelty) that by the time he reveals himself as a selfish rascal he is unconvincing. As for Marilyn Monroe, *The Misfits* does little to reduce the celebrated enigma which she has become. At times she is exciting yet credible as the loveless Roslyn, a child facing a woman's choices; but it is impossible to forget that the part was written for her—that the part probably *is* her, as far as anyone knows—and this is certainly a questionable demand upon her talents. She has little opportunity here to convince us that she is not as limited as has been charged, and surely she will be unable to transcend her stereotype as long as she is given lines like "Gee, how quiet it is . . . you can hear your skin against your clothes."—LAWRENCE GRAUMAN, JR.

Breathless

Director: Jean-Luc Godard. Producer: Georges de Beauregarde. Supervised by Claude Chabrol. Original story: François Truffaut. Screenplay: Jean-Luc Godard. Camera: Raoul Coutard. With Jean Seberg, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Liliane David. Films around the World.

Alors, qu'est-ce que "la nouvelle vague"? We had begun by elimination, as one production after another failed to bear out the notorious *Cahiers* tastes ("But they don't *make* that kind of film!"). *Breathless* shows what the modern French version of "that kind of film" really looks like, and the result is one of the most genuinely novel films of the lot. As parody, it is as subtly intellectual as *Kiss Me Deadly* was exaggeratedly visceral; as improvisation, it is as unified and witty as *Beat the Devil* was chaotic and arch; and as an example of new-wave camp, it is a beaut. The 89 hectic minutes of *Breathless*, in fact, constitute something very close to a publicity release of the whole *Cahiers* metaphysic: the cult of America and the *film noir américain*, the theories of pure cinema, etc. To this it specifically contributes the new celebrity, not only of what the French press has already labeled *"Belmondisme,"* but *Sebergisme*, and *Godardisme* as well.

To take *Godardisme* first: "I was out to attract attention," he recently told the New York *Times*. The dedication to Monogram Pictures, like the proffered copy of *Cahiers du Cinéma* that gets within camera range (yes, again), is an earnest joke—*acte gratuit* combined with a bit of inside Hip. This two-ways-at-once approach characterizes the entire film. Both ways have equal weight and are equally serious. *Breathless* at once assimilates and canonizes the Monogram tradition; that is its epochal service. It was Cocteau who said: "The principle of novelty becomes very difficult to recognize when our age forces us to remove from it its usual attributes of strangeness." It was also Cocteau who, with Sartre, proclaimed *Breathless* "a masterpiece." The principle of novelty, in *Breathless*, lies in its acceptance of an exhausted genre—the Hollywood grade-B crime film—as a simulacrum of reality. Its plot is little more than that of the quickie digest: Footloose Killer on the Run Tangles with Double-dealing Broad as Cops Close In—Big Paris Manhunt. These mediocre clichés are played out in the deadpan style of an *actualité*, producing a dual impression of great moral wit and intense neurotic despair. The term "romantic nihilism" which critics have applied to many of the new-wave films and to *Breathless* in particular is apt enough. But the trouble with it is that it tends to make a generalizing cultural analysis of what are essentially cinematic fun and games. I wonder that these same critics do not take more notice of the far more explicit cultural analysis that the film itself makes.

In so far as it is the perennial function of art to reveal, compare, and criticize cultural and moral preference, *Breathless* accomplishes much that is necessary for our present. Classic parallels are uncovered in the commonplace and are witty beyond any since Cocteau's own historic rummagings on behalf of another generation. As she appears in *Breathless*, the gangster's classic nemesis (Double-dealing Broad) would have astonished Diaghilev. The new fatal woman appears for the first time in the unremarkable person of one of those American college girls who wear slacks and yellow T-shirts and hawk the *Herald-Tribune* up and down the Champs-Elysées. The writing, casting, and playing (it is Miss Jean Seberg) of this part, not to speak of the whole psychological conception of the character and its function as the film's moral focus, are of such deadly perfection that, if we were as alert to the results of cultural export as we are to its necessity, picket lines and reprisals from the American Legion would seem to be in order. After all, here she was Joan of Arc.

The French love of the free-style American idiom isn't artificial; if it reflects local ethos and tempo in the American Age, that idiom is also fascinating in itself. *Breathless* is a mannerist fantasy, cinematic jazz. Watching it, one can hardly avoid the feeling that Godard's intention, above all, was to produce slices of cinema—shots, figments, iconography—what the

Cahiers critics talk about. His reality is always cinematized; the camera is always "there," as it were, with its short jabs or long looping rambles of celluloid. There are few dissolves and almost no smooth cuts; and the cuts are often so fast that for moments at a time the spectator is thoroughly dislocated. For example, the arrival of Belmondo in Paris is shown thus: a long shot of the city / a car pulling up / Belmondo entering a phone booth, making a call, getting no answer, leaving / Belmondo somewhere buying a paper/Belmondo on the doorstep of a pension, with some dialogue / Belmondo inside at the concierge's desk and stealing a key/Belmondo emerging, toweling, from the bathroom of the apartment. The whole truncated sequence lasts considerably less than a minute; there are no transitions, no "continuity." Often there are cuts made within the same shot. No attempt is made, either through cutting or through the long drunken pans, at academic-style montage, composition, or meaning of any sort. It is merely movie business.

Similarly, Belmondo's performance, appearance, and manner are a totemistic compendium of movie-gangster busywork: the boxer's gait, the squint, the hat-wearing, chain-smoking, telephoning, driving, singing, shouting, mugging (in both senses), and, of course, the classic thumb-to-lip gesture of reflection (after Bogart, who himself appears in appreciable close-up, in a still), are all brilliantly tabulated. Action is all. This article of faith, central to the *film noir,* is what has always made the aesthetic truth of the *film noir* seem so shallow to American and British critics; the identification of personality and behavior is both absolute and rudimentary, unpardonably so. Hence, in *Breathless,* Michel's "Burglars burgle, lovers love, murderers murder . . . they can't help it" becomes an exact reflection of the crime movie's puerile fatalism.

But it would be a shame to depend exclusively on the words in this film, good as they are. *Breathless,* from beginning to end, is the total expression of its own meaning. If action is all, spontaneity, improvisation, is the only possible style. It is the style cultivated by

Monogram redivivus: Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg in BREATHLESS.

Michel as an expression of impermissible masculine virtuosity. He at least is the hero of his own life, even if his life is a cheap film and, in the end, not worth living. *Breathless* sees an art form as a life-style and vice versa; quite logically, it ends with its hero's death.

Sebergisme is the logical destruction of *Belmondisme.* Patricia, the American, irretrievably square, emotionally immobile, centerless, complacent, and uncomprehending, touches Michel, the Frenchman, at all those points where he is most vulnerable. She is the triumphant actual artifact of a culture of which he, in his delusion, is the copy, the dupe. He is the dynamo, she the void. Their long magnificently impromptu scene together in and out of bed inaugurates a dialectic of contemporary national manners that is almost Jamesian in its

proportions. Their mutual assimilation of each other's backgrounds is as comically and painfully incomplete as it is conscientious. After she betrays—or, more accurately—disposes of him by calling the police, who shoot him down in the street, his bitter and just pronouncement upon her as a human being, "Tu es dégueulasse," is as far as the film goes. No one says, "*Tu es New York*"; "*Tu es Paris,*" although it is implied at every second. *Breathless* shows, with power, irony, and precision, what great cultural convulsions have taken place in our time. Again, as of old, the megalopolis frames the last spasm of the fleeing killer. Paris, beautiful, for centuries dedicated to an ease of individual enterprise, was created for deaths larger than this.—ARLENE CROCE

Exodus

Producer and director: Otto Preminger. Screenplay by Dalton Trumbo, based on the novel by Leon Uris. Photography: Sam Leavitt. Music: Ernest Gold. With Paul Newman, Eva Marie Saint, Lee J. Cobb, Ralph Richardson. United Artists.

". . . *Exodus* is remarkably compelling . . . The events parallel what actually occurred . . . We are witnessing the birth pangs of a new nation . . . the main purpose of the picture is achieved with the vote establishing the independent state of Israel. . . " —*Saturday Review*

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"One of the ten best films of 1960" —*The New York Times*

No publicity, no advertisement, no press release has stated that *Exodus*, either the book or the film, is a true depiction of the events that led to the establishment of Israel. And yet it is clear from the above comments that the press and the public have accepted it as such, and there can be no possible doubt that the tremendous emotional impact the film has had is based on this assumption.

In attempting to treat *Exodus* seriously as a film, we must perforce become involved in some way in the question of whether it is honest—not simply as a criterion of whether the film is telling the truth, but as a matter of approach, as a yardstick to a director's attitude toward his audience, and, finally, as a measure of his artistic integrity. Considering the fact that *Exodus* is dishonest as far as facts are concerned, it is hardly surprising to find that it is also—and perhaps more drastically—dishonest on the higher level.

Exodus (and, I presume, the book by Leon Uris from which it derives) is not, in fact, any of the things the public has taken it for. It distorts facts: the actual event upon which its title is based occurred in 1947, and the result of world-wide attempts to force the British to let the refugees into Palestine was that they were, instead, shipped back to Germany to another detention camp. Other "facts" abound—the whole atmosphere of underground activity in pre-Israel Palestine is treated by Preminger in shallow cat-chase-dog international-espionage style, whereas in reality it constitutes, of course, one of the most outstanding achievements of the human spirit in our age. For one who has lived through that period and that time in that place, *Exodus* is sacrilege.

But let us not be sticklers for truth. I suppose it's understandable that one doesn't want one's work cluttered up with a lot of facts, and one's images with a lot of comparisons to what actually happened. In many ways, in fact, this may well be a defendable position, what with *creative liberty, dramatic transposition, audience identification,* and other strictures applied to movie-making by contemporary "independent" Hollywoodites. It is also conceivable, finally that a good film could be made of something that never happened at all. The problem here, then, is not so much one of reality as one of

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The reality of illegal immigrant "arrival," photographed in Haifa port by Gideon Bachmann.

truth. And we are most emphatically asked to believe that the "inner truth," at least, of *Exodus,* is the story of the birth of Israel.

A film-maker in tackling a historical subject, contemporary or otherwise, faces no less of a responsibility to his viewers than other artists tackling "reality." Certainly we expect no historical treatise, but even a sham concoction like *Ben-Hur* pays at least lip service to factual, historical occurrences. Certainly a film which uses the emotional entanglement of millions with its subject can be expected to have some form of reverence for both that subject and for those millions. Preminger—abstractly—could perhaps find some excuses for distorting the *reality* of Israel, but he seriously offends the intelligence of his paying public by distorting its *truth.*

The success of *Exodus,* both the book and the film, is a frightening phenomenon of our time. More frightening than propaganda because it takes in precisely those who know it to be false. *Exodus* was the best promotion campaign Israel ever had. Daily one finds American tourists on the streets of Tel Aviv asking to be guided to the (fictional) village of Gan Dafna which figures in the book/film. Tourist travel to Israel soared when the book remained eighty weeks on the bestseller lists. Rival political factions in Israel praise the film, and in fact one of its major flaws is that it provides something for everyone. Preminger knows his public well; he "knows what they want" as Louis B. Mayer used to. The difference is that Preminger disguises his exploitation under the cloak of reality and truth, of contemporary problems and their "solutions." He is by far the worse saboteur.

I suppose one should, even if briefly, say what the film is about, just in case there are some readers who have escaped this knowledge by some extraordinary ostrich technique. The book is the story of Zionism from Russia to Tel Aviv; the film picks out some juicy episodes from the wealth of quasi-historical data presented by Uris, and dramatizes them into an emotional volcano ostensibly describing the establishment of the State of Israel and some of the more ungainly aspects of the outgoing British administration of Palestine in 1946–1947. The action centers around a shipload of refugees from the European holocaust who want to enter Palestine by hook or by crook, running the blockade of British warships set up to enforce Britain's White Paper policy of limited immigration. In the film, the action is picked up with the arrival of the refugees on the island of Cyprus, where the British maintained detention camps for refugees caught in the attempt to

The Preminger version.

enter Palestine illegally. We follow the adventuresome route of this group to Palestine (in this version the British have miraculously let them in, setting them loose upon arrival in Haifa port!), and we then follow some of them in various activities in the nascent state. The film ends before anything real happens, except that you know that the state is being established and is facing hardships.

Newman is a sabra smuggled into Cyprus who finally succeeds in getting the refugees to Palestine, and who then continues to lead Palestine into becoming Israel, ably abetted by his father (Cobb) who started it all back in the last century in Russia, who in turn can't stand his brother (Opatashu) who is busy shooting up the British and who gets Sal Mineo to blow up the King David Hotel singlehanded. Saint, of course, gets Newman, Jill Haworth (who was really too young to be considered seriously as Mineo's final harvest) dies to show how bad Arabs are, and Alexandra Stewart, a truly delectable dish who started in Tarzan movies and has recently been making hay with in-the-hay pictures in France, here combines both aspects in the portrayal of a sabra heroine. There should be schools that teach actors nothing but what to do with their hands. And to make things complete (there *are* good Arabs) there's a Valentino type played by John Derek (previously a Cossack) complete with keffiyeh and Van Dyke, who is hung by a Conrad Veidt type played by Marius Goring—a good Arab punished for pro-Jewism by ex-German henchmen of the Grand Mufti. Grave scene, Götterdämmerung, curtain.

Besides being a bad film; *Exodus* raises a number of important questions. Usually bad films can be dismissed either because few people see them, or because those who do—being unable to judge quality—may not discern the subversion of distorted facts (as we find them here). But *Exodus* has won its way into the hearts and pocketbooks of millions, and thus the points it raises must be explored and exposed.

First, there is the entire question of the relative importance of truth. Secondly, it is important to expose the degree to which sugarcoating and whitewashing have created what turns out to be "successful" entertainment (*Exodus*, with a production budget of $4,000,000, had sold $1,600,000 worth of tickets before it opened; when it did open in New York in December, 1960, tickets were immediately sold out through May). Finally it is necessary (and fascinating) to find explanations for the Israelis' own muddled attitude toward this epic, and their inability to divorce propaganda from life (in which they mirror the film's approach) or to decide whether it is more important to let the world become compassionate or to let it know facts. *Prima facie* the whole thing simply points to one conclusion: there are better ways to get through to people than by telling them the truth. Preminger knows, and so does Ben Gurion.

Why is *Exodus* a bad film? I am wholly disinterested here in its derivation from a novel, as works purporting to be art should be judged on their own level. (Anyway, the comparison would only add one demerit.) Therefore the utterly confused and antidramatic script itself (by Dalton Trumbo) must be considered fault number one. There is, for the first forty-five minutes of the film, a standard cinematic approach of mounting and resolving tension, filmed fairly adequately within the confines of Hollywood techniques, which could well have served as a film if detached from the mammoth's body. But for the rest of the three hours and forty-five minutes that the thing keeps coming at you, there is no focus, no continuity, and no unity. Art's first prerequisite, selection of essence, is totally absent. And if story-telling alone were the criterion, there are seven main stories, interwoven to absurdity, and avoiding through sheer pedestrianism precisely that coherence which Dos Passos, for example, derived from such interweaving. Shades of *Intolerance* and D. W. Griffith sentimentality.

Fault number two is that *Exodus* is completely unimaginative. Motion picture techniques have grown up to the point where a certain amount of sophistication can be expected

from their makers. There are ways today of approaching reality with enough awe to attempt its recreation, and of trying to involve the viewer through the *form*, besides the *content*. *Exodus* makes no such attempt. There is nothing in it that is not spelled out, and by allowing the perceptor no free range it disengages him from itself. *Exodus* is, in the true sense of the word, a "square" film.

Third, (and this is perhaps the most Premingerian characteristic) it is laughably pretentious. Close-ups of the lovers are held in slow pans, shot so that the viewer expects a revelation at the other end of the camera's movement. Cut. We now see the same scene from below, the lovers loom against the cypresses and the sky, what are they seeing? Finally, the pan resumes—a valley and a village. "This is my world, how can it be enough for you?" the hero says to the American nurse (or something like that; lapse of exact memory must be excused in the case of such platitudes). Constantly we are being made aware by camera tricks, by dialogue, by juxtaposition of landscapes and people, of contrasts in behavior, of suave worldliness and rugged attachment to the soil of the fatherland, that while what we are seeing may be simple, it is really terribly profound. It's message-message-message, in word and image, sound and music. Perhaps the best that can be said for it in this department is that it is consistent in its boorishness.

Lastly, *Exodus* fails miserably in the department which would seem to me to be the most important criterion for a film: it does not provide an experience. It stimulates sentiment, but so does a soap opera. It strives for identification ("something for everybody" again), but so does a juvenile gangster film. It uses all the resources of artificiality to rouse emotions, but succeeds only in obscuring that element which in historical material alone can create impact: truth.

Exodus does not portray historical facts. *Les Miserables* did not portray the facts of the French revolution, but it portrayed its truth. *Exodus* does neither.—Gideon Bachmann

Book Reviews

Film Notes

Edited by Arthur Lennig. (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Film Society, 1960. Paperbound, $1.45) Available from 419 West Gorham, Madison 3, Wisconsin.

Something interesting has for some years been going on up in Madison. The Wisconsin Film Society at the University has been one of the country's most active film societies for about a decade now, and its labors have resulted, among other things, in publication of this collection of program notes. From its virtues, and defects, we can learn a great deal.

What happens when a group of students from a variety of academic fields band together over a period of years and run every silent film they can get their hands on, together with many older sound films? What happens, especially, when they sit down to provide explanations and evaluations of films for their highly intelligent and none too respectful audiences? The first stage, which is all that many societies manage to pass through, consists of reprinting quotations from *The Film Till Now, From Caligari to Hitler,* and other supposedly definitive works. The second stage, it appears, is one in which these views of older men, established through decades of repetition and reprinting, are subjected to wholesome questioning. Given the level of film criticism and history heretofore, this stage is a welcome and salutary one. It is, regrettably, a fact that film history is generally derivative; vast reaches of it are likely to be almost completely overthrown if respectable historianship is ever brought to bear upon it. It is, even more regrettably, a fact that faddism, snobbery, log-rolling, and preciousness have long disgraced film criticism.

It is, therefore, a pleasure to see the young men of Wisconsin and other film societies, like those around the *New York Film Bulletin,* set-

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What happens when a group of students from a variety of academic fields band together over a period of years and run every silent film they can get their hands on, together with many older sound films? What happens, especially, when they sit down to provide explanations and evaluations of films for their highly intelligent and none too respectful audiences? The first stage, which is all that many societies manage to pass through, consists of reprinting quotations from *The Film Till Now, From Caligari to Hitler*, and other supposedly definitive works. The second stage, it appears, is one in which these views of older men, established through decades of repetition and reprinting, are subjected to wholesome questioning. Given the level of film criticism and history heretofore, this stage is a welcome and salutary one. It is, regrettably, a fact that film history is generally derivative; vast reaches of it are likely to be almost completely overthrown if respectable historianship is ever brought to bear upon it. It is, even more regrettably, a fact that faddism, snobbery, log-rolling, and preciousness have long disgraced film criticism.

It is, therefore, a pleasure to see the young men of Wisconsin and other film societies, like those around the *New York Film Bulletin*, set-

ting out to demolish false reputations. One hopes they will build better. They attempt it, in the essays comprising this volume, with varying intelligence, varying sophistication, and varying skill as writers. Mr. Lennig's own contributions, which make up about half the book, are mostly perceptive and personal, though the "background" sections of his essays contain, necessarily, much familiar material. He occasionally lets an arrogant tone creep into his attacks on overrated film-makers or critics (he is especially concerned to puncture what he considers the inflated reputation of *From Caligari to Hitler*); but he is willing, like the best of critics, to deal particularly and patiently with the actual techniques of films. His tastes, which are for Lang's *Nibelungen Saga,* Eisenstein, Robison's *Warning Shadows,* and the like, are determinedly and usually intelligently unfashionable. He is willing to sit at the viewer and measure the shots in *The Ghost That Never Returns,* or check the sequence of shots in *Strike* against a published shot breakdown, so that one knows his strictures on the Odessa Steps sequence are worth thinking about. And he is willing to lead to the slaughter, or attempted slaughter, any critical holy cow whatever. He has, unfortunately, no sense of humor; he is, in an odd, defensive way, very concerned with the "literary quality" of films; and he has been careless in editing, so that the book contains innumerable small but irritating errors. (One of the worst is a note that in Russia there was "a dearth of oversimplified scripts," which seems intended to mean there were too many.)

Other contributors to the book are Gilbert Schloss, who writes a quiet, deadly new look at *Earth,* and a note on the great American silent comedians; Cameron Macauley, who contributes an analysis of Keaton's style in *The General* and a note on *Intolerance*; Joop Doorman; David J. DeLaura; J. Quinn Brisben; Bill Donnelly; and Gretchen Schoff.

The book's contents being derived from program notes, it will easily serve as a somewhat iconoclastic guide to new film-society officers and anyone else concerned with planning programs of films from the past. (It includes twenty pages of thumbnail reviews at the end of the book.) The critical value of the book is somewhat diminished by the need to provide elementary information, and also by a prelude-like air indigenous to the program note. But it remains of great interest as an example of the thinking of the film enthusiasts who carry on the vital task of bringing a knowledge of the film's past to audiences in university towns all over the country. Like every film-society generation, the Wisconsin writers must now enter the third stage and cope with films of the present.

The book is paperbound. It has a section of illustrations at the end with valuable frame blow-ups by Mr. Lennig, including sequences from *Fragment of an Empire* and *October.* The book's design is pedestrian inside and the two-color cover is grimly and wastefully unattractive, but the printing, as they say, is clear.

—ERNEST CALLENBACH

This issue of *Film Quarterly* contains approximately 30,000 words: as much material as is found in many paperback books of similar price. Subscribers are assured of receiving each issue promptly, and in addition receive the annual indexes. $4.00 per year to: Periodicals Department, University of California Press, Berkeley 4, California.

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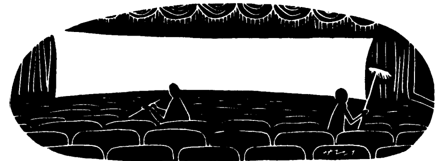
Four Screenplays of Ingmar Bergman

Translated from the Swedish by Lars Malmstrom and David Kushner. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960. $6.00)

A note at the beginning of this collection of screenplays tells us that they "are identical to those used by Ingmar Bergman when filming, except that: 1) the original scripts contain numbers before each sequence which indicate the estimated number of shots that will be necessary for that sequence; 2) since these screenplays are prepared before shooting begins, they contain sequences and dialogue which do not appear in the final film; Bergman has deleted some material to make the published scripts conform to the movies."

The omissions are unfortunate, for one had hoped that the screenplays would give one more of a glimpse behind the scenes. The nature and content of the discarded sequences, and if possible information on the reasons Bergman had for omitting them (or adding scenes not in the original draft) would have assisted us in gauging Bergman's intentions, and there is always a fascination in watching an artist pick and choose from his own scraps of creation. (One unfilmed sequence, for no stated reason, is left in the *Wild Strawberries* script. In it, Professor Borg converses briefly with two of his contemporaries who are also to be honored at the academic ceremony. It contains some interesting dialogue; but perhaps Bergman thought it best not to distract us by merging Borg's individuality for a moment in the general class of old men.) The screenplays as they stand, then, serve chiefly as aids to recall and as a partial halting of the evanescence inherent in the medium. Anyone without a strong visual memory, however, may be occasionally misled. Those who are concerned to elucidate Bergman's dramatic and philosophical subtleties will pore over the scripts, finding, I think, that the subtitles were excellent and that little is added by a penetration of the Swedish. Others will read these scripts with curiosity to discover the source of Bergman's grip upon a large, literate American audience — large enough to exhaust a substantial first printing of this book in about three weeks.

Film classicists are somewhat taken aback by this belated popular recognition of the director's role: people who for years have gone to see Gabin or Giulietta Massina, Magnani or Guinness now flock to "see" Bergman—and how many of his fans are familiar with the names of Max von Sydow, Gunnar Björnstrand, or Eva Dahlbeck? It is true that Bergman has a first-rate cinema talent, that he has made some twenty-five films, at least eleven of which have come from his original screenplays, and that he



is adept in several genres. Nevertheless, it is confusing to find him hailed as though he had invented the arts he practices, and the critic must wonder why this is the case. What is it about Bergman that gives him star rating?

We should remember that it is the master's late films which have earned him his following. In these, Bergman works in an international tradition with a backdrop of cosmopolitan theater styles, modern philosophy, and Freudian psychology; he is not provincially Swedish in his themes and emphases. Secondly, like Shaw he is able to touch upon broad and serious topics—the existence of God, the nature of love, the meaning of life—without ever losing sight of their dramatic and entertainment values. Though somewhat didactic in manner, he does not make the mistake of presenting ready-made solutions: his didacticism lies rather in questions than in answers. Consequently, it is possible to enjoy the sensation of profundity without actually penetrating very far below the surface of the action. Moreover, his dialogue is strong and his characters are firm; there is

as much for the ear as there is for the eye, and this is a trait valued by audiences who shy away from considering the film as an independent art form, preferring to see in it an extension of the novel and the drama. As the printed screenplays testify, Bergman is intellectual, intelligent, and urbane; his expression is controlled, and he is given to rather conservative forms.

Bergman emerges, in fact, as first and foremost a dramatist. In some quarters he is said to derive from Strindberg, though I believe this to be truer of Dreyer. If we must find him an ancestor in Scandinavian drama I suggest that Ibsen provides a better model. (They even share a certain ponderousness.) Bergman, however, has a streak of showmanship deriving from the popular theater. Like Shaw on occasion, he manipulates a vulgar tradition for his own ends. *Smiles of a Summer Night* is a moralist's variant upon a certain type of synthetic decadence deriving from the French theater, represented within the film itself by the scene upon the stage—just as *Arms and the Man* rings the changes upon popular Balkan romances. Each gains a freshness from the opposition of a novel content and a conventional form.

This is not, of course, to suggest that Bergman's only talent is as a writer. The translation of these fluid screenplays into the sure and steady triumphs of the screen is in itself astonishing, and obviously indicates a powerful visual and rhythmic talent. Bergman tells us of the conception of his films in an introductory essay: "A film for me begins with something very vague—a chance remark or a bit of conversation, a hazy but agreeable event unrelated to any particular situation. It can be a few bars of music, a shaft of light across the street. Sometimes in my work at the theater I have envisioned actors made up for yet unplayed roles." Indeed, not only has Bergman acquired considerable mastery of film techniques over the years, but he has also, in recent years, established a troupe of actors and actresses whose teamwork and comprehension of Bergman's conceptions are uncanny. Reading over the screenplays, having seen the films, it is quite impossible to imagine different casting or alternative interpretations of the roles. This is not so much Bergman's luck, surely, as his achievement.

The book, it should be said in conclusion, is a handsome one, beautifully provided with stills. It is to be hoped that some of Bergman's peers will be equally well treated by the publishing world.—R. H. TURNER

Antitrust in the Motion Picture Industry

By Michael Conant. (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960. $5.50)

This is a formidably detailed and cautious economic analysis of precisely what happened, especially in the Chicago market area, when existing antitrust laws were applied. Did this experiment in antitrust activity, more important than any ever attempted in any other industry, actually promote market patterns closer to the model of free competition? This is the question Mr. Conant—formerly an attorney for entertainment firms in the Chicago area, and presumably privy to many trade secrets that do not necessarily come out in his study—addresses himself to. But it is of course a question of more than simple economic interest, and to anyone concerned with long-run problems of the optimum economic organization of "art industries," it turns out to be a question with immense ramifications.

To get to Mr. Conant's chief conclusion: it is that the federal antitrust actions from 1938 to 1946 *did* indeed have significant effects. Government influence on film boards of trade and other industry groups previous to 1946, Mr. Conant notes, "fostered and abetted monopoly and combination in the motion picture industry as much as they curtailed it. The Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Justice, the federal courts, and Congress all took turns in approving different aspects of the monopolized control carried on by the boards of trade." How-

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ever, the divorcement ordered by the *Paramount* decree, separating exhibition enterprises from the giant vertically integrated major companies, did *in the short run* destroy much of their overwhelming power; the lot of the small exhibitor is now a much happier one, armed as he is with potential triple-damage suits against distributors. Nonetheless, Mr. Conant feels that when the watchdog role of the district court ends, the economic weight of the major circuits will again make itself felt. He thinks that the divorced circuits are still much too big: United Paramount Theaters, for instance, was left with some 500 houses, and several others owned more than a hundred. "The only sure, long-run remedy for monopoly power is dispersal of that power," Mr. Conant roundly declares. "The circuits should have been destroyed." He says that 10 theaters in a chain would have been a realistic maximum.

As was implied by one trade journal in reviewing *Antitrust in the Motion Picture Industry,* some degree of oligopoly or monopoly is the social price demanded by capital for entering into such a risky enterprise as film production and marketing. The long-range question is not really whether we can, by some great effort of judiciary supervision (which, as Mr. Conant rightly points out, cannot long be continued, and is perhaps in any case improper as well as inefficient) tinker with the machinery to make it less unjust. It is, instead, whether we really want this kind of economic organization at all.

Mr. Conant's study hardly touches on the quality of films, save in a strictly commercial sense. And it is not easy to tell what other kind of quality he may have in mind when he writes that "The public has gained many more pictures of high quality from the entrance of so many independent producers into the freer film market created by the *Paramount* decrees." The independent producer at present is a far cry from the model of the independent free-enterprise entrepreneur—as far, perhaps, as the great studio machines in their way were from the classical image of the corporation. Neither one can afford to be concerned with art. The "industrial" conditions under which film-makers *could* function as artists have yet to be seriously discussed, at least in the West.

The prohibition on fixing admissions in film license contracts has been only partly successful, Mr. Conant observes; informal practices have been devised to achieve what the contracts can no longer specify, and no real price rivalry exists on the exhibition level. Closely connected with this is the failure of the decree to prohibit "clearance" agreements, by which a theater can obtain a film and prevent any other theater from showing it for some specified time. Clearance provides the basis for substantial price differentials between first- and second-run houses and the rest of the theaters. If it were seriously weakened or destroyed, Mr. Conant points out, theaters would compete more sharply with each other on a price basis; lower admissions "could well result." The decline in revenue per spectator would probably not be made up by an increase in number of spectators; lower distributor income would result, and the income of the industry as a whole would thus decline; producers might curtail production even further, and release fewer prints of their pictures. Not only this, but the theater side of the industry, basically a real-estate operation in competition with other metropolitan intensive-land-use enterprises, would decline further. Mr. Conant, cautious as always, concludes from these horrendous possibilities that "prohibiting all time lapse between runs would not be a fruitful policy." In plain English, the American film industry cannot afford free competition among exhibitors.

This is not a novel conclusion for students of contemporary economic institutions, needless to say. But it is well that in this very careful and indefatigably documented work, Mr. Conant has spelled out the situation for the film industry. His book is a distinct advance over earlier studies of the industry's structure and economic practices, both in the sophistication of its economic analysis and in its use of information that could only be obtained after the impact of the antitrust decrees could be assessed in some reasonable time perspective.

—Ernest Callenbach

The Fifty-Year Decline and Fall of Hollywood

By Ezra Goodman. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1961. $5.95)

A survey of the bumps, calluses, and open sores on the idol's feet. Includes much familiar material, treated with vehement and sometimes only apparent iconoclasm; but also includes novel and fascinating accounts of critical hanky-panky at the *New York Times*. Reviews by Benjamin R. Crisler, for one example, were replaced on several occasions by softer reviews from — surprise! — Bosley Crowther. As Goodman curtly observes, "If this sort of thing goes on at a newspaper like the *Times*, one can only begin to imagine what transpires at other, lesser publications." He also recounts numerous anecdotes of industry pressures brought to bear on reviewers writing for publications from *Time* on "down," and by people from Stanley Kramer on "down." The sad fact seems to be that if critics are not puffers, they are treated as the enemy.—E. C.

Il Film Cecoslovacco

(The Czechoslovakian Film) Edited by Ernesto G. Laura. (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1960. 279 pages. 3,500 lire)

Ernesto G. Laura, a prominent 28-year-old Italian critic, is responsible for this first, thorough, and intelligently presented history of the Czechoslovakian film from 1898 to the present. The volume is handsomely printed and enlivened by some 300 photographs and several color plates. It contains a *History of the Czech Film* by Laura himself, *The Animated Cinema* by Marie Benesová, *The Scientific Film and Documentary* by Sárka *and Lubos Bartosek*, and finally *The Industrial and Economic Structure of the Czech Film from Its Origins* by Jaroslav Broz. An ample filmography and two analytic indexes (one of names and one of film titles) make the volume extremely useful for reference purposes.

Laura, who has written the fundamental section of the book, and who has spent considerable time in the archives of Prague, is here a political and social historian as well as an accomplished critic of the art and techniques of film. Those who know only the works of Gustav Machaty, such as his *Erotikon* and *Extase* of the early 'thirties, will be introduced to an unexpectedly varied history of film production. Historical and social realism (*Nema Barikáda*, Silent Barricade, by Otakar Vávra, 1949; *Daléka Cesta*, Ghetto Terezin, by Alfréd Radok, same year), though still very important in contemporary Czech production, are paralleled by light comedy and psychological studies (*Dobryvojak Svejk*, The Good Soldier Schweik, by Karel Stekly; 1956, *Svédomí*, The Conscience, by Jiri Krejčik, 1949).

Of even more exceptional interest, however, are the sections devoted to the animated cinema in general, and to films with puppets in particular. Czech production of the latter has grown to an unprecedented extent since World War II, and artists such as Tyrlova, Zeman, and Pojar, as well as Trnka, have made of their puppets characters of strong expressive autonomy. The plates reproducing the early stages of the drawings for Trnka's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, or those that document the work of the younger Pojar, well illustrate the delightful poetry and depth of the first, and the satire and social consciousness of the other. Pojar's latest effort, *The Creation of the World*, follows the Book of Genesis with high humor: God is pictured as a delightful character, rather like George Bernard Shaw, and every phase of the creation is wittily represented without a touch of cuteness.

Only occasional monstrously long paragraphs mar this excellent book, which is the best introduction to the growing Czech film world in any reasonably accessible language.—LETIZIA CIOTTI MILLER

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Production Report

Young German Directors

Since German producers are very uncertain these days, the directors are seeking their way themselves, some of them producing without a studio. This is the case with Helmut Käutner, Wolfgang Staudte, and Harald Braun, three of the most prominent and prolific directors in Germany. After Käutner's *Der Rest ist Schweigen* (The Rest Is Silence) they produced a new film through their own company, "Freie Filmproduktions GmbH." This is *Kirmes* (State Fair), the story of a village where a World War II corpse of a soldier is found during the erection of tents for the fair. A flashback reveals that the soldier was a deserter. The mayor then was a Nazi, and we hear the Nazi speeches. Today, of course, everybody is a democrat, but the body of the soldier still creates a certain unease. . . . Wolfgang Staudte's direction is technically very interesting; though some effects of light and camera go against the prevailing realist style, the film is one of the best to appear in recent years.

Rolf Thiele, who made *Rosemary*, has made of *Der liebe Augustin* a most disappointing film—it is a story for housewives, sweet and in "glorious color." In *Labyrinth* he tried to exploit devices from German experimental films; but it is always deadly to depend on "influences" and Thiele, in any case a man without style, is certainly not well advised to do so.

The German experimental film-makers themselves, to be sure, sometimes rely on effects which Cocteau used thirty years ago. But many of their ideas are as abstract as modern art.

Herbert Vesely, a young Viennese, made *Nicht Mehr Flichen* in Germany. Its theme (it has no "story") is the absurdity of our time. The sequences, perhaps appropriately, often have no connection and the oversymbolic images are sometimes reminiscent of Buñuel. The film was an experiment, not always convincing and sometimes as absurd as our time itself, but it is one of the rare examples of a free cinema in Germany.

Maya was composed of five short films about young people. The most interesting was the episode "Die Brücke," by Haro Sanft. A young girl without any contact with her surroundings runs through a deserted suburb; at last she comes to a bridge. "Jonas" deals with the psychology of the unconscious, and remains somewhat obscure despite an introduction designed to explain terms and symbols. Its maker, Dr. Ottomar Domnick, is a Stuttgart psychiatrist. The characters often are sick and without contact (a theme of increasing commonness); the plot, if one can call it that, is the story of a hat—a symbol explained, in poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger's commentary, as one of protection. Jonas's hat is stolen; he also steals a hat. But in this hat are the initials of a friend whom he lost in escaping as a prisoner of war; so he is again caught by feelings of guilt and helplessness. At the end a girl runs after him—to protect him?

The dialogue is unimportant: what counts are the voices that address the hero (or us). It is as if robots are talking to us with human voices and humans are talking like robots. The photography uses wide spaces and planes, with the people frequently seen from slightly above; it is by Andor von Barsy. Herbert Vesely supervised the picture.

Other, shorter films also belong to this genre. *Die Stunde X* (X-Hour) deals with an unexploded bomb found when a city is being rebuilt; its camerawork is very good, though the rest of the film (directed by Bernhard Dörries) is not convincing. *Der Fluch der bösen Tat* (The Curse of Crime) is the story of a prisoner who relives the path that led him to his cell; upon release he must regain contact with the world. The film was made by Ulrich Wiedmann and photographed by Richard Schüler in a rather abstract style.

Gino, the latest film by Ottomar Domnick, again photographed by Andor von Barsy, also has no plot. The action, in so far as we can speak of an action, centers on three persons who come from entirely different social and intellectual classes. They are the owner of a quarry, his former wife, and Gino, a sixteen-year-old boy. As in *Jonas*, the theme is neither an epic event nor a sensational film story; it is merely an everyday episode. Gino again is a young man without contact (here obviously understandable since he is an Italian working in Germany). The quarry-owner uses Gino as a spy on his divorced wife. The woman does not really fall in love (or does she?) but she finds the young man interesting; finally he takes her car's key and has an accident. The film works on three levels: reality, Gino's dreams, and the world of the woman. Each level has its own visual effects. On the reality level, the characters are portrayed by their contrasting surroundings: the woman's home is modern and tasteful, filled with books and works of art; the quarry is almost prehistoric, with huge blocks of stone and gigantic machines; Gino lives in a primitive barracks. The subjective levels show the boy dreaming of being a handsome hero (at an automobile race) and living a "sweet life"; the woman sublimates her experience in a novel written in an abstract literary style—a "film within a film"—which reflects the sources of her passion for the "narcissistic" boy.

The problem, as in Jean-Luc Godard's *A Bout de Souffle*, is the hopelessness of human love. But *Gino* concentrates on absurdities and confusions: a tendency that seems widespread in pictures by the younger German film-makers. Are there no other problems?—WERNER ZURBUCH

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Since German producers are very uncertain these days, the directors are seeking their way themselves, some of them producing without a studio. This is the case with Helmut Käutner, Wolfgang Staudte, and Harald Braun, three of the most prominent and prolific directors in Germany. After Käutner's *Der Rest ist Schweigen* (The Rest Is Silence) they produced a new film through their own company, "Freie Filmproduktions GmbH." This is *Kirmes* (State Fair), the story of a village where a World War II corpse of a soldier is found during the erection of tents for the fair. A flashback reveals that the soldier was a deserter. The mayor then was a Nazi, and we hear the Nazi speeches. Today, of course, everybody is a democrat, but the body of the soldier still creates a certain unease. . . . Wolfgang Staudte's direction is technically very interesting; though some effects of light and camera go against the prevailing realist style, the film is one of the best to appear in recent years.

Rolf Thiele, who made *Rosemary*, has made of *Der liebe Augustin* a most disappointing film—it is a story for housewives, sweet and in "glorious color." In *Labyrinth* he tried to exploit devices from German experimental films; but it is always deadly to depend on "influences" and Thiele, in any case a man without style, is certainly not well advised to do so.

The German experimental film-makers themselves, to be sure, sometimes rely on effects which Cocteau used thirty years ago. But many of their ideas are as abstract as modern art.

Herbert Vesely, a young Viennese, made *Nicht Mehr Flichen* in Germany. Its theme (it has no "story") is the absurdity of our time. The sequences, perhaps appropriately, often have no connection and the oversymbolic images are sometimes reminiscent of Buñuel. The film was an experiment, not always convincing and sometimes as absurd as our time itself, but it is one of the rare examples of a free cinema in Germany.

Maya was composed of five short films about young people. The most interesting was the episode "Die Brücke," by Haro Sanft. A young girl without any contact with her surroundings runs through a deserted suburb; at last she comes to a bridge. "Jonas" deals with the psychology of the unconscious, and remains somewhat obscure despite an introduction designed to explain terms and symbols. Its maker, Dr. Ottomar Domnick, is a Stuttgart psychiatrist. The characters often are sick and without contact (a theme of increasing commonness); the plot, if one can call it that, is the story of a hat—a symbol explained, in poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger's commentary, as one of protection. Jonas's hat is stolen; he also steals a hat. But in this hat are the initials of a friend whom he lost in escaping as a prisoner of war; so he is again caught by feelings of guilt and helplessness. At the end a girl runs after him—to protect him?

The dialogue is unimportant: what counts are the voices that address the hero (or us). It is as if robots are talking to us with human voices and humans are talking like robots. The photography uses wide spaces and planes, with the people frequently seen from slightly above; it is by Andor von Barsy. Herbert Vesely supervised the picture.

Other, shorter films also belong to this genre. *Die Stunde X* (X-Hour) deals with an unexploded bomb found when a city is being rebuilt; its camerawork is very good, though the rest of the film (directed by Bernhard Dörries) is not convincing. *Der Fluch der bösen Tat* (The Curse of Crime) is the story of a prisoner who relives the path that led him to his cell; upon release he must regain contact with the world. The film was made by Ulrich Wiedmann and photographed by Richard Schüler in a rather abstract style.

Gino, the latest film by Ottomar Domnick, again photographed by Andor von Barsy, also has no plot. The action, in so far as we can speak of an action, centers on three persons who come from entirely different social and intellectual classes. They are the owner of a quarry, his former wife, and Gino, a sixteen-year-old boy. As in *Jonas*, the theme is neither an epic event nor a sensational film story; it is merely an everyday episode. Gino again is a young man without contact (here obviously understandable since he is an Italian working in Germany). The quarry-owner uses Gino as a spy on his divorced wife. The woman does not really fall in love (or does she?) but she finds the young man interesting; finally he takes her car's key and has an accident. The film works on three levels: reality, Gino's dreams, and the world of the woman. Each level has its own visual effects. On the reality level, the characters are portrayed by their contrasting surroundings: the woman's home is modern and tasteful, filled with books and works of art; the quarry is almost prehistoric, with huge blocks of stone and gigantic machines; Gino lives in a primitive barracks. The subjective levels show the boy dreaming of being a handsome hero (at an automobile race) and living a "sweet life"; the woman sublimates her experience in a novel written in an abstract literary style—a "film within a film"—which reflects the sources of her passion for the "narcissistic" boy.

The problem, as in Jean-Luc Godard's *A Bout de Souffle*, is the hopelessness of human love. But *Gino* concentrates on absurdities and confusions: a tendency that seems widespread in pictures by the younger German film-makers. Are there no other problems?—WERNER ZURBUCH

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