VOL. XVII, NO. 3 — SPRING 1964

Editor's Notebook

To Greet the Spring

Felicitations . . . to all those who toil in the film vineyards: The film society organizers who bring new films to the hinterlands and instill in new and wider audiences a love of the great films of the past. The museum keepers who gather up and protect the rare films so that they do not entirely disappear. The occasional scholars who bring to bear on film problems a concern for hard fact and documented evidence. The film-makers both in the metropolitan areas and scattered across the nation who regard their work as a métier and not a job, who struggle to function as artists in an expensive medium at the mercy of money. The experimenters who seek to say what seems to them new and personal. The lonely great men who have fought the commercial or political cinema and won the chance to make films for which they cared. The animated film-makers, bent over their esoteric machinery, sometimes as fantastic as their films. The factual film-makers, who have been seeking to bring documentary face to face with human character in detail, as well as with the social situation. The film teachers who are trying to develop in their students an intelligent grasp of the past and a dedicated passion for the future. The art-house managers who program with daring and publicize with zest a wide range of contemporary films. The distributors who are willing to take a chance on what is unknown yet may soon become immensely popular. The 16mm projectionists who always clean the gate, and the 35mm

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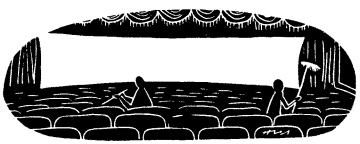

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Japan. HERBERT FEINSTEIN produces a weekly radio interview program for KRON-FM, San Francisco. DEREK HILL writes for many British periodicals. EDWARD HARRISON imports foreign films, among them Ray's. WILLIAM JOHNSON, Londoner now in New York, formerly wrote a film column for *Modern Photography*. PAUL NELSON is editor of *Little Sandy Review*, a folk-music journal. HARRIET R. POLT writes for film journals here and abroad. T. J. Ross teaches at Fairleigh Dickinson University. JOHN THOMAS lives in Los Angeles. STANLEY WEINTRAUB wrote *Private Shaw and Public Shaw*, about Lawrence and G. B. S. LOUIS MARCORELLES lives in Paris and writes for many film journals.

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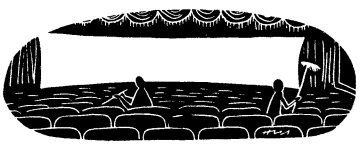

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Jean-Luc Godard's Half-Truths

"Je suis un faux peintre,
je suis un faux artiste,
je suis un photographe."
—J.-L.G.

Few new cineastes have made such a shattering entry into the seventh art as Godard, and few have provoked such extreme reactions. Jean Cocteau, Jean-Paul Sartre, Sophia Loren, and Harvard University all radiated an unfeigned enthusiasm for *Breathless*. This miracle has just been repeated with his last picture, *Le Mépris*. Badly received in Italy, it has triumphed in France; the celebrated writer Louis Aragon declares that he has seen nothing to equal it since Chaplin. By contrast, however, Godard's other films, like *Une Femme est Une Femme* or *Les Carabiniers*, have been total flops with both critics and public, even though in many respects they were clearly superior to the first two mentioned.

The paradoxical fact is that this Swiss-born director combines, in a sense, practically the whole of French cinema, old and new. It

would be easy to cite what links him with René Clair or Jean Renoir, Jean Vigo or Abel Gance, Alain Resnais or François Truffaut. Advocate of style above all, Godard thinks cinema as he breathes. If, he said to me several years back, some accident should make it impossible for him to direct films, well, he would continue to see them, discuss them with his friends, and he would be happy. But this admirable profession of faith conceals another important facet of his character: Godard is fascinated by literature, poetry, beautiful language, Aragon, Cocteau, Malraux, and himself possesses great talent as a writer, with an acute sense for the value of the written word. A third point about him is that, before entering the cinema, he studied ethnology; and, unlike many European film-makers, he traveled adventurously, assisting various amateur film-makers who present their travel films under the auspices of the Connaissance du Monde in Paris. Lastly, like John Osborne, Godard has a social conscience, making him despair of living in an era when, as Jimmy Porter says in *Look Back in Anger*, there are no more good causes worth sacrificing oneself for. (Whence *Le Petit Soldat*.)

Jean-Luc Godard is erratic, tormented, uncertain—not only of his own reactions, his own sensibility, but of the means to use in expressing himself. His career is a reflection of these contradictions. It reveals a temperament which is at the same time curious to know everything, to try everything, and also incapable of being settled, of going to the bottom of things, of looking reality in the face. Hence his frequent resort to a kind of verbal delirium.

Godard as a man of letters: Godard has an active concern for language, spoken or written. He knows how to write and speak. His little-known short, *Charlotte and Her Jules* (1958, with Jean-Paul Belmondo) remains to this day perhaps his most astonishing work, and the most revealing about his aesthetic direction. A young man, often crude in speech, delivers a long monologue to a girl-friend who has just come to find him in his room; he explains all the reasons why she should love him, despite his bad treatment of her. Godard took over whole the idea of the "Bel Indifferent" of Jean Cocteau (who really created the stage role of Edith Piaf). This enabled him to say what he thought of the cinema, of women, of love. Made for $1,000, and shot one afternoon in Godard's own room, the film had to be postsynchronized by Godard himself in Belmondo's absence. The result is extraordinary, even if the synchronization is sometimes inexact: Godard is a prodigious story-teller, like Cocteau or Guitry. He knows how to make fictions true. "At home," he told me (he is the son of a big bourgeois family in Lausanne), "we had the habit of reading together in the evenings. That's how I developed a taste for recitation aloud."

Godard's montage, not only in *Charlotte and Her Jules* but in all his films, was to be organized around the dialogue, which often enough would be spoken in a deliberately unrealistic fashion. In *Charlotte* Godard cut into the monologue with brief unanswered questions to the girl, who could only reply "Ah!" "Oh!" "Non!" or else make some silly gesture with her head. One may easily see the same abrupt cutting, built on the sentence rhythms, in the famous bed scene in *Breathless*, and more recently though less successfully in a similar scene in *Le Mépris*, when the camera frames Bardot in close-up against the white bathroom wall, and lets her say, with the greatest expressive force one could desire, several words calculated to shock the puritan.

Godard as Brechtian: Hoping to recapture the conciseness of writing, yet not denying the realistic solidity which speech acquires on the screen, Godard fears like the plague all the traps of realism. He likes to cite Brecht himself: "Realism does not consist in reproducing reality, but in showing how things *really* are."

◀(*Opposite page*) *Godard directing American actor Jack Palance and Brigitte Bardot in* LE MÉPRIS.

Hence his concern for the documentary side of film, his desire to provoke in the viewer a kind of sudden awareness. I say "a kind of," because Godard has little further in common with Brecht. His complaisant despair is at the opposite pole from the lucidity of the author of *Mother Courage*. Two of his first films display clearly the influence of Brecht: *Vivre Sa Vie*, with its division into tableaux in order to "distance" the story, in the manner of *Three-Penny Opera*; and even moreso *Les Carabiniers*, whose integral nihilism recalls the nihilism of early Brecht, as in *Drums in the Night*. I am thinking in particular of the scene of the execution of the young communist girl in the woods. The soldiers regard her simply as a pretty girl who could be raped even though she goes on reciting her Marxist catechism. One feels, in Godard, a simultaneous real affection for the character (who believes in an ideal) and a shrug of the shoulders: what good are ideals? The two heroes of *Les Carabiniers*, brutes who do nothing but rape, steal, and kill, and yet are not bad guys, represent all too well what Godard thinks of ordinary humanity left free to follow its instincts. And Brecht says exactly the same thing in *Drums in the Night*. Will Godard someday be capable of transcending this nihilism? Has he realized the intolerable character of his *Petit Soldat*, conceived initially as a fable about the violation of conscience, but ending as a painful confession that this new child of the century is incapable of taking a position on the problems of his time? Godard claims to detest the whimpering humanism of Albert Camus; but his own morose delights leave him worse off still.

Godard and the "cinéma direct": An adventurer of the mind, seeking to seize with the camera everything that happens around him, Godard likes to repeat that the cinema is equally Eisenstein and Rouch: the most rigorous control and unlimited improvisation. From this springs the great interest he took in an article by Richard Leacock on the new camera used by Morris Engel for *Weddings and Babies*, and in the work of Leacock in general. Under the influence of Rouch's *Moi, un Noir*, he experimented with maximum improvisation in his third film, *Une Femme est Une Femme*, while using synchronous sound as far as possible. *Le Mépris* proves that he believes more than ever in the importance of directly recorded, synchronous sound. The long central scene of exposition of the couple's relationship would not make sense without the total continuity that Godard has obtained in the playing and the rendering of dialogue. *Une Femme est Une Femme*, which I consider Godard's best film, remains to this day the only really original attempt to utilise the direct recording techniques for dramatic purposes. With, of course, some refinement on Godard's part—as in the scene in the apartment of Jean-Claude Brialy and Anna Karina, where Anna cries as she leans against the wall. Taken short, and not knowing what to do next, Anna Karina stopped acting and remarked, "C'est ce que disait Agnès [Agnès Varda] ... c'est très beau une femme qui pleure ..." Godard, in the cutting room, retained these reactions of his wife, which fitted admirably into the spirit of the scene. Another capital instance was in a cafe scene, in a long continuous shot; the camera was being hand-held by Raoul Coutard, almost entirely on Anna Karina as she sat at a table talking with Belmondo. A nervous musical rhythm fills the scene—notably a song by Charles Aznavour, "Tu te laisses aller." Thanks to the synchronous sound, we can read this young woman like a book: prisoner of her emotions, intensely unhappy, as if aged by her anxieties and yet visibly ready to start again from zero, to let her vitality come forth.

Why then is Godard so reserved about the experiments of Leacock, or a film like *A Tout Prendre* by Claude Jutra, which he reproaches for their lack of *mise en scène?* Perhaps a description of the shooting of a 16mm color sketch which he did in collaboration with Albert Maysles at the camera, last December, will give the beginnings of an answer. The

story was nothing more nor less than a reworking of the tale of the missent notes told by Anna Karina in *Une Femme est Une Femme*: a girl believes that she misaddressed two letters, which she had sent to two of her lovers in order to break a rendezvous with the first and arrange one with the other. However, the notes really were properly sent; and the girl makes herself look ridiculous, and loses both lovers. In the sketch, one of the boys is an "action sculptor," the other a mechanic. I found myself, one afternoon, in the miniscule studio of the sculptor, near the Gare Montparnasse. There were the sculptor, the girl (played by a Canadian cover-girl), Godard, Albert Maysles, and a sound engineer loaned by the director Mario Ruspoli. Godard made the actors rehearse very minutely, and Maysles also, for he was to turn, camera in hand, literally around the actors, framing them, losing them, catching them, according to the impulse of the moment. Maysles, who in my opinion is the most brilliant of contemporary cameramen, told me that in the end Godard would have to hold his camera himself—which Godard for the moment, however, did not at all seem to consider. Certainly this Godard-Maysles collaboration went perfectly, and they will find themselves together again soon, perhaps in Montreal to shoot the adventures of a French-Canadian terrorist (though this project seems to be abandoned for the moment), perhaps in New York to follow the life and loves of some bunny from the Playboy clubs.

This is what constitutes the Godard method, in 16mm or in 35mm, with Coutard or Maysles, with or without improvisation: the director seeks to flush out reality, to catch on the wing the expressions and attitudes which, better than any dialogue, can reveal a person's psychology and the dramatic significance of a situation. But Godard does not share the essential aim of the new cinema—to show human relationships stripped bare, to set up new kinds of ties between director, actors, and public; in short to tear off so far as possible all

Jean-Claude Brialy and Anna Karina in UNE FEMME EST UNE FEMME.

the usual masks of social life. The director of *Breathless*, in the end, is concerned with the graphics of events, which he devotes himself to reconstituting with maximum intensity. He still thinks in terms of a fixed reality, given in advance; the mimicry of the actors, caught by surprise, adds only supplementary touches to portraits whose outlines are established in the director's mind; they do not spring from events which unroll with the participation of everyone. The lesson of *Shadows*, or of the best experiments of Leacock, Maysles, and the Canadians, is lost on him; Godard is bold, but he remains a man of letters, a man of the old order.

He will not go to the edge of truth, risking derangement of the moral comfort of the viewer—or himself.

[Translated by Ernest Callenbach.]

HERBERT FEINSTEIN

An Interview with Jean-Luc Godard

The following is part of an interview given in October. Since then, reports of continued problems with LE MÉPRIS have been rife. As we go to press in March, it is still not clear if Godard's name will be on all three language versions.

M. Godard, why did you really dedicate Breathless *to "Monogram Pictures"?*

I did it to prove that you can do pictures that are both interesting and cheap. In America a cheap picture is not considered interesting, and I said "Why not?" because actually there are many American directors who do B and C pictures who are very interesting. *Vivre Sa Vie* I dedicated to B pictures, because in my opinion it is a B picture.

You're being dead serious now?

If it's less than $100,000, it's a B picture. The trouble is that in Hollywood the B budget is all they consider; it can be a B or Z budget, but even with a Z budget you can attempt to make an A quality picture. If you talk to a Hollywood producer—if you make a B picture then you are a B director. You are only an A director if you make films with A budgets. . . . I think this idea is wrong. But if you go to see bankers or producers in America they still think in Hollywood's way, even though Hollywood is dead.

Have you tried to make a film in America?

I am trying—for example my last one, with Brigitte Bardot, *Le Mépris [Contempt]*, is entirely produced by an American, Joseph Levine. And I have a fight with him—it's very hard. I am probably going to take my name off the picture, because they want to change too many things in it.

This has happened to Orson Welles, Irving Lerner —I mean it happens to Americans, too.

The great directors from all over the world, like von Stroheim, Chaplin, Welles—they never can work in America. Up to a certain point [they can] but after that it's impossible. . . . Even now, you can speak for example of Stanley Kramer, who is supposed to be an intelligent, free producer; but if you ask John Cassavetes how he made a film with Kramer, you'll hear another sound. . . . Even with an intelligent producer, they are too much used to a certain way of making pictures—a certain way of financing it; and when Stanley Kramer calls his pic-

(*Above*) *Brigitte Bardot in* LES MEPRIS.

ture an art picture he doesn't mean what I mean in calling a film an art picture. . . .

When I was discussing *Le Mépris* with Joseph Levine, I learned little by little that the words did not mean the same things to him that they did to me. —He is not a bad man; but I am not either. When we say "picture," it doesn't mean the same thing at all.

Maybe Levine's aesthetic sense is different and less sophisticated than yours. He did put up the money for Two Women, *the Moravia story directed by De Sica, which I thought was a satisfactory film.*

It was a good one, but nothing special. Like *Bridge on the River Kwai*: it's commercial; it's a good one, but in my opinion there is nothing artistic in it.

I was wondering about Brigitte Bardot—an international star, and I was thinking a director would be asking for a lot of trouble, it would be like getting mixed up with an institution. She may be a very talented actress, but if you hire a woman like Judy Garland in America or Brigitte Bardot in France, you are undertaking a whole mafia of people.

Well, I thought I was going to have a lot of trouble with her. I considered her the *real* producer. But on the contrary it was very nice with her, and I have trouble wtih the producer. She is really not a screen star but a newspaper star. And it helped me, because I could not have made the picture without her; it was an expensive one, and I wanted to do it in an expensive way. It was not I who asked for Brigitte; she asked me to do the picture. And I accepted because with Brigitte I could go to the bankers and the producer and say give me a million dollars to do the picture, and they say OK. Whereas two years ago, with only myself and the novel by Moravia, I wasn't able to do the picture. If I had Marilyn Monroe or Paul Newman I can make anything I want; without them I can't.

What is the story of Le Mépris?

It's the story of a girl who is married to a man and for rather subtle reasons begins to despise him. And it goes on in that way. . . . [Unlike Louis Malle's *Une Vie Privée*], it's not a picture of Bardot, it's a picture by Godard with Bardot.

. . . They thought they could do the same thing with *Le Mépris*—an international star, a novel by Moravia, a New Wave director. But when they saw the picture they realized it was very interesting but difficult for them.

Who has the right to edit your films—does the producer keep that right in the contract?

Nobody. I have the only right to edit it. Of course you can't prevent someone in Tokyo from taking his scissors. . . .

Elena et Ses Hommes, *made by Jean Renoir, was ruined in the American version by cutting. It was all pushed into flashback.*

Sure, like *Lola Montez*—that was destroyed too. I understand that the audience in America is different from the audience here—but so why ask me to do a picture? A picture from a Moravia novel which is rather intellectual, to show to Texas or Alabama?

There are many theaters in America that would *show it, that show* Breathless *for example.*

I know that, but Levine doesn't know that, and he's not willing to—he's doing a picture with me and Moravia, but he hasn't even read the script; he spent a million dollars to buy a novel he never read, to make it directed by me. I've made five pictures since *Breathless;* he never asked to see them, and doesn't know in which direction I'm going now.

Another thing he said: when he got the picture he said, Oh, I've spent a million dollars so I'm obliged to sell it everywhere around America. I say: you can't. If you have a Rolls Royce you can't sell it as a Chevrolet. You must sell it to people who like Rolls Royces. You can't say to people who like Chevrolets, come on and buy a Rolls Royce. They don't have the money for it. That's the trouble with the picture. The producers can't accept this. They prefer no audience to some audience. They prefer to put a picture into a drawer and do another one. The trouble with producers now is that they don't like the job they're doing. When you are speaking to an aircraft company president, he likes his job, he knows the way it is done. But when you are speaking to a 20th Century-Fox president he doesn't know the way pictures are done. He doesn't know it has to go through cameras and through laboratories—nothing about it. An editor knows the kind of paper his book is printed on. A producer doesn't know the kind of film his films are made on—he doesn't know the difference between Eastman and Ferrania. He is not interested in what he is doing. He is only interested in giving money, selling it, and getting money again. But the production has life in it if it is good, but he is not in that life. For example when Zukor and Goldwyn were beginning they knew *everything.* When you speak to old producers, they knew they were *fighting.* Yes, they were afraid, they were—but now they are not fighting. They want just to go to Miami or to Nice and to the sun and the girls. They are neither interested in nor do they know the pro-

ductions they are selling. So sometimes it goes but sometimes it goes wrong. They are financiers, capitalists interested in manufacturing their product. But I don't blame them for being merchandisers, I blame them for not knowing what their merchandise is.

When a man in a market is selling potatoes, he knows the difference between potatoes and strawberries, so he can sell his potatoes. But a producer doesn't know if he is selling potatoes or strawberries.

You know, there's an American word "packaging." Has it come to France yet? I think a man like Levine is certainly smart and at times he is quite nice—I rather like him—

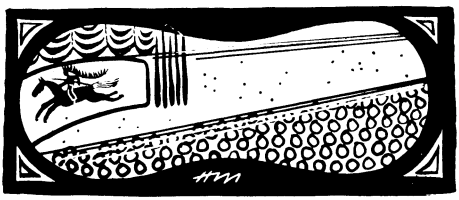
Yes, but he doesn't know what is *in* the package. You have to know because if not, people may be surprised sometimes but sometimes disappointed. Levine buys something and makes a very nice package out of it. He is selling the package and not the contents. If the package were a gift, it could be a pleasant or an unpleasant surprise . . . but the audience is paying one or two dollars to see it and they should know what is in the package beforehand. I know what's in it—I always know what is in my films—why doesn't he know?

Mr. Levine got his start with Hercules, Hercules Unchained, Godzilla, *and so on.*

But he also bought Fellini's 8½ and had a big success with it. He doesn't know why he had success with it, and he doesn't know why he won't have success with mine.

Are you so sure that Le Mépris *will not be a success?*

It can't, because it is a difficult film. It can have some audience, but you have to work for them. . . .



More Festivals

CAROL BRIGHTMAN

Montreal

Contrary to *Time's* apocalyptic decree (September 20, "The International Cinema"), the modern film is not "the whole of art in one art." In an age of packaged deals where almost everything comes four for the price of one, it is hardly surprising that movies should be freighted with a similar guarantee—as if a movie can't sell itself as a work of art unless it borrows from other more regulable brands of art. But it is now more important than ever to appreciate the modern film's departure from the "all-in-one" claim, which *Time* has so rashly arrogated from Eisenstein.

Of the New York Festival films which *Time* mentions, *Hallelujah the Hills, Trial of Joan of Arc, Knife in the Water, The Exterminating Angel, An Autumn Afternoon, Harakiri,* and *The Chair* also appeared at the Fourth Montreal International Film Festival. Together with Godard's *Le Petit Soldat* and *Les Carabiniers* (exhibited only in Montreal), these films may be said to share one concern, and that is their lack of concern with laying claim to any artistic form other than that which they have proven unique to the medium of film. They are each bent upon exploiting the perspectives of *filmed* reality rather than ulterior interests such as the personal style of an actor (Newman in *Hud*), artistic decor (*The Leopard*), dramatic dialogue (*Long Day's Journey into Night*), or psychotherapeutic tropes (*David and Lisa*).

These films are revolutionary precisely because they approach cinema as a medium which does not reproduce reality so much as it *creates* it. The camera, once liberated from its utilitarian status, becomes the decisive formal principle. What it "sees" naturally exists, and seeing becomes believing. In *The Exterminating Angel,* the disembodied hand which scurries across the table is believed *not* just because we realize a moment later that it is seen (and stabbed) through the eyes of a madwoman, but because by this time Buñuel has deftly displaced the conventional logic of possibilities by his own law of

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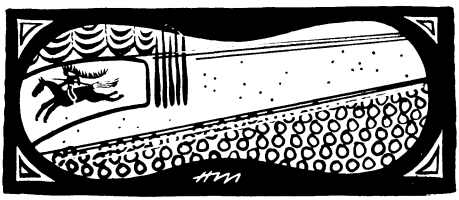

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probability, justified within the suspended microcosmos of the living room.

Each of these films challenges us to meet it on its own terms without reverting to conventional notions about how life is lived, or how "art" should portray life. Although *Knife in the Water* and *An Autumn Afternoon* may impress us for their projected insight into everyday life, they are not works of film art because they reflect certain universal patterns of behavior, but because they invent them. No matter how familiar their behavior seems, these characters are ultimately indecipherable in terms of daily experience. Only in terms of their own self-willed existences can they be understood, and once we've entered into the spirit of their universe, we must be prepared to accept its values solely within the contours of the film.

A debate over the rights proper to the film medium grew out of Montreal's North American première of *Le Petit Soldat* and *Les Carabiniers*. Viewed alongside a film such as Anderson's *This Sporting Life*, Godard's films dramatized the growing split between critics who maintain that film, like other arts, must transform its materials into a narrative whole, and those who hold that the raw materials—the physical realities which confront the film maker—should be permitted to remain intact, alive, and in effect, a dominating element in the finished work. Critics who suspected Anderson of willful obscurantism, pointing to his flashbacks and relatively unconventional use of visual and sound effects, were generally confounded by Godard's films which do not lend themselves to talk of style in terms of subject. For Godard, meaning is created in the very movements of the camera. Questions of technical appropriateness are irrelevant; so is the question: is it art? or, is it real? Andrew Sarris, a jury member, wanted to know why, in *Le Petit Soldat*, Bruno is allowed to march openly down a crowded Geneva boulevard with a gun waving at the back of the man he intends to kill—certainly, in real life he would have been spotted and caught. *"Je fait selon me plaisir,"* replied Godard. It is the gratuitous *"realisme du cinéma"* which preoccupies him, that "realism" which is in large part the French legacy of American action films of the 30's and 40's.

There is more to Godard's audacity. What appears in *Le Petit Soldat* as the savage make-believe world of pulp thrillers is also quite real, alarmingly so. Bruno undergoes torture at the hands of the revolutionary FLN with the same stoic indifference with which he finally murders for the OAS. Although for his murder he has a motive—to earn the promised passports to freedom for himself and Veronika—his motive is detached from his act, and inevitably it remains not only unfulfilled, but invalid: unknown to Bruno, Veronika has already been killed by the OAS before he completes his assignment. Bruno does not choose to act outside of a moral framework, nor has society forced him outside; one simply does not exist which can comprehend the sum of society (of which Bruno is a very real part). Such a lack makes guilt impossible, it does not negate evil. Godard himself is uninterested in blaming or justifying either terrorist organization; he merely wishes to expose the circumstantial evidence of brutality—without motive or remorse—in our political era; and he succeeds.

Le Petit Soldat (which has been banned in France since 1960 because it carries the Algerian crisis into neutral territory) does not attempt to enlist our sympathies or even to satisfy our indignation over its atrocities; rather, it captures our attention on the more elemental plane of sheer happening. Action seems almost improvisational; synchronized sound is harsh and unmodulated; editing is brutally swift. Scenes either flash on and off like snapshots, or the camera roves erratically like the human eye from object to object without cutting. *"La photographie, c'est la vérité,"* Bruno comments, while snapping Veronika in a variety of candid poses; *"le cinéma est la vérité à vingt-quatre carrés per second."* But not all cinema. Like Rouch, Godard directs his actors to tread the brink between self-expression and conscious personification: once he has thrown them into character, he withdraws and allows them to fend for themselves—largely, to use the camera as they see fit, playing up to it at times, leading it at others, fleeing from it when they would flee from their own involvement in the world to which they have become committed. And the result is a raw-edged authenticity (which often tilts human behavior into revealing postures) impossible either for the thoroughly staged feature or the passive documentary.

Les Carabiniers, which as Godard claims is a fable like the fables of Aesop, is less documentary and more dreamlike. With its high-contrast photography and archaic transition titles, it echoes the silent era. The pastoral setting—which is periodically interrupted by newsreel footage from the first World War—operates as a bright foil for Godard's chilling play with contemporary notions about war. In *Les Carabiniers* two brothers, hastily conscripted to fight the King's War, wander dazedly into battle after battle, killing, maiming, destroying, without personal motive,

From LES CARABINIERS.

except perhaps "to travel in foreign countries, to see the fruits of civilization." Murder is committed out of obligation, but obligation to what? No matter, the evidence lies in the faces which convey the same dumb expression whether they are exploiters or exploited, living or dead. All men have become the bemused combatants.

Godard's target is not so much cinematic convention as it is the conventional audience. Because he is not concerned with solving the problems he raises, the audience can only observe. The usual consolations whereby blame or praise is properly apportioned is withheld; empathy, as well as pity or fear, is impossible; shock is not.

For some reason, those who shy away from the savage ironies of Godard are the same ones who squirm before picaresque comedy such as Adolfas Mekas' *Hallelujah the Hills*. Confronted with a film which flaunts its own medium, they seem unable to decide whether they should enjoy it for the authenticity of its parodies or for the comic interludes themselves, as if the two might be incompatible. One has to really enjoy movies for their own sake to appreciate this one, and it should have been the darling of the Festival—but it wasn't.

The Trial of Joan of Arc is not so innovative as it is timeless; and in his own way, Bresson dates much of the experimentalism of his contemporaries. As strictly classical and inflexibly committed to historical accuracy as it is, the *Trial* is less a tract than a speech oratorio. But it is the camera which really endows the debate with the taut contours appropriate to such a subject—a camera stripped of all "effects" which observes the action from five principal angles (in the cell and in the trial chamber) in order to expose in the most incisive way possible the moral issues which surround Joan's conviction. Dramatic events which alternate from the cell to the courtroom are bridged by shots of soldiers and clerics ascending and descending the prison steps, like a chorus in ritual procession; the film itself is paced as ritual, which must repeat itself over and over, without end or resolution. Joan's body is never seen as it burns, or as it is finally consumed; Bresson has visualized instead the metamorphosis of her soul.

Richard Leacock, who brought his two films *Jane* and *The Chair* (both TV productions by Drew Associates for *Time-Life*), touched off another controversy: can the documentary remain objective? Proponents of *cinéma vérité* (originated largely by Jean Rouch in France, the National Film Board in Canada, and by Leacock, who calls it "screen journalism," in the U.S.), insist that not only can the cameraman-director expose a situation impartially, but that this is the most effective way to lead an audience to personally participate in the events filmed. Leacock referred to the NFB's well-known *Lonely Boy* (Koenig and Kroitor's documentary on Paul Anka) as nonobjective cinema because "it ridicules Anka at his own expense." Of his own latest film, *Crisis*, he remarked that even the Governor of Alabama had been given a chance to present himself on his own terms; his position was approached without bias.

"We've made filming so simple," Leacock commented. "The camera [a $3000 chopped Auricon] is very light. There are no lights and no director. We don't go around asking questions [unlike Rouch]. We simply observe a situation and follow it through where it leads us." Obviously, certain "situations" lend themselves to this sort of coverage better than others. *The Chair*, which traces events leading up to the commutation of Paul Crump's death sentence, is implicitly controversial. According to Sarris, this is all the more reason to suspect its objectivity; impartiality, he argued, becomes impossible: "We all know Crump's the hero." But if we do in fact, that is because our sympathies are naturally aligned with Crump, not because we have been propagandized—Sarris misses the distinction. With documentaries of any persuasion, the doughty extrapolator proved uneasy, as if these film makers would dupe him with their professional realism devoid of "style." It worried Sarris that stylistic evidence had not yet been filed by these new documentarists, evidence which would determine their innocence or guilt in respect to objectivity.

Jane caused considerably less consternation since its subject is not inherently controversial, and for that reason too, it is the less interesting of the two films.

As a footnote to the improvisational structure of the film—which follows the rough chronology of Jane Fonda's preparation for her first starring role on Broadway—it is curious how the "real Jane" (whatever that implies) never emerges to controvert the disarmingly contrived "personality" which Miss Fonda flashes during even the most intimate or catastrophic moments. In *Jane*, and to varying degrees in all Leacock's films, one is struck by what is really a social-anthropological find: to escape the moral imperatives of a face-to-face encounter (with the Other, be it human or otherwise), all men remain their own understudies. No crisis—moral or physical disability—is sufficient to keep them from going on stage. For example, it comes as a startling revelation of character when the condemned author of *Burn Killer Burn* is pushed by his visiting editor past the limits of propriety to squirm: "How do you expect me to really think about that sentence now?" Then, conscious of overstepping himself, and embarrassed by all the helpless feeling he's packed into that "now," he quickly adjusts himself to assume the guise of the artist whose syntax is being questioned. Now we see him, now we don't. What we saw, we saw *not* by the tell-tale power of the candid camera (Leacock's camera is not hidden), but by the candid intrusion of the "Other," the unfortunate female editor who chanced to invade Crump's private sanctum, humanizing him for a fleeting moment of recognition. During the office sequences where Crump's lawyer, Don Moore, consolidates his defense, it is the camera which momentarily acts as the catalytic intruder (perhaps unintentionally), throwing Moore into moments of acute self-consciousness where he loses track of his professional role. Not all of Leacock's subjects will be equally approachable, as certainly the Kennedy brothers, pleading diplomatic immunity in *Crisis*, were not. The Drew-Leacock documentaries have excited European festival-goers for two years, but partly because of *Time-Life's* production rights which limit the films to sponsored TV, American audiences remain largely unaware of them. Now Leacock and his partner Donn Pennebaker have set up shop on their own; their future is uncertain, and will probably continue to be until the new documentaries win the feature rights, they have come to deserve.

Florence Carrez in Bresson's TRIAL OF JOAN OF ARC.

JAMES BROUGHTON

Knokke-le Zoute

No country in the world is as officially enthusiastic about Experimental Film as Belgium. This may derive from the Flemish surrealist tradition begun by Bosch, it may have something to do with the Belgian psyche, or it may be due to the special passion of Jacques Ledoux, the indefatigable Director of the Royal Film Archive.

In any case they like their films as wild as possible in Belgium and their government is willing to support them. Where else is there a festival giving out $17,000 in prize money for strictly experimental films? Much larger festivals extend no such largesse. It is thus scant wonder that the 3rd International Competition, held during the week between Christmas and New Year's, was a much anticipated event for independent film-makers and their devotees.

The festival was held in the roomy Casino at Knokke-Le Zoute, a fashionable resort on the North Sea, much of which was boarded up for the winter so that it looked rather like a setting for an eerie experimental film. Knokke had hosted the 1st Competition in the summer of 1949; the 2nd took place in Brussels during the World's Fair of 1958. The event now occurs every five years and entries must have been produced within that time span. Theoretically then it provides an opportunity of seeing all the best recent work in this genre.

The occasion was as gala as it was hopeful. Ledoux had summoned many distinguished personages; there were constant symposia, a concert of electronic music, an avant-garde play, an exhibition of "kinetic art," and cocktail parties; the press coverage was extensive and the audiences full and vocal. The nine invited jurors, all film-makers, included Herbert Vesely, Jorgen Roos, Jonas Mekas, Norman McLaren,

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Lorenza Mazzetti, Jan Lenica, William Klein, Jean Cayrol, and myself. Our supposed task was to reward films that made "an effort to regenerate or to extend the film as a medium of expression."

It would be gratifying if one could report that such a well-endowed get-together provided a rich aesthetic experience. In the long velveted auditorium of the Casino, with its three huge chandeliers and its windows curtained against the fogbound beach, we sat for six days from 10:30 each morning until midnight looking at some 107 films from 18 countries. The menu comprised all traditional experimental forms (except documentary) in varying style and quality, including even a few in CinemaScope. The net effect, however, proved more somnolent than stimulating, which is the usual result of over-indulgence.

Impressive enough are the facts about the entries, of which there were in all 364. Of these the largest number by far came from the United States, with 143 films submitted and 47 chosen for exhibition. The nearest competitors were France with 15 submissions chosen, Germany with 10, and Japan with 7. Plainly the experimental movement is more energetically prolific in this country than anywhere else and the festival programs throughout were dominated by American scenes, sounds, and attitudes, including the obsessive preoccupation with the Bomb. By contrast the films from France, traditional home of the avant-garde, seemed weary and contrived, while the supposedly newly active countries like Poland, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia had only one film each in competition, and Russia none.

It is the very qualities often deplored at home—the naiveté, the rawness, the rude humor and the self-revealing risk—which have always made American films appealing to the more sophisticated European audience, for whom they have the fascination and freshness of primitive art. In the Belgian context only the entries from Japan had, surprisingly, something of this same ingenuousness, even a certain old-fashioned amateur bounce, and the festival authorities acknowledged this by awarding an unofficial prize to the entire Japanese selection. One of these had two carpenters tearing up a house, another was the nightmare of a waitress having her guts eaten by customers, a third (*The Sand*) evoked a haunting lyricism with two people on a dune.

Official jury duty was much enlivened throughout the festival by the action of one of its intended members, Jonas Mekas of *Film Culture*. On opening day (Christmas itself) the jurors were summoned to a chamber called The Room Behind the Mirror where Mekas expressed his outrage that Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* had been rejected by the Selection Jury because it violated an ancient Belgian law prohibiting the manipulation of naked genitals in public. Mekas condemned this as unforgivable artistic censorship and announced his withdrawal from the jury in protest. He also produced letters from American film-makers Vanderbeek, Breer, Brakhage, and Markopolous authorizing him to withdraw their films from competition if *Flaming Creatures* was not shown. Since the head of the Royal Archive happens also to be Belgium's Minister of Justice, he could scarcely sanction a violation of the law of the land at an event sponsored by his own government.

Once off the jury Mekas devoted his time to promoting the cause of *Flaming Creatures* as a test case against censorship. He held a press conference, he besought the remaining jurors to resign and to issue a public statement, he set up continuous screenings of the film in his hotel, and on New Year's Eve actually succeeded in projecting a portion of the film inside the Casino building.

Thereby this rather quaint and blunt American work became the most discussed and most often shown film of the festival. *Flaming Creatures* portrays a harmless and rather cheerless-looking transvestite party, of unresolved groping and swishing, all seen in a shadowless placeless world of autoerotic fantasy. It is so adolescently pure that no one in it can even raise an erection. Ledoux, delighted by the whole scandal, executed the *coup de grâce* by awarding the film a special prize "maudit."

Actually Jack Smith's charade is much less erotic and less artful than Ron Rice's new film, *Chumlum*, which had some of the same drag queens in it but no visible penises to censor. This "party" in color took place mostly in double exposed hammocks.

But the most outrageously teasing of the films shown was yet another American entry, Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising*, a juicy approving of the black-leather, motorcycle boys in their pseudo-Nazi rituals of bravado noise, tight militant couture, and phallic sadomasochism. What begins as a lingering delight in narcissistic fantasy develops into a bald Buñuel-style parody, cross-cutting the gathering of naughty rebels with scenes of Jesus meeting his disciples. Most vividly the film asserts the symbolic power of objects and costumes in the power dreams of the male.

Scorpio Rising, which offended many, is Anger's most mature film and it came close to winning a prize. But the jury was rather sharply divided in all its decisions by opposing concepts of "experimental":

the imperfect pioneering work as against the well-made work of art. So its final choices were largely compromise votes. In fact the jury had great difficulty agreeing on anything, deliberating for some 20 hours, even postponing the final announcement of awards for half an hour while the restless audience waited. Even then all the winners were loudly jeered.

The Grand Prix of $5,000 went to a feature-length German film, *Die Parallelstrasse*, by Ferdinand Khittl. This is a rather literary work, an involved kind of Kafkan game wherein a nameless tribunal must determine the identity of a man who is only hinted at in the series of travelogue scenes shown to them. Some of this is amusing as an intellectual trick, but in the end there is no real revelation.

Prizes of $2,000 were awarded to *Twice a Man* by Gregory Markopolous, *Breathdeath* by Stan Vanderbeek, *Renaissance* by Walerian Borowczyk, *Le Nez* by Alexandre Alexeieff, *A Tout Prendre* by Claude Jutra, and *Madeleine Madeleine* by Vlado Kristl, a Slav working in Germany.

Of these *Renaissance* and *A Tout Prendre* were the most distinguished and will probably be the most widely seen. Borowczyk has made a beautiful poem of death and rebirth entirely in visual terms, through the camera magic of reconstructing destroyed objects; it is also a virtuoso piece technically. Jutra's feature film from Canada is likable and touching, rather in the manner of Godard in style, an improvised and sympathetic film about the director and his affair with a Negress. It is experimental only in the sense that it is intensely personal and that it was made so independently; its cinematic language is that of the New Wave. But its charm captivated everyone, perhaps because there was so little in anything else.

Vanderbeek's dance of death—atomic bomb and all—won out over Bruce Conner's *Cosmic Ray*. Vanderbeek with his kind of Méliès style of collage is often banal, but occasionally he is hilarious. *Le Nez* was the most polished animation film shown, but it is only an extension of the work Alexeieff began years ago with *Night on the Bald Mountain;* it is admirable but it did not add anything new. It nosed out a more modest French piece called *Banhing* by Jean-Charles Meunier, a jolly animating of a traffic collision done with what looked like thumbtacks.

The award to Vlado Kristl for *Madeleine Madeleine* most offended the audience who thought it too trivial. But Kristl is a genuinely playful original with a crazy comic sense. His other film in competition, *Arme Leute*, had a wild visual invention although its military parody got a bit exhausted. *Madeleine* all takes place on a tennis court, a most unlikely prospect for revealing the beautiful absurdity of life; yet this is a stylish piece of nonsense when the two old women play a match to the death in a downpour.

The numerous "happening" films from the U.S., by Breer, Saroff, and Zimmerman—*Pat's Birthday, Necropolis I, Scarface and Aphrodite, Voyages II World's Fair II*—were much enjoyed as a significant new trend by the Belgians who gave them an unofficial prize. Brakhage, with 7 entries, was most admired for *Blue Moses*, while Emshwiller was honored for his *Thanatopsis*. Peter Kubelka of Austria and Peter Weiss of Sweden made distinguished contributions.

But on the whole the Competition was disappointing. Not only because all festivals tend to seem disappointing, but because there was in truth precious little magic to delight the soul and too little wit to engage the mind. And if the function of the avant-garde is to extend the language of the medium, there was very little in this display to invigorate some future Resnais or Fellini. Nothing at Knokke had as much poetic mystery as the murals by Magritte and the paintings by Delvaux that grace the walls of the Casino. Yet one must not expect to encounter a new genius every five years.

ANiMatIOn

Behold the usual vicious circle: Because animation has traditionally meant just "cartoons," because the commercial role of all shorts has collapsed, because animation films are fugitive and hard to see, critics seldom take them seriously. Because they are little written about, audiences pay little attention, and exhibitors still less. Because of all these factors, and the riskiness of the genre, animation film-makers withdraw into their own little circle, or stop working, or resign themselves and grow rich making TV commercials.

Nonetheless the animated film has undergone a remarkable transformation since the days when the Disney style flourished from Burbank to Moscow. As the articles and illustrations which follow amply prove, an astonishing diversity prevails in the animation film.

Is animation "film"? Some critics would banish it outside the Kracauerian pale. M. Benayoun, just below, is impatient with such argumentst to him, if it runs at 24 frames per second in a darkened hall and uses the grammar of cuts, dissolves, pans, fades, etc., it is surely a film. D'ailleurs (in my own opinion) film is as film does; it has no metaphysical essence; we can only know what film "is" by analyzing how film-makers use it successfully.

And one may argue on animation's behalf that, in giving movement to the products of the visual imagination directly, rather than as embodied in apparently "real" persons and things, animation is in fact carrying on the central tradition of visual art: it is the *dramatic* film which may be accused of being a mere accidental offshoot — the temporary prostitution of a visual medium to the conventions of the stage. This is no straw - man argument: it is only in the years since the war, with the films of Godard and Antonioni notably, that one could find much evidence in the feature film of its independence from stage characterization and plot structure. Even the films which Kracauer likes are shot through with stage conventions. The genius of the film may someday be seen to lie in the animation film equally with those nonfiction films which, naively like Lumière or *Drifters*, or cannily like *Nanook*, captured the way things looked. At any rate, to the outward-directed vision of the photographed film, let us compare the inner-directed vision of animation. —E.C.

ROBERT BENAYOUN

Animation: The Phoenix and the Road-Runner

The following article led off the July-August 1963 issue of the French journal* POSITIF, *which was devoted to a survey of the state of animation. It is reprinted here, slightly condensed, by M. Benayoun's kind permission, and he also loaned us several of the illustrations. [Translated by Ernest Callenbach and Christine Leefeldt.]

It is not really possible to sum up the state of the animation art. Like the phoenix, brother of the road-runner, animation develops so fast and so haphazardly that it overtakes itself perpetually and is always disappearing from sight. The aficionado of the frame-by-frame film may thus sometimes feel like a morose and frustrated bird-watcher—or like a character out of Edward Lear, scrutinizing owls until, big-eyed and hook-nosed, he becomes something of an owl himself.

Let us try to evade this danger. When animation is carved up by pompous specialists, the ever-renewed phoenix can turn into a cardboard chicken or a hunk of sandwich. The animators themselves, deep in technical questions, or captives without realizing it of the twists of fashion, are not always sound judges of advance or standstill in the field. A more objective viewpoint is necessary to evaluate this most rapid, most concentrated, most lasting product of the seventh art.

At the Annecy Festival of Animated Films in 1962, we had plenty of *Flebuses*—in every screen ratio, their bodies reduced to head and legs, crossing brackish reels upon whose background decalcomania, collage, materials of the most bilious tachisme mixed—artistic techniques being rediscovered thirty years late by the commercial (auto, appliance, etc.) salons of spring and fall.

But there was little novelty in these mannerisms or formulas, no matter how up-to-date they were considered by the many serious animators anxious to keep *au courant*. Real novelty lay, that year, in a kind of serene disregard of technique, a bypassing of mannerism, a virginal return to the origins of the art—as in the work of Williams and Dunning. In the 1963 competition, the false Hubleys and false Lenicas ran into the real ones, and Bozetto, after a year of reflection, imitated *The Apple*.

Let it be said at once: the annual interval which a festival like Annecy provides serves above all to show how ridiculous is the idea of a "new look" based on the successes of the year; on the contrary, it only furnishes a valuable imitation potential. And the wheel turns with a wild speed; styles grow old faster than a twist tune or a swimming suit. Happily, and as always, the essentials remain. —Out of reach, Lardner would say.

In *Peanuts*, my favorite comic strip, a boy of four astonishes his friends by building, with constant audacity, intricate castles out of cards. Everybody admires them, except a little

girl of the same age who categorically says: "It's not bad, but is it art?"

This is something like the position, fifty years after its birth, of the animation film. It is divided between the far-out researches of the highbrows and the business of producing TV commercials. Who can tell if animation is an adult mode of expression which has been turned into baby-food, or a new language created by children (of genius) exclusively for intelligent adults?

Over the years, film critics have refused to take notice of what they consider a puerile sop on the weekly theater programs, and some animators have declared that, far from being a link between the cinema and the older plastic arts, animation is an autonomous eighth art. They refuse to be called film-makers, and they refuse to be called artists; they prefer an undefinable niche in an occult fraternity, jealously guarded, whose rites are celebrated at certain places along the Loire river. . . .

And in truth the animator today defies definition. He may be an able sketcher or may never have held a pencil in his life; he may have a degree in engineering, hold patents on inventions, or manifest a colossal lack of culture together with a perfect instinct for the laws of movement. He may be a meticulous lab-man within the experimental branch of some official organization, or a freewheeling publicist, devoting his energy and talent to an ever-renewed praise of consumer goods. The diversity of form which is the result of all this can be surprising, detestable, even fatal, but nonetheless is what we must work from in defining animated film today.

All these films illustrate, channel, or release an irresistible craze for speed, a realization symptomatic of one of the central compulsions most typical of our era—for it is superposed, in different forms, on disciplines as static in their basic laws as painting or sculpture.

Animation, in principle, has no other plastic imperative than movement. Stills from the most beautiful animated films are as deceptive, as little representative of the original, as are stills from a film by Resnais. When certain critics write, therefore, that the animated film is not cinema, they commit the same error as so many neophytes who imagine, once they have used an animation stand to shoot a number of free forms in the act of moving, that they have made a *film*. They treat the genre as if it were a kind of annex to the beaux-arts, an after-dinner amusement. But if an animat-

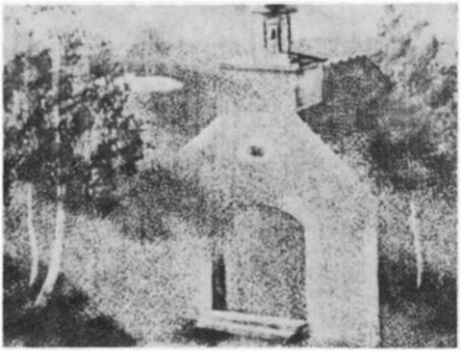
From Jan Lenica's LABYRINTH.

ed film is made to be projected in a hall, its images registering at 24 per second on the retina, it surely constitutes a film. An animated film made without traveling shots, without pans, without cuts or other cinematic grammar, without dramatic progression, would not only be a ludicrous anachronism but would also be as silly as those dance films which record a beautiful ballet with deadly stolidity —and in so doing betray the spirit of dance as well as that of film.

However, these curious notions which circulate about the "autonomy" of animation help explain the regrettable isolation which seems to have become the lot of so many animators, who keep themselves away from everything else happening on the screens, and work increasingly in ivory towers. They are animating exclusively for other animators.

During the more than fifteen years that I have been an enthusiastic follower of animation, I have observed all the fluctuations, all the swift-passing fads and formulas of the genre. These disturbances are incidental. Sometimes, they bring with them technical discoveries of importance; sometimes an abrupt break (always late) with entrenched styles. Modern art, though it has continually influenced, modified, or given impetus to the course of animation, has seldom been influenced in return. The great contemporary artists have never been tempted by animation. Those who have integrated a form of movement into their work—Calder, Frank Malina, Vasarely, Agam, Tinguely, Takis, Munari, Davide Turconi—have centered their efforts on an exploration of kinetic laws, but left to themselves they have not gone on to an analysis and decomposition of movement, or to its creative manipulation as did Alexeieff.

Animation, by contrast, its fashions and ephemeral revolutions aside, has produced a certain number of authentic artists, who merit in their individual sphere the same admiration, the same critical exegeses, and the same respect as Miró, Tanguy, Arp, or Magritte.



Alexeieff's EN PASSANT *(pin screen technique).*

Unfortunately the lack of publicity and distribution of their works condemns them to a narrow audience of cinephiles and to the film museums, isolating them from the rest of the public. A vicious circle thus arises: the problem of distribution itself drives the animators to cultivate a regrettable esoteric spirit, which leads some of them toward a sterile self-pigeonholing among the arts, as if they were the keepers of some lost secret.

The great artists of animation seem to be distinguished very clearly from the experimenters. Art in animation begins at that moment when the "experimental" phase ends, and *freedom* ensues. McLaren, who is an unsurpassed experimenter, does not impress us by the techniques he has developed or perfected (painting on film, stereoscopic film, animation

McLaren's CHAIRY TALE *(man is Claude Jutra).*

of the human figure, synthetic sound) so much as by the forms he created once he let loose these techniques and then gave in to the automatic impulses of his own genius, as in *Blinkity-Blank* or *Chairy Tale*. It is in the unbridled play of his imagination that he is superior to Len Lye, Fischinger, or even Cohl (who preceded him on the level of pure experiment). But his *Lines Horizontal* and *Lines Vertical* are mortally tedious and empty; they are merely superfluous tests, disinterested exploration which leads only to pretentiousness.

As to Alexeieff, who is the most accomplished of all animators, his fame comes not from his invention, admirable though it be, of the pin screen, but rather from his prodigious subsequent poetic visions, like *Le Nez,* which are full of art and poetry.

"The tools are always lagging behind the art," he said to me one day, defining himself, with his characteristic modesty, as a sort of "engineer of the useless." In making films where the functioning of an instrument creates previously unknown forms, he finds his greatest satisfaction when, at some given moment, the oscillations of the pendulum he is now working with conform to his hypotheses. The imagination of an Alexeieff is ahead of the pendulum, just as it transcended the pin screen. Art works through research, but can also supplement it, or ennoble it. The experimental animated film is like the domain of the makers or the tuners who perfect musical instruments on which they are not themselves gifted performers. Art requires a total domination of an instrument, up to a total disregard of its "nature." It is when the experimenter is truly merged with the artist that we can expect to reach the summit.

I find the most pleasing animated creations of the last three years to be precisely those which disdain "technique" and are superbly indifferent to so-called "plastic values."

When the American Robert Breer discovered, by one of those accidents which are the point of research, that the human eye could register and "appreciate" 24 totally different images per second, he was seized with a creative passion next to madness, and began making far-out films where he disregarded every aesthetic value usually attributed to an ensemble of forms and colors. Mixing photographs, newspaper clippings, and quickie paintings of an insolent tachisme, he ran them together as fast as racing cars. The eye absorbs them imperturbably, as if they constituted a coherent sequence. It is the succession of different images *itself* which comes to constitute an illusory form, comparable to that of solids in movement, and which reduces every attempt at analysis to a simple "impression." Every frame is treated by Breer as an individual sensation: in one of his films, 240 distinct optical sensations are compressed into ten seconds. By arranging, within the film, several "loops" which bring about the eventual return of the images, Breer has found not only a way to preserve the integrity of a composition in space while modifying it in time, but also the insolence, the casualness necessary to turn this experiment into a work of art, capturing a kind of poetry of the imperceptible.

There has been much talk of the Yugoslav animated film, whose resolutely modern graphics are inspired by certain wash techniques (see especially *Un homme seul* by Vastroslav Mimica). But there too, all exoticism put

Mimica's UN HOMME SEUL.

aside, animation is still behind the times, absorbing at most a few new materials. However, there is also Vlado Kristl.

This tormented artist, of wild temperament, has made films which the Yugoslavs, a little dismayed, minimize in favor of the more spectacular work of Vokotic or Kostelac. Kristl seems obsessed by the spasmodic proliferation of minute people (reduced to symbols) along parallel and perpendicular lines. In *Jewel Theft* (by Mladen Feman), Kristl, who animated it, reduced a fantastic anecdote to a lunar crossing of naked lines where humans reduced to the size of lice and in a state of panic hopped about according to some unknown erratic lures.

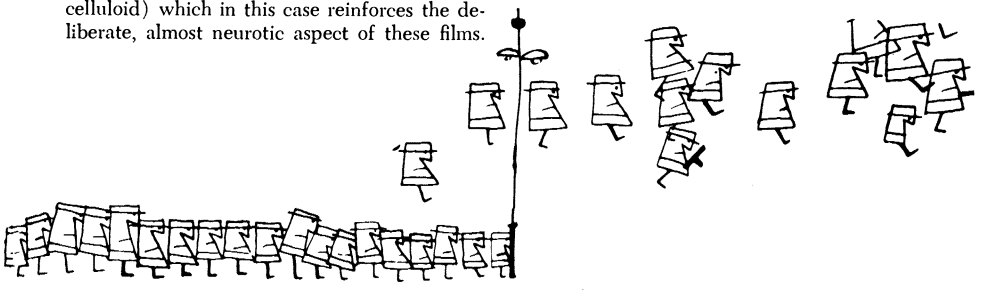
With *Don Quixote*, which he both designed and directed, Kristl gave a definitive portrait of his personal nightmare. The Don, transformed into an ultrasonic insect, confronts the evil and injustice of this world in a kind of automotive joust: waves upon waves, whole regiments of motorized cops, or at least of soldiers on wheels, swoop upon the defender of justice, but he quickly annihilates them. A demon of sound and speed seems to animate this insensate rally, completely unintelligible, but possessing an extraordinary subversive eloquence. Kristl then made (with Ivo Urbanic) an hysterically mad adaptation of *La peau de chagrin*: one unfailingly notices, in the background of the tortures which upset the two heros, the inevitable human carousel, telescoping time not by the artifice of Breer, but by the traditional technique (design on celluloid) which in this case reinforces the deliberate, almost neurotic aspect of these films.

Kristl's LA PEAU DE CHAGRIN.

The style of Kristl has roots in certain imperishably beautiful films by Pat Sullivan, and in an American tradition which goes from Saul Steinberg to Alvin Lustig (Lustig also seems to have influenced the young Yugoslav, Boris Kolar, whose *Boomerang* received an honorable mention at Annecy in 1962).

More recently, a well-known and talented animator, who, however, had never reached the great heights of genius, took it upon himself to commit an *acte gratuit* in regard to his own style, George Dunning in England made *The Flying Man* (Grand Prix at Annecy, 1962), in which he throws to the wind all his experience as an animator in order to re-

From Feman's THE JEWEL THEFT, *animated by Kristl.*



plunge, with startling freshness, into the basic resources of movement.

Drawn with a brush and gouache on pieces of glass, *The Flying Man* seized what is most fragmentary in each dissected movement, and traced, so to speak, the ghost of each gesture. A man arrives at the beach, takes off his clothes, and begins to swim in the air. Awkward at first, he improves rapidly. Another man (followed by his dog) tries but fails miserably and goes away. This simple tale, obviously, allows Dunning's brush work to be as euphoric as his character. The triumph of this film is equally grand when it shows the failure and the success of a movement considered impossible. I deny absolutely that *The Flying Man* is an experimental film. Other filmmakers might have realized a more eloquent technique using glass and brushes, but it took a creative master to join in one work theme and method, to create on the screen, with a technique necessarily imprecise (as Dunning forsook all fixing-up) the impression of a triumph over matter and weight.

What is revolutionary in *The Flying Man* is that animation, on the higher level of its language, manages to reconstitute the gravity and solemnity of the sketch, and the essential truth which lies in a hesitant, groping style.

John Hubley, another master, also plays in this register of apparent plastic insecurity. The lunar mirages of *Moonbird,* the telescopic vision and the energetic phantasms of the feature-length *Of Stars and Men,* and still more recently the lightning glimpses of *The Hole* are all fugitive perceptions which turn anthropomorphism in upon itself. The human characters of Hubley are elongated or extended amoebas, with fluid movements, awkward gestures; mystified by comets, electrons, or fantastic birds; their voices, indistinct, stuttering, or elastic (the serene slang of Dizzy Gillespie), float and bob like sonorous ectoplasms, subject to the most unexpected accidents.

Dunning's THE FLYING MAN.

In 1963, animation found its strength for renewal in a certain asceticism, a disdain for too detailed analysis of movement; it turned against twenty-five years of servile "in-betweening," of academic perfection in drawing. Like Jules Engel with his *Icarus,* it was preoccupied with giving life to static drawings, reconsidering all the possibilities of the regular film camera, as Foldes had done in *A Short Vision.*

And it is here that the cinema reasserts its rights. When *Positif* asked a number of leading animators if live photography was significant to them, or if they considered animation a closed field, their responses made clear that since last year the cinema accepts, nay seeks, animation. Kristl is acting in his new film, *L'homme grave.* Dusan Vukotic in *Le jeu* is mixing live sequences with drawn. Ernest Pintoff, after his short *The Shoes,* is making a feature live-action film, *The Week-End.* Robert Cannon has made a film with a pantomimist, Lotte Goslar. Ion Popesco-Gopo made a feature, *A Bomb Was Stolen,* in which animation plays a modest role. Jan Lenica seeks to extend to feature length his fascinating experiments in *Labyrinth,* but this time with a live actor. Kavel Zeman, in *Baron Münchhausen,* combines in color the resources of live photography and animation.

As to Saul Bass, his work has always been halfway between animation and direction. He has made more than a dozen animated titles for features, illustrating the exactitude of

effects which an animator brings to the "given" of photography. The gallop in *The Big Country,* the flames of *Exodus,* the plunging architecture of *North by Northwest* and *Something Wild* are difficult to classify. In doing *Walk on the Wild Side,* Bass filmed the coming and going of a black cat (his own, by the way) and made virtually a whole short by live photography, which logically had to lead him toward longer works—and in fact he is now at work on two films, one on New York, one on nuclear research. And let us not forget that he entirely planned several battle scenes for *Spartacus,* one of which was followed exactly.

For this confluence of animation and live action, several major factors are no doubt responsible. First, the immense temptations of trick work, which plague many animators, such as George Pal, Jean Jabely, Zeman, and which tend to give to the cinema a magical side. Also, some first-rank artists feel a certain limitation in the short form, when they have begun to pass beyond the trouvaille and embark on major works. There is also the difficulty of giving psychological depth to characters, in a dramatic context, which forces the ambitious animator to consider merging the two genres. And the feature animated film poses more than just technical problems. In the case of marionettes, one is reduced to a totally rigid exterior for the characters, which even Trnka could not overcome (in his *Midsummer Night's Dream*). In the case of cell animation, one faces the dilemma of anthropomorphism and the need for stylization, which tend to cancel each other.

In the end we must admit that animation, eager to renew itself, asks from live photography a kind of inspiration which it cannot obtain from its own plastic capacities. Live action offers a certain dynamic potential which can tantalize the animator, give him the desire to transcend a certain crazy movement, a certain sublime effect, to push a possibility of the camera to the absurd. It was on the basis of the flight of real birds that Ub Iwerks was able to achieve some of the tricks in Hitchcock's *The Birds*—which suggested at moments another film, still to be made, in which the dynamics of a bird's flight would be the object of a poetic or lyrical exploration: James Pollack's titles for *The Birds* are what most strikingly remains in the mind.

THE HOLE, *by John Hubley.*

Dialogue is another phenomenon on which contemporary animators are fiercely split. The Hollywood school, from Tex Avery to Chuck Jones, has always relied in large part on vocal effects for characterization of its figures: Droopy, Bugs Bunny, or Woody Woodpecker are recognizable from the soundtrack alone. As for the "quiproquos" of Mr. Magoo, they are usually due to the puns and obvious jokes that rely more on the voice of Jim Backus than on the technique of Pete Burness. One of the great masters of modern animation, for many people, is the ineffable Mel Blanc, the multivocal phenomenon at Warner's, who, with the aid of three writers, has built up a library of 1,000 different voices. John Hubley has always been careful to see that a rich dialogue accompanies his films; as far back as *Moonbird,* he used the babblings of his own children, though in *The Hole* he turned to the doubletalk of Dizzy Gillespie. Ernest Pintoff attributes such importance to dialogue that several of his films resemble dramatic sketches by Harold Pinter or S. J. Perelman. *The Inter-*

MARCEL TA MÈRE T'APPELLE,
by Jacques Colombert.

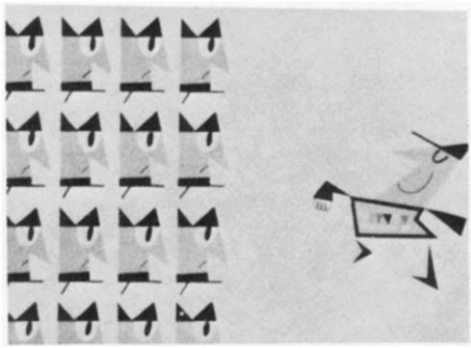
view animates almost immobile characters, whose hip *vs.* square dialogue dictates their subtle changes of expression and their highly repressed gestures. In *The Critic,* the commentary is the basis of the film: as abstract shapes of a familiar kind cross the screen, the Yiddish accent of a heckling, skeptical New York spectator is heard commenting on the dismal progress of this phony avant-garde film, while a nearby lady tries vainly to shush him.

Against this tradition stands the pantomime tradition of central and Eastern Europe: Trnka, Vukotic, Kolar, Hofman, Bozetto, Lenica, Popesco-Gopo, *et al.* Bretislav Pojar, an old partisan of pantomime, skirts the problem by giving a visible form to language in *The Orator*: words take the form of balloons, with a life of their own. In Europe, of course, the wish to be understood across national boundaries encourages the use of mimicry and sound effects, as opposed to speech. But more often this preference indicates a tendency, opposed to that of the American animators, toward a generalization of characters, who become entities or symbols, instead of mouthpieces or stars in their own right—as one might in a broad sense call Bugs Bunny. One might have believed heretofore that the preference for dialogue was exclusively American, if it were not for the brilliant British school of animation. In the films of Vera Linnecar, Bob Godfrey, and

Richard Williams (especially *Love Me, Love Me*) the role of voice is enormous and determining.

The discipline found in the analysis of movement can be seen to operate on the level of the gag. Just as Jerry Lewis, the last holdout of the American burlesque style, adapts himself to the technique of the "slow-burn" and relies on the knowledge of his public to fill out a scene which is not even on the screen, the three Warner musketeers, Jones, Freleng, and McKimpson, no longer hesitate to depend on the assiduity of the audience. In effect they say: you've already seen this gag a thousand times, we won't insult you by repeating it. Wile E. Coyote, as he falls over the cliff, holds up to us a little sign reading "Again!" and waves a fond good-bye. The fall itself, seen from above, remains invisible: we guess at its termination and then see, at the bottom of the ravine, a tiny mushroom of dust. Nothing could be more "cool." The gag thus becomes a kind of understanding between the film-maker and those whom he now considers his accomplices. Thus it is that a trait of the most abstract animation, such as the retreating horizon or the upsetting of natural cycles, is also paradoxically found in the cartoon, where the plastic capacities of animation give way entirely to successive transformations of rhythm.

Boris Kolar's BOOMERANG.



Toward what stratospheric regions is the gag heading? It is difficult to say. We have now seen that shots of a blue fish in its bowl, the hand of a barkeeper polishing his counter, or the progress of a little figure along horizontal bands of color, can suddenly become authentic gags.[1] Today, the gag can arise from rocks in single file suddenly becoming afflicted with a tendency to do the jig—they all become covered, as they hop about in the wilds, with skittery tatoos à la Miró (as in Carmen D'Avino's *Stone Sonata*); the gag can cause demonic laughter in an egg which is proving very hard to cook and which attacks the camera (*L' Oeuf à la coque*, by Marc Andrieux and Bernard Brévent); or by using six or seven leitmotif images associated with various shouts it can hilariously resuscitate the spirit of the No play (as in *The Human Gardens*, by Yoji Kuri). And finally the gag can have the fixed pattern of a shriek, in the mechanical or melodramatic unfolding of a drama so schematic, so elementary, that it seems like the pure derangement of a daydream—as in *The Concert of Mr. and Mrs. Kabal* by Walerian Borowczyk. (The four films mentioned above justly received prizes at Annecy in 1963).

The gag is continually brought into question by its undoubted masters. Chuck Jones, for example, in his personal laboratory, gives it many a new spark of life. In *High Note*, he strives for the bareness of a Mondrian painting. In his last film, *Now Hear This*, which he made with his art-director Maurice Noble, he goes so far as to do away with visual alibis, and replaces an expected sound gag by the simple placard: GIGANTIC EXPLOSION.

But we can be sure the time has not yet come when the gag itself can be replaced by a sign saying "GAG!"

[1]These different images appear in *Christopher Crumpet* by Robert Cannon, in *Rooty-Toot-Toot* by John Hubley, and in *Flebus* by Ernest Pintoff.

DEREK HILL

Animation amid the Animators: A Report from the Annecy Festival

"Animation is a cottage industry," remarked one of the British visitors to the fifth Annecy Festival of animated films; and he went on to point out that animators scavenge for their tools and equipment among the by-products and cast-offs of other industries. The patience, craftsmanship, and artistry that animation demands, the absence of any company designing material specifically for cartoon production, and the habit among animators of using slightly caricatured versions of themselves as heroes all accentuate the goblin-like nature of the whole business. Against an enchanted setting in the French Alps this festival by now resembles some magical rite, as yet unspoilt by trade, press, or political interference. Cartoonists from Bulgaria and Japan communicate by doodles. Soho animators sketch for eager Frenchmen a hundred and one things to do with old aircraft parts. There was talk that the considerable Hollywood contingent were arriving by chartered seaplane and would

Toward what stratospheric regions is the gag heading? It is difficult to say. We have now seen that shots of a blue fish in its bowl, the hand of a barkeeper polishing his counter, or the progress of a little figure along horizontal bands of color, can suddenly become authentic gags.[1] Today, the gag can arise from rocks in single file suddenly becoming afflicted with a tendency to do the jig—they all become covered, as they hop about in the wilds, with skittery tatoos à la Miró (as in Carmen D'Avino's *Stone Sonata*); the gag can cause demonic laughter in an egg which is proving very hard to cook and which attacks the camera (*L' Oeuf à la coque*, by Marc Andrieux and Bernard Brévent); or by using six or seven leitmotif images associated with various shouts it can hilariously resuscitate the spirit of the No play (as in *The Human Gardens*, by Yoji Kuri). And finally the gag can have the fixed pattern of a shriek, in the mechanical or melodramatic unfolding of a drama so schematic, so elementary, that it seems like the pure derangement of a daydream—as in *The Concert of Mr. and Mrs. Kabal* by Walerian Borowczyk. (The four films mentioned above justly received prizes at Annecy in 1963).

The gag is continually brought into question by its undoubted masters. Chuck Jones, for example, in his personal laboratory, gives it many a new spark of life. In *High Note*, he strives for the bareness of a Mondrian painting. In his last film, *Now Hear This*, which he made with his art-director Maurice Noble, he goes so far as to do away with visual alibis, and replaces an expected sound gag by the simple placard: GIGANTIC EXPLOSION.

But we can be sure the time has not yet come when the gag itself can be replaced by a sign saying "GAG!"

[1]These different images appear in *Christopher Crumpet* by Robert Cannon, in *Rooty-Toot-Toot* by John Hubley, and in *Flebus* by Ernest Pintoff.

DEREK HILL

Animation amid the Animators: A Report from the Annecy Festival

"Animation is a cottage industry," remarked one of the British visitors to the fifth Annecy Festival of animated films; and he went on to point out that animators scavenge for their tools and equipment among the by-products and cast-offs of other industries. The patience, craftsmanship, and artistry that animation demands, the absence of any company designing material specifically for cartoon production, and the habit among animators of using slightly caricatured versions of themselves as heroes all accentuate the goblin-like nature of the whole business. Against an enchanted setting in the French Alps this festival by now resembles some magical rite, as yet unspoilt by trade, press, or political interference. Cartoonists from Bulgaria and Japan communicate by doodles. Soho animators sketch for eager Frenchmen a hundred and one things to do with old aircraft parts. There was talk that the considerable Hollywood contingent were arriving by chartered seaplane and would

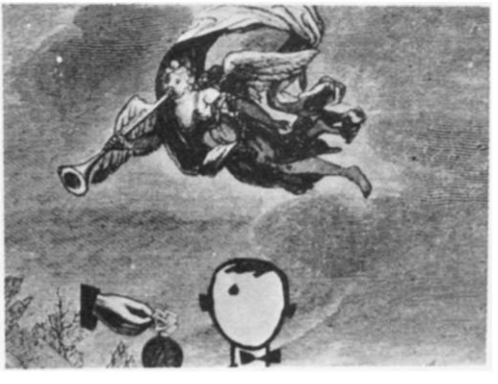
make a spectacular landing on the lake at the festival cinema's very doors; but this, alas, was only rumor. American jury member Chuck Jones drew several hundred Bugs Bunnies and Road Runners for queues of French children, and took the European lionizing in his loping stride. The jury president George Dunning, scarcely known even to the critics back in Britain, found himself sufficiently celebrated in France to be the subject of an animated parody, *God Save Dunning*.

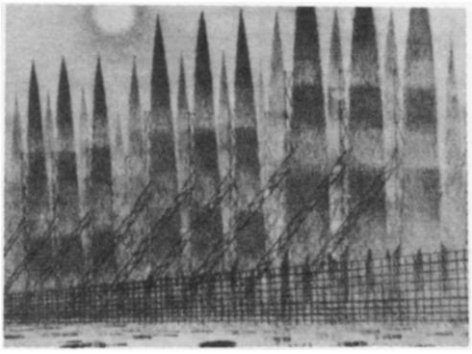
Dunning's THREE BLIND MICE.

On the whole the cartoon film is given scant and patronizing critical attention. This year's Annecy jury scarcely encouraged a more serious consideration of their medium by their total disregard of a work which is arguably the finest and undoubtedly the most intense ever produced in the animated cinema. When *Labyrinth*, the latest film of the great Polish artist Jan Lenica (*Dom, Monsieur Tête, Janko the Musician*), missed the Grand Prix at Tours and again at Oberhausen, the stunned audiences consoled themselves with the thought that at least it was sure to be recognized at the animators' own festival. But perhaps this is too uncompromising a work for any jury. *Labyrinth* is a painful, wholly pessimistic film. Composed largely of steel engravings, it shows how an innocent visitor to a city inhabited by monsters witnesses various examples of the barbaric behavior to which he is expected to conform. He maintains a human heart, and endeavors to escape. But birds with human faces peck his bones clean. . . . Maybe the jury found agony out of place in a festival. Whatever the reason, they gave *Labyrinth* no mention. But it did receive the critics' prize.

The jury divided their honors between the traditional work of established names and the often wild experiments of comparative newcomers. Special tribute was paid to John Hubley's services to animation and to his latest work *The Hole*, already winner of an Academy Award. This development of the now familiar Hubley style is used to point a parallel between the possibility of an accident befalling two construction workers and an accident leading to a nuclear war. Hubley's continued faith in recording an improvised duologue which is subsequently edited and then illustrating the resulting track still seems a matter of putting the cart before the horse; but within the limitations that this approach imposes this is undoubtedly his most successful and disturbing work. A similar tribute was paid to the Yugoslav animator Dusan Vukotic, best known for his Oscar winner *Ersatz*, though here the jury were recognizing his achievement in marrying live action and cartoon in *The Game*, a cold-war parable told through two children's drawings. Personally I found it an uncomfortably self-conscious work, combining admittedly adroit technical experiment with a fashionable message and over-calculated charm. The Yugoslav contribution to Annecy was a considerable disappointment. Apart from *The Game* and Mimica's strange little fable of a

Lenica's MONSIEUR TÊTE (*commentary by Ionesco*).





Miler's THE RED STAIN.

blind man's dog loose in a world of men, (*Everyday Chronicle*), Zagreb offered only a couple of episodes from their new *Inspector Mask* series, each so deplorably crude and unfunny that it seems impossible that they could be turned out by a studio of such a reputation.

A few individual reputations skidded a little, too. Bretislav Pojar, the brilliant puppet-film maker (*The Lion and the Song, The Orator*), opens his latest production, *Romance*, with a marvellous scene of a puppet trying to connect his limbs in the right order, but after this splendid start the film declines into a bitter little love story that might just as well have been told in live action. The new Ernest Pintoff film, *The Critic*, is an advance on his last misfire, *The Old Man*, but its sly record of a man's reactions to abstract shapes is a very mild pleasure compared with, say, *The Interview* or *The Violinist*. Alexeieff made a come-back with a new production on his famous – and laborious – screen of pins, *The Nose*, adapted from the celebrated Gogol story, but a more effective return was made by Zdenek Miler with *The Red Stain*, a symbolic account of the effect of a pacifist's protest against his country's missile bases after he has been executed. Miler's film uses an extension of the style he employed in his famous *The Millionaire Who Stole the Sun*, and it shares much of the earlier film's naivety. All the same it offers a passion which few other works shown could approach, and was the only serious contender against *Labyrinth* for the critics' prize. (Shown out of competition, it was ineligible for a jury award.)

Two magnificently quirky works were given special jury prizes. Both concerned the sex war, and both uninhibitedly condemned women as predatory monsters. *Clap Vocalism*, by the Japanese animator Yoji Kuri, is no less peculiar than its title, and contents itself with a two-minute repetition of half-a-dozen fearful pictures of man at the mercy of his spouse, who has him chained, caged, and pummelled into domesticity. *The Concert of Mr. and Mrs. Kabal*, improbably the first of a French TV series, shows how Mrs. Kabal's piano recital is so ruined by her husband's interruptions that she tears him limb from limb and stuffs him into the piano. This gorgeously stylish work is by Walerian Borowczyk, collaborator with Lenica on *Once Upon a Time* and *Dom* and currently engaged on what promises to be another equally astonishing TV series making witty and inventive use of steel engravings, *My Grandmother's Encyclopaedia*. Unexpectedly, prizes also went to two far-out experiments with animated objects, the American *Stone Sonata* by Carmen d'Avino, and France's *Boiled Egg*, in which Marc Andrieux and Bernard Brevent engagingly have an apparently drunken, tittering egg skim about a desert until it plunges down a pit and hovers thoughtfully over an egg-cup. . . . A pity that

Carmen D'Avino's STONE SONATA.

with all this commendable taste for the bizarre no honors went to *The Two Castles,* a delightful trifle by the young Italian cartoonist Bruno Bozzetto.

Jiri Brdecka's *Gallina Vogelbirdae,* a parable about the artist's right to choose his own approach, was a controversial Grand Prix winner, as its bold message was conveyed in a disappointingly unadventurous style; while a second Brdecka production, *Spirit and Reason,* was understandably given the festival's roughest reception. All the same, the Czechs could afford to be content. Quite apart from winning the Grand Prix and providing two retrospective programmes of real value, their *Forty Grandfathers,* by Vaclav Bedrich, offered the week's spryest, wittiest fantasy.

Generalizations? While some Hollywood animators are reducing cartoon series production — especially for television — to a mere shuffling of filed movements and expressions, the pressure in France is toward complete automation, with machinery replacing the artist. (It appears that a reasonably complicated computer can do at least competent "in-betweening.") A growing number of animators seem resigned to the fact that originality and sophistication in their unsponsored work actually inhibits their chances of theatrical release on any worthwhile scale. Hardly surprising, then, that animators who serve the ad men continue to regard animators who serve the State with enormous curiosity and some envy. After all, the two most enlightened cartoon sponsors in the world remain the governments of Yugoslavia and Canada. (The thin representation of both Zagreb and the National Film Board this year was doubtless partly due to the fact that this was the first time Annecy had been held in consecutive years — which meant several leading animators simply had nothing new ready to show.)

The revolt against charm is as widespread as ever, and possibly still more fierce. Beauty is suspect, and abstract animation arouses the most intense hostility of all. McLaren rests on his splendid pinnacle, out of reach of his dozens of pigmy imitators.

Bedrich's FORTY GRANDFATHERS.

ERNEST CALLENBACH

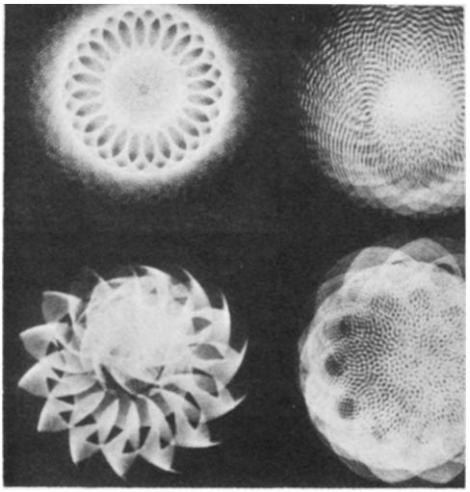
Auguries?

Most of the materials in this issue concern films made by cell-animation, collage, drawing-on-film, painting-on-glass—means in which the hand of the artist directly manipulates the materials. The camera then usually photographs the result, frame-by-frame.

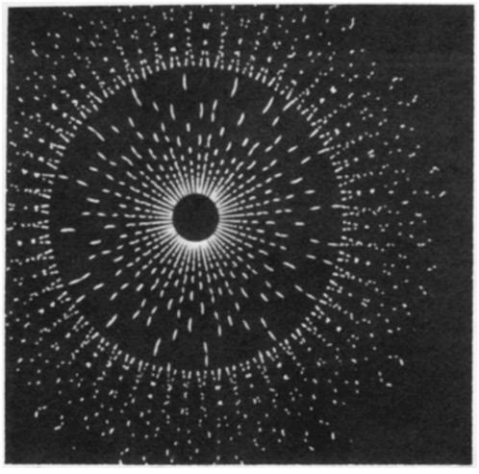
In recent years, however, an entirely different kind of image-making process has appeared. ("Film" is perhaps too narrow a term for the end-product, as some of these visual experiences are created and reproduced electronically.) These new images are in part machine-made, in the sense that their makers rely on the shape-generating powers of various devices to provide visual materials. Here the perhaps premature doctrine of Futurism has found a startling and genuine (and sometimes frightening) expression.

John Whitney of Los Angeles, with his brother James, was one of the first to approach film-making in this way. The Whitney work has been described elsewhere by Lewis Jacobs—in *Experiment in the Film,* edited by Roger Manvell (London: Grey Walls Press, 1949, pp. 140-141). At present John Whitney is working with a device which is basically a war-surplus anti-aircraft gun-director. It can be programmed to produce a variety of periodic motions, and through the interposition of a simple shape on the light-table (whose motions as well as the camera's are controlled by the program) Whitney can film complex geometric patterns. However, he has mostly been experimenting or doing commercial assignments with this rig, rather than making finished work. James Whitney is making utterly private films for his own purposes.

Jordan Belson of San Francisco, who began with films such as *Mandala,* which was hand-drawn on strips of paper and then photographed, has now turned to work in which shapes are, I gather, generated by a complicated system of lights, mirrors, prisms, and motors. (He works with these quite rapidly, and would like to be able to make a film in a single day.) In my estimation Belson is an artist who makes McLaren, despite his ingenuity, look like an amateur. The richness of his invention and the subtlety of his color sense certainly rank him among the two or three greatest talents in the world of the animated film. His approach to film-making and film-viewing, however, has become so special that his recent films are not in distribution; he is interested in having them seen only in carefully prepared, almost seance-like, situations, and he will not release them for ordinary showings —even in the "experimental" film world, in which Belson finds little hope. They are, he says, "films for no audiences." His *Allures,* which I have seen under the special circumstances he requires, is indeed something of a magical or mystical experience. Totally abstract (and with electronic music), its grow-



A sequence of images produced by John Whitney with his current rig. (*See also page* 16.)

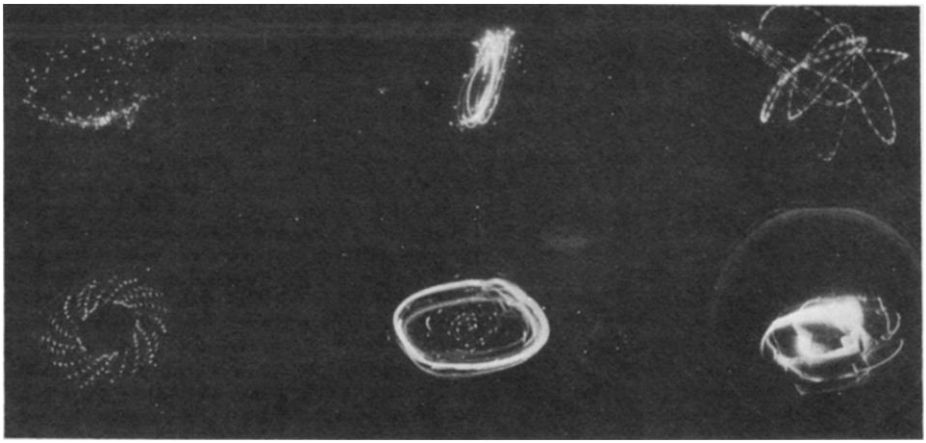


From Belson's ALLURES.

ing, folding, transforming shapes of light have a lovely organic quality. *Allures* has a feeling one might attribute to a sub-atomic world: a world of delicately controlled, intricate, often symmetrical motion, and of colors which are not related to each other like those of the ordinary visible world. These images are pronouncedly post-Bohr, at any rate, in several senses; they have a perfectly contemporary (*not* "science-fictionish") air.

Bill Risdon, also of San Francisco, has worked with several systems—the projection of shapes onto ground-glass screens by complicated mechanical devices, rather like the color box by Mary Ellen Bute at the Museum of Modern Art; the creation of pinpoint light patterns on a computer flashboard; and, most interesting, compositions for closed-circuit video systems using TV or radar picture tubes. Through a three-channel generating, storage, and display apparatus, Risdon is able to make the electron beams of the tubes trace patterns of the greatest complexity and delicacy. Even using only a quarter of the available 60kc bandwidth, images such as those illustrated below can be achieved, and Risdon is able to compose ten-minute pieces which are fantastically varied. By using slow-decay radar tubes he is able to make the track of the beam dot remain visible for some time, resulting in a marvellous spider-web tracery of a faintly orange tinge, over which the variably bright beam dot (which can range from a dim blue to a blinding blue-white) leaps and swirls. Like much of modern art, the process has elements of spontaneity and chance operating within an interplay of the machine's limits and its operator's intentions. The machine can create randomness—which is not at all easy, as John Cage has been at pains to make clear in connection with music—and, by varying the phasing of the three channels, it can be made to produce motion patterns and sequences whose nature cannot be accurately predicted without considerable mathematics, though they can thenceforth be reproduced. These dashing, circling, spreading, flashing shapes seem to partake of the same spirit as, say, the movements of stars if these were stupendously accelerated: they are cool, elegant, almost intelligent. Sometimes they can be frightening as well, notably through the flicker which can be made to approach the alpha-frequency of the human brain (something not to be toyed with by the neophyte, as protracted flashes of this frequency can bring on epileptic seizures). Most of all, however, these images possess a novel style of movement. Because it is not at all like those motions we encounter in the ordinary world (for one thing, most of it is at constant speeds, or constant rates of acceleration), this style has strong elements of mystery: we have not seen such movements, yet we seem to *recognize* them. These weightless, tireless shapes dancing on the surface of a tube in a pitch-black room are surely portents and omens.

Risdon, who is an electronic wizard (and also a painter), is perfectly capable of building a version of his system which could operate from any standard video-tape machine. It is to be hoped he will attempt this, so that these



Images produced by Risdon with his electronic system.

extraordinary images can be seen elsewhere. However, he thinks of the experiences as theatrical in the large sense—indeed some of his pieces are "performed": varied and structured in the playing. Understandably, perhaps, he does not seem anxious to can them for ordinary distribution.

After *Allures,* or an evening of Risdon's electronic images, one comes away feeling that action-painting, pop art, and the other clichés with which painters have been concerning themselves, are quaint artifacts of an age before we were born—pleasant in their homey way, like a kerosene lamp, but no longer relevant. What Antonioni is to the dramatic narrative film, these weird, unsettling images are to the abstract film. Their influence will spread far through the animated films of the future.

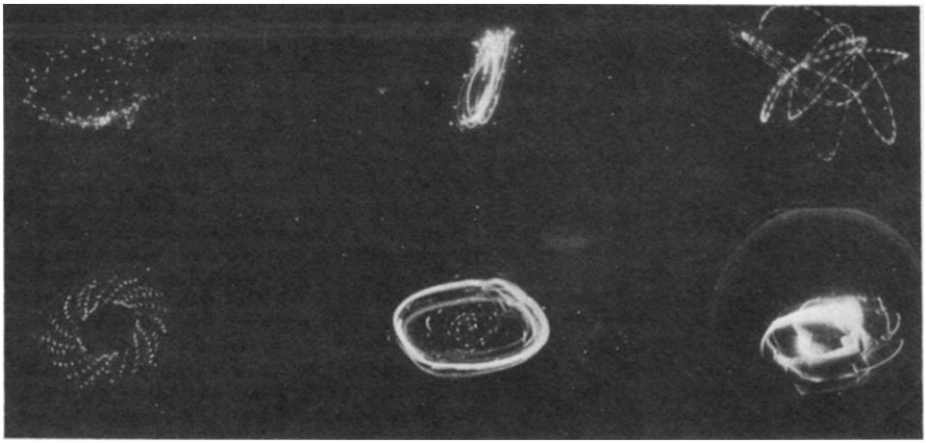
HARRIET R. POLT

The Czechoslovak Animated Film

During the summer of 1963, Miss Polt, who was born in Czechoslovakia, paid an extended visit to Czechoslovak animation studios; this formed the basis of the following study of a notable national tradition in the genre.

Czechoslovak animated films have won numerous festival prizes and have long been recognized, especially in Europe, as among the world's outstanding examples of this neglected form of the film art. The films made during the last several years point to further development and will be discussed at some length later in this article. It is helpful first, however, to give a few definitions and a brief summary of Czech animated films from 1945 until the late 'fifties.

In the United States, the word "animation" is traditionally used to refer only to *drawn* animation and is virtually synonymous with "cartoon." In Europe,



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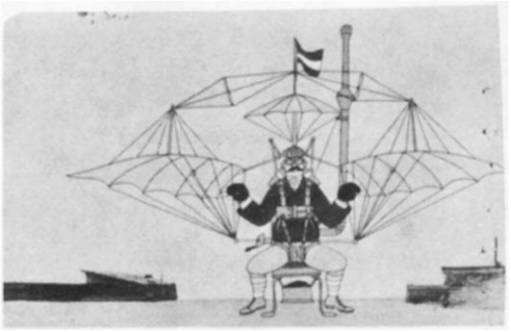
In the United States, the word "animation" is traditionally used to refer only to *drawn* animation and is virtually synonymous with "cartoon." In Europe,

the terminology is different and a word of explanation is in order. The French term *cinéma d'animation* includes not only drawn animation, but also puppet and object animation, as well as the animation of photographs (here called photo-animation) and paintings, and various other techniques of film-making such as painting designs directly on the film (as in Norman McLaren's work). The term, in other words, covers everything that is *not* live action.[1] In German and in Czech, the term "animation" in our sense does not exist at all. Instead, all of the categories of films incuded in the French term *cinéma d'animation* are covered by the words *trick film*. In this article we shall therefore consider not only drawn animation but also puppet, silhouette, painting, and photo-animation.

The Czechs were making cartoons as early as the '20's; however the real development of the industry did not begin until just after World War II. At this time the "Trick Brothers" studio, whose symbol, three little men in striped jerseys, was to mark the opening of many noteworthy cartoons, was developed by a small group of animators who had been making advertising cartoons during the war. Jiri Trnka was put in charge of the studio. In the first two years of the Trick Brothers period, before he went over to the Puppet Film Studio, Trnka made a number of cartoons– *Grandfather Plants a Beet, The Animals and the Brigands, The Gift,* and *Springheeled Jack*. Of these cartoons, *The Gift* is particularly significant for the modernity and stylization of its design–the figures' legs ending not in feet but in points, the waving hair of the artist–as well as for the subtlety of its story line. *The Gift* has as its characters people instead of animals (for a change), and its situation is, while fantastic, not grotesque. It is, according to J.-P. Coursodon, "somewhat the *Citizen Kane* of animation."[2] *Springheeled Jack* (1946) was one of the first cartoons to use a background consisting of actual photographs (scenes of Prague streets, in this case), against which the rounded, ghostlike figure of the hero and those of angular goose-stepping SS-men are particularly effective.

Other important early cartoons were *Atom at the Crossroads* by Cenek Duba, *The Angel's Coat* directed by Eduard Hofman and written by Jiri Brdecka, *Dirigible and Love* with script and direction by Brdecka; and *The Millionaire Who Stole the Sun,* by Zdenek Miler in an unusual "sketched" style.



Brdecka's How Man Learned To Fly.

The early '50's, a time of political oppression and artistic sterility in Czechoslovakia, produced few cartoons of value; the next productive period began around 1957 with such films as Zdenek Miler's *How the Mole Got His Trousers;* and *Moontale,* especially noteworthy for its clever use of collage materials–spangles, cut-outs, etc. Jiri Brdecka produced two good pictures also: *Before Man Learned to Fly,* a half-comic, half-serious film using old newsreels and animated engravings; and *Attention!* with designs by Zdenek Seydl. Brdecka collaborated with Bretislav Pojar on *Bomb-Mania,* for which Trnka did the designing. *The Creation of the World* by Eduard Hofman is a full-length comic version of Genesis (though acclaimed at Venice, the film was damned by the Vatican). In Frantisek Vystrcil's *A Place in the Sun* we find a line-drawing cartoon, somewhat reminiscent of early UPA style, satirizing two men's greed for a little spot of sunshine.

Perhaps better known are the Czech puppet films of the period 1945-1960. The Czechoslovak puppet film derives from a long tradition of puppet theater, reaching back as far as the 18th century. Jiri Trnka, best-known of the puppet-film-makers, himself worked with the famous Czech puppeteer Josef Skupa before the war. In explanation of the Czech interest in puppets, Trnka has said: "The Czech artists have always looked for the world's reality not in size but rather in depth, not on the high mountains, but in the

[1]Another French term is the *film image-par-image*–implying the technique of frame-by-frame exposure. This would leave out a film of hand puppets in action, for example, and also McLaren's works drawn directly on film without usual frame boundaries or separate exposures, as well as the new electronic techniques.

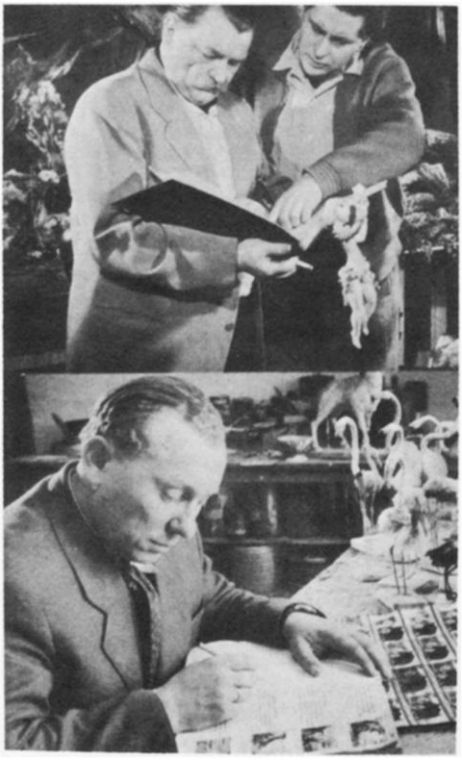
[2]J.-P. Coursodon, "Jiri Trnka: Cinéaste par Excellence," *Cinéma* 60, no. 44, 1960, p. 100.

woods, the rivers, in the songs of birds and of young girls, in the sorrows and joys of children—it is in these places also that we find reality. Perhaps it is for this reason that we love puppets, because in this smallest of worlds we attempt to express everything about life, about beauty and about love . . ."[3] Robert Benayoun puts it less poetically: "Among the Czechs, stylization is not a moralizing postulate, but rather a matter of natural selection. Czechoslovakia is the cradle of European marionettes."[4]

Three big names stand out in the Czech puppet film from 1945 to the present. First there is Trnka. Not less important is Karel Zeman, and coming into his own somewhat later is Bretislav Pojar.

Trnka's first puppet film, made in 1947, was *The Czech Year* (*Spalicek*), a full-length film consisting of six episodes illustrating old customs, sayings, and folksongs of the Czechoslovak people. The film has a scope and a maturity no animator had previously attempted. The puppets are highly stylized, with round heads and huge eyes. Their movements approximate, without trying to imitate, those of "real" people and achieve for the film a lyrical rhythm quite new to animation. The music for *The Czech Year*, composed, as in many of Trnka's later films, by Vaclav Trojan, is one of the most appealing parts of the film. Unfortunately the existing prints, like those of many Czech films of this period, are badly faded: they were made in Agfacolor, which in time has become dull and brownish.

Trnka produced at least one film every year between 1947 and 1950, of which, for lack of space, I shall mention only two. *The Song of the Prairie* was a parody of a Western, with excellent music by Jan Rychlik—and with one puppet exactly resembling Trnka himself, of which Trnka said, "This is my contribution to Socialist Realism." In *Bajaja*, a full-lenth romantic fairy-tale, the puppets assume much more personality than those of *The Czech Year*. Trnka followed with *Old Czech Legends* in 1953, again with music by Trojan. In this film, the puppets take on a statuesque quality entirely divorced from the caricaturistic type common to most animated films. Several episodes from the modern Czech classic



The big three of Czechoslovak animation: top, Trnka and Pojar; bottom, Zeman.

The Good Soldier Schweik appeared in 1954-1955. Here, for the first time, Trnka let his puppets speak: in previous films he had relied solely on music or on a spoken commentary. In 1959, with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Trnka returned to the spoken commentary. In this highly decorative version of the Shakespeare play (with music again by Trojan), Trnka uses puppets of all sorts, from the simplistic, round-headed, bulb-nosed figures of the artisans (similar to the puppets of *The Czech Year*) to the dignified, life-like figure of Theseus. Speech is indeed not necessary: the movements of the puppets take the place of speech, and the commentary is fully adequate to inform us of what is going on.

Karel Zeman's career is more varied than that of Trnka. His *Christmas Dream* in 1946 was the first

[3]Quoted in *Paris-Prague*, no. 11-12, December, 1961, pp. 12-13.

[4]Robert Benayoun, *Le Dessin Animé après Walt Disney*, p. 15. What Benayoun seems to mean is that stylization is a competitive tradition with the Czechoslovaks, rather than a purposefully assumed manner of saying or showing something.

puppet film to be made at the newly established puppet film studio. This film was followed by a series featuring Mr. Prokouk, a mustachioed little man, the personification of middle-class mediocrity. In 1947 came *Inspiration*, a tour de force in which Zeman animated glass figurines. Though this film's fancy seems a bit dated now, one can't help admiring its technical virtuosity: for each frame, each figurine had to be heated and re-shaped. The last of Zeman's more important conventional puppet films was *The Treasure of Bird Island*, a dramatization of a Persian fairy-tale. Here, Zeman innovated by combining puppets with drawn animation.

With *A Journey into Prehistoric Times* in 1955, Zeman began the series of fantastic half-live, half-animated films for which he is best known here. Combining puppets, large mock-ups, and photographs with live action, Zeman achieved results of a much higher artistic value than those of the average science-fiction or monster film. The startling quality of Zeman's films is due not to their plaster monsters but to their technique—the image is that of the storybook illustration come to life. Zeman perfected his method in *The Diabolical Invention* (sometimes called *An Invention of Destruction* or *The Deadly Invention*). In this film, based on a story by Jules Verne, Zeman was inspired by the drawings of Gustave Doré, which he animated into the film, again combining them with live-action, of course, puppets, and various ingenious trick techniques. The striated effect of the animated engravings is carried out in the costumes of the actors, thus eliminating the sense of "real" characters in "fake" settings. Reinold E. Thiel refers to the "alienation techniques" (*Verfremdungseffeckte*) with which Zeman presents contemporary problems in antique guise (*The Diabolical Invention* deals with a terribly powerful explosive which falls into the hands of pirates).[5] *Baron Munchhausen*, made in 1959, made use of the same techniques but with the added complication of color. Shot in black and white, the film was later colored in the laboratory, not in a realistic but rather in an impressionistic way, the mood of each scene being set by one predominating color.

Bretislav Pojar, youngest of the big three, worked for many years with Trnka before going on his own as a director of puppet films. From 1945 to 1947 he worked in Trnka's studio as an animator. For the next ten years he continued to collaborate with Trnka, though he began directing himself (*Hansel and Gretel*) as early as 1951. Pojar animated individual puppets in such Trnka films as *The Czech Year, The Emperor's Nightingale, Bajaja, Old Czech Legends*, and others.

Though Pojar's career as a director began in 1951, it was 1954 before he made his next film, *A Drop Too Much*, the story of a motorcyclist whose overindulgence brings him to an unhappy end. Then came a series of pictures with Spejbl and Hurvinek, traditional puppet figures beloved by Czech theater audiences. Pojar's first major film, which won him the Grand Prize at the Annecy animation festival, was *The Lion and the Song* (1959). In this picture, a hungry lion devours a wandering harlequin and his accordion and goes through the desert with music coming from his insides until his death; after which another wanderer picks up the accordion from the lion's skeleton and continues along in the desert. The puppets for this film, like the puppets and designs for many other films by Pojar and Trnka, were made by Zdenek Seydl. The lion, though comic at times, manages to be ferocious also—one of the few figures in animation that does.

Of the remaining directors of puppet films—about 12 in all—the most important is Hermina Tyrlova, who made her first film, *Ferdinand the Ant*, in 1941. Since then she has made many children's puppet films, which we will not deal with in the present article. Others worthy of mention are Jan Karpas, Stanislav Latal, and Josef Kluge, a disciple of Pojar's.

Before discussing new films and current projects of specific directors, it would be helpful to give a general view of the animation industry in Czechoslovakia. The average yearly output is 8 drawn and 11 puppet films. These are produced in several studios in Prague and Gottwaldov—Kresleny Film studio (animation) and Loutkovy Film (puppets) with branches headed by Trnka and by Pojar, all in Prague, and the studios in the city of Gottwaldov in Moravia, where Zeman and Tyrlova work.

The setup of the animation studios is somewhat different from that common in the United States, in that a group of 20 to 40 people works for all the directors; that is to say, no one director has his own personal group of animators.

Czech animation artists are required to complete a five-year course at the Prague School of Fine Arts. Since the schools and colleges in Czechoslovakia are responsible not only for the education but also for the future employment of their students, they admit only as many students as will foreseeably be able to get jobs upon graduation. Admission to the animation

[5]Reinold E. Thiel, *Puppe und Zeichenfilm*, p. 21.

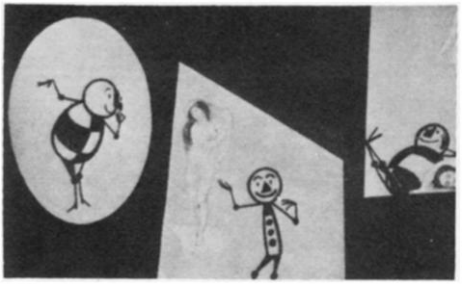
school is by examination, and places in the department are hotly competed for, only about 20 students being admitted per year. Of these, 5 to 15 may be expected to finish the course, and these graduates are guaranteed employment in one of the studios. Thus, unlike their Hollywood counterparts, Czech animators never find themselves unemployed. Guaranteed employment, however, has built-in drawbacks: since the studios have to be kept busy at all times, they are sometimes forced to occupy themselves with mediocre films just in order to keep their crews working.

One director who has made his reputation fairly recently is Vladimir Lehky. Lehky likes to use a very simple style of drawing, imitating in at least two of his films (*Three Men Fishing* and *Zuzanka Learns to Write*) the style and coloring of children's drawings. In *The Parasite* (1961) he uses a somewhat more sophisticated but equally simple form of stick-figures. Here, Lehky innovates in projecting the story of each of his two main characters on a different screen, in the manner of Polyecran, a multiple-screen experimental cinema developed in Czechoslovakia some years ago. (*The Parasite*, like certain other cartoons, has what might be considered a didactic party-line plot: it can without much straining be interpreted to depict the downfall of capitalism.)

Not a new artist, but one who has come into new prominence at this past year's Annecy festival, is Vaclav Bedrich, who showed two films made in the past year, *Forty Grandfathers* and *The Last Shot*. The latter is a satire of the ever-popular classical Western; the former, more original in style and rather more charming, is based on a fairy-tale of an old man who, to his wife's great distress, is suddenly multiplied into 40 old men.

Zdenek Miler's *The Red Stain*, also shown at Annecy, repeats the sketching technique of his earlier *The Millionaire Who Stole the Sun*. Miler's films are rich in atmosphere, and his style, at least in his last two films, is unmistakeable. He uses few in-betweens —that is, the movements of characters, growth of plants, etc., are large and abrupt rather than gradual. The static, pictorial quality of the individual drawings is thus emphasized rather than the motion from one to the next. Black and white with shades of gray are the main colors; but red is used for the flowers which grow up from the blood of the man killed protesting military build-up. (Like *The Millionaire, The Red Stain* is a film with a "message.") In *The Richest Sparrow*, made in 1961, Miler tells a children's fable teaching the dangers of greed.

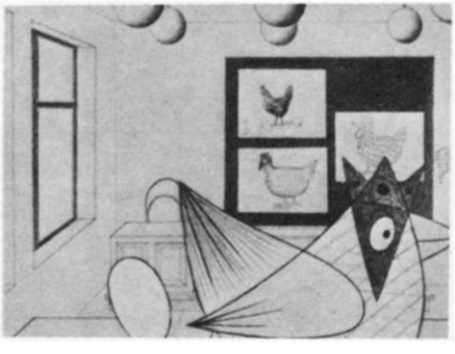
The Grand Prize at Annecy in 1963 went to Jiri



Lehky's THE PARASITE.

Brdecka for his film *Gallina Vogelbirdae* (which also showed in the San Francisco Festival this year). Brdecka started out just before the war as a newspaper cartoonist but turned to animation in 1946, writing the scenarios for *Springheeled Jack*, *The Angel's Coat*, *Dirigible and Love*, and *Bomb-Mania*, as well as for a few live-action films, and directing *Before Man Learned to Fly*, all before 1960. Since then he has made *Man Under Water*, again a seriocomic "history," using a combination of pure animation and animated engravings; *The Television Fan*, a children's film; *Attention!*, a film relating the history of weapons and armaments with an implied warning against war; *Reason and Emotion*, a rather long, ballet-like fantasy showing the struggle and eventual reconciliation between man's rational and his emotional tendencies; and *Gallina*. In all the three last-mentioned films, the artistic direction is by Zdenek Seydl, who has also worked with Pojar and Hofman. Seydl's figures are always highly elaborate and baroque; it is impossible to miss his touch, and the touch can sometimes be too heavy. *Reason and Emotion*, for example, suffers from Seydl's figure of the harlequin (representing Emotion), which seems to me overly formalized and stiff: the "emotion" which he represents consists too much of prancing

Brdecka's GALLINA VOGELBIRDAE.



movements and rococo decor. Although the film won the first prize for short films at Mar de Plata in 1962, it has not been very popular.

In *Gallina* on the other hand, the touch of Seydl is less evident. The film concerns a little boy who, to his teacher's distress, draws a cubistic version of the class drawing assignment, a chicken. (This figure of the hen is the only part of the film that Seydl designed.) Our hero's hen, however, comes alive and becomes a rarity for ornithologists, while the conventionally drawn chicken of the teacher's pet, the hero's rival, remains statically on its piece of paper. The ideological aspect of the film—its defense of individualism and modernism—certainly played a part in the film's winning the Annecy prize.

At present, Brdecka, a vigorous, stocky man of around 40, is working on several projects, including co-directing (with Oldrich Lipsky) a live action parody of a Western. Entitled *Lemonade Joe*, the film will be in part a musical. In the musical number, Brdecka will insert animated backgrounds using a collage technique in nineteenth century "western" style. "Just filming a singer singing is static," says Brdecka. "The animation will give more movement to the film." *Lemonade Joe* is being filmed in black and white but will be colored in the laboratory—as was Zeman's *Baron Munchhausen*—in a stylized manner, with experiments in color juxtaposition.

Brdecka has not given up animation, and is currently at work on two cartoons, one a short film about harmful methods of dieting and the necessity of consulting a doctor before embarking on a diet, the other a lyrical piece based on medieval songs. This film will be called *Love* and will have two parts: the first, now in production, represents the happy side of love and is based on a Czech song. The second part, showing the tragic side of love, will be based on the French ballad, *Le Roi Renaud*. Brdecka confesses that he is a little tired of conventional animation. In *Love* he is using paintings instead—by a different painter for each half of the film. The paintings will not be, strictly speaking, animated; the movement will be in the photography and in the editing rather than in *what* is being photographed.

In the area of the puppet film, we find the Old Master, Jiri Trnka, currently doing book illustrations instead, for which he is almost as famous as for his films. Since *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Trnka has made only two films, both of them short—*Obsession* in 1961, and *Cybernetic Grandmother* in 1962. Because of the difficulty of sustaining interest in longer animated films, Trnka has decided to limit himself to films of a maximum length of 45 minutes. Trnka limits himself also to subjects in which he is able to exploit his already developed techniques and give his kind of puppets new opportunities for showing what they can do. One can observe a steady development in the films of Trnka; but it is not a development through experimentation: it is more like a straight path leading from *The Czech Year* to *Cybernetic Grandmother*, a development based on the expressive possibilities of the three-dimensional puppet. When he has no new ideas for this medium, Trnka prefers to work in other media and give puppets a rest.

His last two films, while dealing with modern subject-matter, retain his unmistakeable touch. *Obsession* is a little film about a man who, from infancy, is infatuated with speed. Repeated sojourns in the hospital do not dissuade him from trying to outdistance everything else on the road; and finally even his soul goes speeding into the other world.

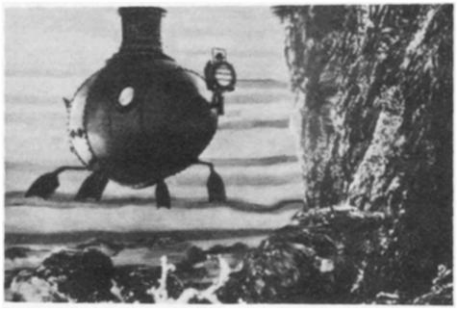
Cybernetic Grandmother is a more original film. In a rather long prologue, a little girl and her old peasant grandmother, both very appealing puppets, travel together and finally take their leave as the little girl steps into a bubble and is transported to another planet. There a second grandmother awaits her, but this one—the cybernetic grandmother—is a machine on wheels. She tries, by coaxing, wheedling, and scolding, to win the little girl's affection; but the little girl ends up back on earth with the familiarity of human emotions.

The film suffers from a superfluity of talk, but its highly effective backgrounds, depicting a world of the future both tempting and terrifying, and its modern musical accompaniment, as well as the charm of

The Theseus puppet from Trnka's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

the puppets themselves, make it one of the most interesting of Trnka's films. It is a satire of modern life, of hyperorganization, above all of the dehumanization of human relations. Trnka's approach is always conservative, his theme always the value of the traditional ways of life, of old customs, of human affection. As André Martin writes in *Cahiers du Cinéma*: "(Trnka's) cartoons, his books and his puppet films do not attempt to overwhelm the attention of the spectators. They never try to surprise, irritate, force, dazzle, or impose an emotion, but on the contrary to comfort and relax the spirit."[6] A characteristic of Trnka's films, as opposed to Pojar's, is the slowness of their movement, the statuesque quality of the puppets and the "staticness" of their action. The climactic scenes are always static. In explanation of this, Trnka has stated: ". . . the very nature of cartoon [i.e., drawn] figures calls for continual motion: it is not possible to bring them into a state of contemplation. All this, of course, limits the creative possibilities of cartoons . . ."[7] Still the question persists, especially among those accustomed only to Hollywood styles of animation (both UPA and Disney), what is the *use* of making puppet films? Why, after all, exert so much effort in making imitations of people imitate the actions of people? The answer, of course, is that the puppets are *not* meant to imitate people, nor are their actions made to imitate literally those of live actors. As in drawn animation, the movement of puppets is stylized movement, which can be exaggerated or curtailed to heighten or suppress various essentials (or non-essentials) of action. Nor are the plots of puppet films those used in live-action films (note, for instance, the embarrassment which usually accompanies productions of *Midsummer Night's Dream*). Trnka has said: ". . . . Puppet films stand on their own feet only when they are outside the scope of live-action films—when the stylization of the scenery, the artificially heroic look of the human actors, and the lyrical content of the theme might easily produce an effect both unconvincing and ludicrous or even painful."[8]

The advantages which puppet animation has over drawn animation, and the reasons for which Trnka seems to have abandoned the latter altogether, are several. First, puppet animation goes through fewer hands than drawn animation: there are never dozens of artists carrying through dozens of processes as there are in a drawing studio. The director thus has much more direct control. Second, drawn animation seems to lend itself primarily to caricature, while puppet animation is capable of either caricature or lyricism. And third, the three-dimensionality of puppets enables the director to use depth and light and to give his films a greater sense of physical space than that possible in drawn films.[9]



Zeman's DIABOLICAL INVENTION.

Karel Zeman, like Trnka, is the perfector of a method, and is constantly in search of new themes through which to exploit it. Zeman's method is a combination of live action, animation, and puppets. He composes some scenes of three separate elements—puppets, photographed backgrounds, and live action. These are combined directly by the camera, much as the backgrounds and figures of normal animation are combined in the process of being photographed. For his interiors, Zeman often uses small drawn scenes which are placed near the camera so as to appear large. A small area or corner of the scene will be cut away, and through this the actual scene and the live actors will be photographed.

At the studios in Gottwaldov, Zeman is currently at work on a new film, provisionally entitled *The Two Musketeers*. Zeman calls it a "pseudo-historical" film. Its action takes place during the Thirty Years' War and its theme is antimilitaristic and antiheroic. The hero, a young man in search of home, love, and family, finds himself suddenly forced to be a soldier; in the middle of war he yearns for love.

The Two Musketeers is also being shot in black and white and will be colored later in the lab. Unlike the other films, however, the new film is not

[6] André Martin, "Pour qui sont ces Trnka?", *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Volume XVIII, no. 105, March 1960 p. 26.

[7] In the Czech periodical *Film*, Vol. VIII, no. 6, as quoted in John Halas and Roger Manvell, *The Technique of Film Animation*, pp. 264 and 273.

[8] *Ibid.*

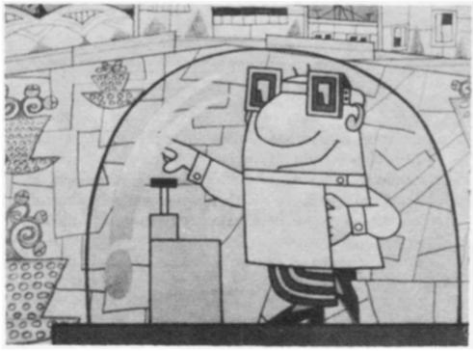
[9] Martin, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

using drawings but rather photographs—photographs, however, of drawings. The inspiration comes from the engravings of an artist called Merian who lived during the time of the Thirty Years' War, wandering from place to place and making engravings of battle scenes. Greatly enlarged photographs of these drawings, as well as of old maps, are being used for the backgrounds of the film; yet the perspectives, Zeman points out, will be those of drawing, not of photography.

Another innovation in the current Zeman film is that no actual puppets are being used. Instead, Zeman is animating reduced-size photographs, which he prefers because of their more "real" quality.

While I was in Gottwaldov last summer, Zeman was just shooting an exterior on the hill above the studio. The camera was set on a platform, on which Zeman, his cameraman, and a couple of assistants, all in shirt-sleeves or shirtless, worked. A script-girl in a bikini sat below the platform. Dozens of children provided an audience, dividing their interest between the action and the few spare horses around the set. Erected on a rather flimsy scaffolding in front of the camera was an enlarged photograph of a drawing of a castle, with two wing-like projections (representing the sides of a road leading to the castle) coming out of its gates. The space between these projections was cut away, and in the grassy space left free, the actors on their horses and in their carriages galloped from a tent-studded distance towards the camera. The resulting scene will thus portray characters emerging from the castle gates and galloping down the road towards the cinema audience. This scene was shot several times, the actors bearing up well in the heat under their heavy costumes. No actual animation work was being done at the time, since the summer months are usually saved for exterior shots.

I was able to visit Bretislav Pojar's studio just before it closed down for vacations. Prague was steaming hot, and the staff were appropriately dressed in bathing suits. Pojar himself is a husky, young forty; the rest of the entourage are perhaps even younger. The staff includes, among others, Milena Novotna, who makes the puppets' costumes out of bits of fabric, leather, and whatever else comes to hand, often having to make a new costume when the original one gets dirty in the process of animation; Mr. and Mrs. Prochazka, who both do animation; Vladimir Malik, Josef Kluge; and two cats, whose function is to keep the mice down. (During the filming of *The Lion and the Song*, mice caused a problem by getting into the grain that was being used to represent the desert. Since that time, cats have been part of the staff.) The studio itself contains the comfortable clutter of work in progress. Nonobjective paintings hang on the walls, and a friendly, relaxed atmosphere prevails.



Pojar's ATTENTION!

While I was there, the group was in the process of making a short commercial, and the backgrounds for *The Ideal,* a puppet film about a sort of Czech Babbitt and his changing ideals from childhood to maturity. Pojar has been very busy since his success with *The Lion and the Song* in 1959: in the same year he made *How to Furnish an Apartment,* in the next year three films, *Midnight Adventure* and the first two films in a series of three short films about cats: *A Cat's Word* and *The Artist and the Kittens.* In 1961 came the third in the series, *School for Cats.* These three films are combined forms with the mime Ladislav Fialka playing a live role, that of a kindly painter who adopts the mischievous kittens, which are represented by paper cut-outs. An amusing interplay is created between the artist and his paintings—

Pojar's ROMANCE.

largely done on a glass plate—and the messes the kittens make of the paintings. Pojar's last three films have been straight puppet films: *Billiards* and *The Orator* in 1962, and *Romance* in 1963.

As previously mentioned, Pojar began his work in puppet films with Trnka. Later, when he began to direct on his own, he had his puppets designed by Zdenek Seydl. But Seydl's own personality and style were so strong that Pojar's own ideas were submerged. In his recent films, therefore, Pojar has been designing his own puppets, allowing himself great freedom to experiment with various materials and techniques.

The standard type of puppet, which Pojar, like Trnka and other directors, has used in many of his films, is based on a wood body with ball-hinged joints. This body is covered with a rubber material, over which the clothes are put on. Often one puppet will have various heads to represent different facial expressions; or if only a slight change in expression is needed, the face will simply be repainted. These puppets are filmed standing erect on their bases, to which their feet are screwed.

A different type of puppet, invented by Jan Dudeska but developed by Pojar in his last several films, is the relief puppet. These puppets are flat in back and are laid on their backgrounds (instead of being stood up against them) or on glass. To keep the figures stable, lead weights are used as backing. The bodies are made of cork or plastic sponge. Heads as well as props, such as dishes, food, or small pieces of furniture, are made of an artificial substance called Modurit, a white clay-like material which is easily sculpted and then cooked for hardness. Unfortunately the Modurit lasts only about two months after cooking. Limbs are made of rubber-covered wire. Both heads and limbs are removable, being stuck to the main body piece with brads or pins. This movability makes the puppets highly flexible and expressive. In Pojar's finished films one notices the stylization of his method—for instance in the particularly effective opening of *Romance*, in which disembodied feet, arms, and legs appear, gradually "finding" each other to compose a person—but never is one aware of the fact that the puppets are not fully three-dimensional.

The process of animating puppets, both at Pojar's studio and at the others, is a painstaking one. Since twenty-four frames go to make up each second of finished film, a good day's work might be nine seconds of film. For each frame, every puppet in the scene, as well as any moving bit of prop or background, has to be separately and minutely moved. If in the rushes it becomes clear that some movement is not right, the whole sequence has to be done over from the beginning. In drawn animation, the process of re-shooting is facilitated by the use of animation sheets, which are an index to the positions of the figures at certain given points in the film. Puppet animation—especially when conventional puppets are used—being three-dimensional obviously makes the use of such two-dimensional indices impossible.

Where is the Czechoslovak school heading? We can observe certain clear tendencies, of which the major one is the trend towards mixed forms. The most notable exception in this trend is Jiri Trnka; but both Zeman and Pojar, as well as some of the lesser-known directors, are turning more and more to mixtures—animation and live action, drawn animation combined with puppets, and so forth. Pojar's series of cat films is a good example. Experimentation in general, as in Lehky's multi-screened *The Parasite*, is more in evidence than it is in the typical Hollywood cartoon.

As to themes and subjects, it is harder to generalize. A number of films, such as Miler's *The Red Stain* and Brdecka's *Attention!* have as their subject the dangers of war—but then so do recent cartoons from the United States, from Yugoslavia, and from West Germany. Much in evidence are didactic films, both for children and for adults—films stressing the value of cooperation, the evil of greed, and so forth. Periodically the government issues directives to filmmakers urging them to use more topical or political material. Yet one finds in Czechoslovakia as many films as anywhere else of a purely entertaining or purely artistic nature. Certainly most of Zeman's last films, as well as most of Pojar's and many of Brdecka's, are totally lacking in party or political overtones.[10]

Perhaps indeed this helps account for the fact that Czech animation directors find themselves in a position as thankless as animators in the United States and elsewhere. Aside from Trnka, who was recently named a National Artist, the highest honor for any Czech artist, the directors of animation films are relatively unknown to the Czech public. Some years ago, a number of theaters presented, with good results, programs consisting solely of cartoons. But for some reason these programs were discontinued, and now, as before and as elsewhere in the world, the cartoons are shown only as "appetizers" to the main feature, and receive little if any notice on billboards or in newspaper reviews.

MOONTALE.

Yet Czech animation has "got something," a something which has won it a good deal of acclaim. Perhaps a large part of it is Czech humor, which differs markedly from American and British humor. Czech humor is often satirical; but when it is not satirical, it tends to be whimsical, even a bit sentimental. In Trnka's early puppet films, for example, we readily observe a kind of sentimentality, blended with a national pride which is more fond than fierce (Czech nationalism of course predates the Communist regime). His favorite figures, such as the old peasant grandmother in *Cybernetic Grandmother*, are all warm, simple, and earthy.

Sadism and cruelty are noticeably lacking in Czech humor. In Pojar's *Cat's Word*, the cat-mouse chase remains gentle: a cat may chase a mouse, but it is all a game, with neither figure showing any hostility towards the other. In the hands of Hollywood, the chase would have developed into the typical slam-bang ruckus familiar to audiences brought up on "Tom and Jerry" cartoons.

Pojar's films are a typical example of the combination of satire and sentiment. Which brings up a vital difference between the Czech method of animation production and the Hollywood method. Pojar has at least collaborated on, if not completely written, all of his own screen-plays. In his last films he has also designed his own puppets, as previously mentioned. This degree of creative autonomy is hardly ever the case in American production, except in the films of independents such as John Hubley (who works out of New York). The scenario of the typical Hollywood cartoon is determined by a group of producers or studio executives and is generally out of the hands of the director, to say nothing of the head animator. In Cechoslovakia the relative autonomy of the director gives the films of each individual director a much more personal and distinguishable quality.

To return, however, to Czech humor: an even more basic quality is optimism—which we might expect, but do not often find, in American counterparts. The ending of Vystrcil's *Place in the Sun* surprised me by showing that both men had learned the lesson of cooperation and were content to share their little disc of sunshine. I would have expected, as in an American film, that the ending would have come back round to the beginning, the two men again battling futilely.

Or is the optimism politically conditioned? It is difficult to say. One clear fact is that, whatever is responsible—the Czech artistic temperament, the organization of the industry, or other factors—Czechoslovakia has been and is producing some of the most interesting animated films of the present time.

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[10]George Karnet states in an article on the Czech film industry (*East Europe*, Vol. 12, no. 5, May, 1963, p. 8) that the Czech film people work under a code "so strict and hairsplitting that their efforts are predestined to failure." In a later article (*East Europe*, Vol. 12, no. 9, September, 1963, p. 4) Karnet adds that rigid Party measures applied to films in 1959 brought the Czech cinema "close to an artistic standstill"; but that in 1962 V. Koucky, the Party official in charge of movie policy, was moved to another job and the grip was thus relaxed. I haven't seen enough Czech feature films to judge the veracity of Karnet's conclusions (though on the few I *have* seen, I differ with him both as to artistic merit and political content); but I can hardly find his conclusions applicable to the majority of the animated films I have seen. Trnka's films, for example, are apolitical in every respect. Thiel mentions (*Puppe und Zeichenfilm*, p. 18) that pressure was put on Trnka at one time to be more "conscious of contemporary themes," in answer to which Trnka made the Schweik film. In response to later pressures, Thiel says, Trnka simply stopped producing, with the effect that pressure was finally abandoned. The film following this letup, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, is certainly anything but socialistic in conception: the puppets of the nobles have the most "character" and dignity, while the peasants are, as in Shakespeare, represented as likeable buffoons though the peasants have the fun, while the nobles are bored.

Film Reviews

DR. STRANGELOVE

Produced and directed by Stanley Kubrick. Screenplay: Stanley Kubrick, Terry Southern, Peter George; based on the book "'Red Alert" by Peter George. Photography: Gilbert Taylor. Music: Laurie Johnson. Columbia.

I assume that by now everyone knows that *Dr. Strangelove: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* is a madcap comedy about nuclear war which closes with the extinction of mankind. I sat beside a high-school girl and her date, and as H-Bomb fireballs filled the last frames of the film she turned to her boy-friend and asked: "What's so funny?"

Well, what's funny is incongruity, and *Strangelove* is a tissue of wierd, lovely, ludricrous incongruities. One is tempted to multiply instances, but the visual leitmotiv is the juxtaposition of shabby, sloppy, silly human beings and glittering, fool-proof, logical machines. The first human figure visible in the film is that of the pilot of an enormous SAC bomber, sitting far above the clouds ("how like a god!") surrounded by dials, levers, switches, knobs, and little black boxes, all exquisitely ordered and purposeful. The man's serious face is bent over something which he is intently and solemnly studying. It is, we find, the foldout nude photograph in *Playboy* magazine.

Among the machines that mock, frustrate, humiliate, dominate and finally defeat the people, are telephones, radios, a Coke machine, and a prosthetic arm; but the machine that broods over the film is the Russians' Doomsday Machine, a non-disarmable device to poison the world's atmosphere for 93 years if anyone attacks the Soviet Union. A mad American Air Force general launches an attack and sets in motion the real star of the film, a beautiful B-52 with a crew right out of *Twleve O'Clock High* or *The Memphis Belle*. In the sequences following the plane as it fights its way gallantly into Russia to drop the bomb that will trigger the Doomsday Machine, Kubrick and his writers turn all our war-movie training against us. Every cliché is hit: the tense struggle in the cockpit as the tight-lipped pilot fights to control the damaged, careening aircraft; the jerky, hand-held-camera shots of crewmen wielding fire-extinguishers in the smoke-filled plane; the matte shot from above and behind the plane as it roars toward a mountain-peak only to pull up and squeak over with inches to spare; the ominous pulsing of the hostile blip on the radar scope. To this add the appeals of the voice of aircraft commander, Col. "King" Kong of Texas (Slim Pickens), folksy ("I'll open them bomb-bay doors if it hare-lips everybody on Bear Creek!"), unctuous ("Citations . . . regardless of yer race or yer color or yer creed,") and red-blooded all the way. His crew, of course, is young, efficient, gallant, appealingly human, and a little cross-section of America. The casting of a Negro as the bombardier is not the least of Kubrick's strokes of perfection. How can any American film-goer *not* cheer for them?

The plane's flight is counterpointed against scenes of the U.S. War Room, where President Merkin Muffley, the Joint Chiefs, and the Russian ambassador (with the Soviet Premier on the other end of the Hot Line) try to forestall disaster, and scenes at Burpelson Air Force Base, where the mad general who started the attack guards the secret code prefix necessary to recall the bombers. (Incidentally, all the reviews I'd seen spoke of the general as impotent, but he is something much worse. Noting that after "the act of love" he feels "empty," he resolves to eschew sex and fluoridated water, both of which sap a man's "essence.") The same exploitation of war-movie conventions fills these scenes—notably in the jiggly shots of the paratrooper assault on Burpelson, reminiscent of miles of official combat film still being unwound on television, except that both sides are American and one of the hottest engagements takes place around the

Agonizing reappraisal in DR. STRANGELOVE.

main gate of the base under a sign reading: Peace is Our Profession!

What *isn't* funny about the picture—or rather, what's funny but only at the audience's expense—is the big real-life incongruity upon which it is based: the absolute and perhaps fatal inadequacy of *all* human attitudes, inherited from twenty-five centuries of struggle, in the Time of the Bomb. The villains of the film are courage, resourcefulness, ingenuity, and optimism.

Kubrick has kept the film blessedly short and the pace is fast. Gilbert Taylor's photography does exactly what it has to do, which is to create the meticulous realism which is the source of most of the horror of the film. (Some of the later process shots make the B-52 look as if it is heading for the tundra, however.)

Peter Sellers, in a triple role, I found a little disappointing: he is the British group captain who figures out the recall code and then hasn't the right change for a call to the President; he's the President himself; and he's Dr. Strangelove. Each impersonation is perfect (and his make-up for the President includes the best fake baldness I've ever seen) but the first two are essentially straight-man parts and the third, the ex-Nazi with the mechanical arm that won't stop giving a Fascist salute, is brief and written on the level of *Mad* magazine. The prize performance of the picture is that of George C. Scott as General Buck Turgidson. Keenan Wynn is splendid in a quick appearance as a Gung-ho paratrooper officer with a respect for corporate property. Pickens is fine, and Sterling Hayden gives a top-notch comic performance as the looney who started it all, simply by playing his role straight in his best square-jawed style.

Whatever your most cherished value, in *Dr. Strangelove* you'll find a scene, a line, or a character to assimilate you to the madness it portrays. Perhaps the final, funny, horror of the picture, on top of everything else, is that you come away not hating the suicidal human race, but rather admiring it—after all, not many species have gone out in such a rapture of triumphant lunacy and daft self-satisfaction, and the only place to look for reassurance is to your worst fears.—JACKSON BURGESS

IT'S A MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD WORLD

Directed by Stanley Kramer. Producer: Stanley Kramer. Screenplay: William Rose. Photography: Ernest Laszlo. Music: Ernest Gold. Cinerama. United Artists.

To paraphrase Kenneth Tynan: Stanley Kramer has played the comic and lost. It really wasn't much of a fight. True, Kramer assembled herculean armies, marched in the field for 166 days, surrounded himself with 636,000 feet of Technicolor film, and dispatched countless zillions of dollars, but, woefully, amidst all the commotion, somebody forgot that screen comedy is an art demanding the greatest discipline and a rare nonverbal intelligence. Kramer tries hard but remains an amateur: one wants to grimace instead of laugh, for too often only the effort is apparent. The film manages to stay on its feet for a little while and trundle self-importantly along, but it soon becomes painfully clear that its feet are flat and its wheels are square. Kramer lacks all the essentials of good comedy; he has few ideas, no cinematic or comic technique (the huge screen certainly didn't help him here: just one more technical burden), no sense of comic structure, and above all, no sense of pace. A steady five miles per hour throughout: no surprises, not many laughs, lots of yawns.

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Kramer, as of late Kid Portentous in the black-and-white trunks, fresh from sparring with such heavyweights as the end of the world and German guilt in *On the Beach* and *Judgement at Nuremberg* (two unintentional comedies), this time apparently decided to make an honest lad out of that impudent, spunky, dirty-faced street urchin called silent comedy. His original idea, one guesses, was to utilize the visual comedy and sight gags of these comedies together with the top comedians in Hollywood and on TV, thereby creating the comedy to end all comedies. One can picture a sober-faced Kramer, grim as Max von Sydow, deliberating humorlessly over miles and miles of Chaplin and Keaton, trying to decide with IBM precision which was *really funny*. The basic idea, a comedy of greed in the land of the almighty dollar, was a good one—especially when one considers the low state of American film comedy—but Kramer botched it. The sweet and delicate framework of silent comedy collapsed under ton upon ton of excess flab.

From beginning to end, *Mad, Mad World* is a real horror film, peopled with grotesques and directed by a blind man. Kramer has taken a script which he calls "the funniest ever written" (but you don't *write* visual comedy) and methodically turned it into a dull and deadly chase "comedy." The plot, on which hangs the comic action, or rather inaction, concerns about a dozen people pursuing $350,000 across the state of California—by plane, car, bike, boat, etc. Waiting at the end of the line is a cynical police officer (Spencer Tracy), ready to take the money away from them and skip the country with it. The moneygrubbers (Milton Berle, Buddy Hackett, Sid Caesar, Ethel Merman, Jonathan Winters, Edie Adams, Terry-Thomas, Mickey Rooney, Phil Silvers, Dick Shawn, Dorothy Provine), among them several gifted comedians, are thoroughly wasted by Kramer, who gives them nothing much to do but stand there with egg on their face while Ernest Laszlo photographs them in a peculiarly tacky, washed-out Technicolor that makes them look like so much wax fruit. These eleven certainly seem capable of scoring the big touchdown for good old Comedy Tech (with a modicum of help from the bench, Winters alone could have made the game memorable). However, Coach Stanley has no instinctive comic strategy, and just doesn't know what plays to call. He is also facing a grievous problem in that, while he has all these Names, he lacks a central comedian around whom and against whom everything else can play. Nor has he learned from the old masters how to build those overpowering crescendos of gags. The result is that the structure of the film is soundest when dealing with Tracy—who isn't funny at all. The game soon becomes nothing but lengthy time-outs and senseless back-and-forth punts. Finally, desperate for some kind of score in the last few minutes, a frenzied Kramer turns to all-out mayhem, and the wax figures fly through the air to numerous, senseless, and grisly demises. Poor Tracy gets hurled through a plate-glass window and breaks every bone in his body. Funny stuff—nothing like it since they shot King Kong. The last scene finds the whole team in a hospital ward, bandaged from head to foot and grinning like so many Cheshire cats, while Tracy breaks up completely with Kramer-inflicted laughter.

There is one 40-second oasis in this comic desert, and even that is disappointing. Buster Keaton does an extremely short bit, displaying some of the character, timing, and grace of silent comedy technique. But even this is infuriating because Kramer, with perhaps the greatest master of visual comedy working for him, could think of nothing for him to do except jump up and down for a moment. (Even those TV commercials are more ingenious.)

Otherwise, what is there to say? Kramer's sense of comedy is even more ponderous than his sense of serious drama. He is like the bull in the china shop: his "comic" touch is like a steady, annoying rap on the head with a hammer; he totally misuses his actors, giving us their worst, not their best; despite his researches, he has remained for all intents and

purposes a cinematic illiterate.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., the Stanley Kramer of film critics, has written one good sentence in his entire reviewing career for *Show*. Let us close with it here: "I would say that *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* does for film comedy what *Cleopatra* did for drama."

Well said.

—PAUL NELSON

ROBERT FROST: A Lover's Quarrel With The World

A film by Robert Hughes and Charlotte Zwerin. Directed by Shirley Clarke. Produced, written and co-directed by Robert Hughes. Associate producer and editor, Charlotte Zwerin. Fall sequence co-directed by Terence McCartney-Filgate. Music by Charles Gross. Produced by the WGBH Educational Foundation in cooperation with Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. 1963, 52 minutes.

The best American picture I saw in 1963? This Hughes-Zwerin film Robert Frost: *A Lover's Quarrel With the World.** "I thought of modifying that," says Frost in an early scene of the film, "and saying I had my lover's quarrels, plural, with the world, but I make that one sustained quarrel all my life. . . . It's a long sustained quarrel." And this was not an easy film to come by. The libraries are filled with films produced by people who had the good and noble idea to go out and make a film about a personality, who thought that the personality would make the film. Bringing nothing to the problem but an interest in their subject the film-makers produced disasters. On the other hand we have the fictional writer digging up Freud, Pasteur, Anne Frank and making melodrama or kitsch out of fact. The rigorously biographical study, existing somewhere in between reportage and semifictional dramatization, has not been often achieved. It is hard to say that *Robert Frost* is a model, for none of these films should ape another. But it is an effective, moving document of a man in the last few months of his life, a man who appeared much in public (as the semi-official poet laureate of the Kennedy Administration) but whose private side was not well known. And, what is most important for my taste, he was a man as American as they come, who got away with the "feminine" art of poetry, who was known for his poetry, and praised and finally exalted for it; but also a man as interesting as his poetry—perhaps more interesting—through whom we could learn a lot about America. He had represented for me that part of America you have trouble finding these days behind the megalopolises—not romantic but colorful, not very polished, very outspoken and quite hard. Later on identified with New England (Ripton, Vermont), he was out of San Francisco—used to the political life of that city since his father was chairman of the Democratic city committee when Cleveland was elected. He tried reporting for three years, but wasn't very good at it and "gravitated to the editorial page." He tried farming but wasn't quite making it pay, so he drifted into teaching. "I think it came natural to do it. My mother was a teacher. . . . I never got called a poet till I was forty or so. And I always thought it was a praise word that I couldn't use on myself. . . . I don't know how I did it, or what would have happened if it hadn't come through somewhere in the end."

It would be the literary biographer's job to tell that story sometime; this film tells the story of Frost at 88, through his poetry, his reading it in public, and his talking about it in public and private. His career is quickly sketched in. Recognition in London in 1913, but by 1938 he thought he was finished. "He said that courage is the virtue that counts most," says Hughes in the narration and later Frost replies:

> A voice said, "Look me in the stars
> And tell me truly, men of earth,
> If all the soul and body scars
> Were not too much to pay for birth."

The film was first proposed by Stewart Udall, Secretary of the Interior, and President

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Kennedy is in part of it—presenting Frost with a medal, dedicating the Robert Frost Library at Amherst, speaking of him. Frost published 700 pages of poetry in 70 years of writing. He was largely responsible for saving Ezra Pound's life; Pound wrote a favorable review of his first book, but he was on Pound's side for other reasons than gratitude. He was old-fashioned enough to think that there is a relationship between health and form, that the "best way to settle [your troubles] is to make something that has form." Hughes and Terence McCartney-Filgate and Shirley Clarke went up to Ripton one weekend and shot Frost on his property there. "I knew a man who could take a scythe, a long slender scythe, you know, take a lawn and cut it just the same as a lawnmower. Lovely motion, lovely sweep. Beautiful mowing. Lovely time of day and all that." The scene is pastoral, but it is also here that we get a close look at an old frail man, out of the public eye, off guard completely, and altogether remarkable and likeable.

He was a tough man, a humorous man, an American, even an irascible American, and the film is a homage to him.

It was produced by WGBH, an educational TV station in Boston, in cooperation with Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Robert Frost's publishers. Shirley Clarke directed the two sequences at Amherst and Sarah Lawrence and some others before going on to *Cool World*. From there it was taken by Robert Hughes, film book editor for Grove Press, who had earlier been called in as writer-editor and who had previously collaborated with Shirley Clarke on *Scary Time* for UNICEF. Hughes worked with Charlotte Zwerin (as editor and associate producer) and McCartney-Filgate as co-director and cameraman, and personally credits them with much more than the credits say. The film, structurally, is a confrontation of two views of Frost—his public performance and his private thoughts, each observed by the film-makers, and commented on. About half the picture's 52 minutes is reportage of the two public performances—the one at Sarah Lawrence with a large appreciative crowd, the one at Amherst a seminar, a more awkward, intimate group. The film weaves in and out of them, using the sound track as a trigger for the other sequences, and sometimes just settling down to watch Frost in action—a performer with a great sense of timing, and also a man who is sometimes just muttering to himself—but knowing always that he is on stage. In the Vermont sequences he is on camera, he is sometimes putting on a show, but this is not the point. In the film these sequences give us a second flavor—the taste of a man alone with his thoughts, face to face with them, not always sure that they are enough of a bulwark against the facts of his experience, not sure that his 700 pages have done adequate justice to his experience. In the end waving his hand at them, turning his head away from them, but never really finishing with them.

It was not an easy film to make. You cannot direct a man like Frost, and yet the film has to have form, so this must come in the editing. What emerged, appropriately enough, is the seasonal movement of the year: we first see Frost as he goes back to open up the cottage in Ripton in the spring, to see what had survived the winter. (For the last 25 years of his life his headquarters was in Cambridge). The film ends with a fusion of the two threads—on the track he says farewell to his Sarah Lawrence "crowd," but we are watching him leave the Ripton cottage in the fall. It was the last time he was to see it. He died before they finished shooting.

At one point in his lecture Frost waves down below his rostrum. "I ought to tell you what you're seeing here on this side-show. This is a documentary film going on and . . . there've been two or three of them for government purposes and they've all been about me with a hoe digging potatoes or walking in the woods reciting my own poems. . . . This time we're going to have it right." It was more than six months after his death that they got it right.

If only this film could spark off others with

the right budgetary support, about other American subjects, we would not have to wait for the dramatists to work out the problems of fictional biography. And if this film gets the theatrical release it should, others may follow. *Point of Order* has been sold, and at time of writing is doing well. *Robert Frost* has been nominated for an Oscar. Time will tell.

—COLIN YOUNG

HARAKIRI

(Seppuku) Director: Masaki Kobayashi. Photography: Yoshio Mitajima. Music: Toru Takemitsu. Shochiku.

Here in Japan where prestige films tend to vanish from theaters into foreign festivals almost before they have a chance to be seen, the spectacle of one of these becoming a popular success or relatively so, warrants inspection. Indeed, so well received has *Seppuku* (released abroad now as *Harakiri*) been here, that the industry, geographically close and responsive to its audience, has followed with another film, *Bushindo Zankoku Monogatari*, also dealing with the breakdown of the samurai code.

Seppuku is the most recent work of Masaki Kobayashi, whose local reputation has largely turned on his multipart film, *The Human Condition, (Ningen No Joken)*, concerned with human values in the Sino-Japanese sector of World War II (in Manchuria). His earlier films, *I'll Buy You (Anata Kaimasu—1956)* about corruption in organized baseball, and *Black River (Kuroi Kawa—1957)* dealing with gangsters on the fringe of an American base, drew praise from Richie for their moral and cinematic sensibility. There is also some reason to believe that Kobayashi, as assistant director, more than Kinoshita, was responsible for the quality of *Narayama Bushiko*, a film notable for its transitions in a Kabuki manner (the set pulling apart) as well as in its use of song as an intrinsic narrative device. Its concern with plunging beyond a difficult social situation into more fundamental human relations is a theme congenial to Kobayashi.

Seppuku, despite its firm narrative line and brilliant sword-choreography, and engrossing as it is, is not by any stretch of the imagination a film one would think destined for a large audience anywhere. It has, of course, deep resonance for the Japanese mind, since it probes the native opinion towards honorable suicide. (The word "Seppuku" is the formal word for "harakiri." But there is no romantic byplay, there are no digressions, for each flashback bears clearly upon the main line, and no lightness, though no lack of irony. The images themselves are strikingly austere.

The wide black-and-white screen delivers us, after scanning the empty warrior court, the tutelary armor of the family ancestor presiding there, and the underlord (his hand only at first) of the family writing in his annals the events of the day to which we are about to be exposed, to the hero of the film, a bearded *ronin* (a masterless *samurai)*, approaching the enclosed structure.

It is a brisk October morning in 1626. The historical period is one of economic disruption and social confusion. Many samurai left masterless, not permitted by the very status they possess the chance of menial employments or beggary, live in poverty. These circumstances are themselves the ground of the code's collapse, for pressures of a new order assert themselves. And the nature of these pressures evokes a reevaluation of the dominant samurai code. At any rate, this is the focus of the film.

Everything at the warrior court is masculine and strict. The room and hallways are empty. Life is absent. Space is limited, clearly defined. We are "within." (The first flashback that takes us "out" seems inexpressibly light and soft, and allows breath, though less climactically than in, say, Bresson's *Condamné.*) And when the action turns to the courtyard, where most of the film takes place, the feeling of being hemmed in, by warriors arrayed and walls, is even more acute.

Shots are kept to middle-distance: we are to see as much as possible without too close an identification, at least till the climax. The

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It is a brisk October morning in 1626. The historical period is one of economic disruption and social confusion. Many samurai left masterless, not permitted by the very status they possess the chance of menial employments or beggary, live in poverty. These circumstances are themselves the ground of the code's collapse, for pressures of a new order assert themselves. And the nature of these pressures evokes a reevaluation of the dominant samurai code. At any rate, this is the focus of the film.

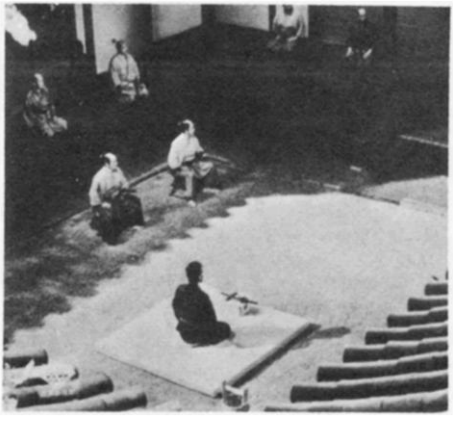
Everything at the warrior court is masculine and strict. The room and hallways are empty. Life is absent. Space is limited, clearly defined. We are "within." (The first flashback that takes us "out" seems inexpressibly light and soft, and allows breath, though less climactically than in, say, Bresson's *Condamné.*) And when the action turns to the courtyard, where most of the film takes place, the feeling of being hemmed in, by warriors arrayed and walls, is even more acute.

Shots are kept to middle-distance: we are to see as much as possible without too close an identification, at least till the climax. The

ronin who comes announcing that he wishes to kill himself in the company of his peers is told by the suspicious underlord that not many months before a much younger ronin had come there expressing a similar desire; he had turned out, when his request was granted, to be shamming. The bearded ronin merely smiles and reiterates his intention forcefully. The underlord, annoyed by his coolness and also trying to sound the man out, decides to relate the entire previous occasion.

This story is now told in a series of quick and poignant flashbacks, showing the arrival and pretensions of the young stranger, as pretty a young ronin as one could imagine. The boy is nonplussed, however, when instead of being welcomed for his brave intent and given a place in the court, as he anticipated, he is asked forthwith to prepare for seppuku. He backs down, or tries to, but he has no choice. Other key warriors at the court have discovered that his sword is made of bamboo! In short, that he has sold his most precious possession, by samurai standards, his birthright. Insult and an occasion for sport mingle. They decide to let the boy suffer the degradation of trying to kill himself with the useless weapon.

The scene is formal, ritual. Though he pleads for a respite, a chance to go home for a day or two, he is disdainfully rebuffed. He has no choice, nor have we. We, like the samurai watching, surrounding him, must participate in the self-slaughter, which, as it turns out, is relentless. It is as painful a few minutes, if that long (it feels much longer), as the screen has ever known: the temperature in the theater noticeably rises, eyes are averted, and I've even heard some youngsters giggle. This is Artaud's "theatre of cruelty" with a vengeance. But the scene (despite reactions, it is more suggested than actually seen, since close-ups of the boy's face predominate, with oblique angle shots to mark the decisive momentum), is the pivot of the film. This gruesome scene should, must, reverberate throughout the remaining scenes. For the film,



The courtyard in Kobayashi's HARAKIRI (*Seppuku*).

despite an ostensibly dialectical form of narrative, is essentially carried by the emotional pitch and its persuasion relies upon the ground swell that this early thrust establishes. It is not unlike the extended love-scene in *Les Amants,* censored though it generally was, which was required to give meaning to the studiously drab lives otherwise encountered.

The ronin, unlike ourselves, seems to be unmoved by the story and his intense serenity commands our renewed interest. Who is he? Why is he really here? The scene shifts quickly again to the ritual ground, the unrelieved white gravel yard. (The pace has moved faster than we expect to this point; its slowing down here moves counter to momentum but gives time for detail and clarification of purpose.) The underlord sits on the porch overlooking the scene, guarded by retainers, in front of a huge family crest painted on the back wall (instead of the Noh drama's pine of longevity is the sign of a dry well and a chrysanthemum.) And the ronin, on the low white platform in the middle of the yard, sitting formally before the ritual sword sheathed on its altar, faces the underlord and is literally the man "on the spot."

The body of the film is now largely a confrontation through revealing flashbacks between the two main figures. It is an engaged study of two points of view, with no

lack of subtlety, and we are made through careful shifts of the camera to weigh both sides, though our sympathies are unmistakably drawn to the ronin.

The seconds called for by our protagonist (in seppuku the victim has the prerogative of naming a second who beheads his doomed body) appear to be absent and are searched for. The ronin was the boy's guardian, we learn, and his father-in-law: they lived together. He has come to avenge the boy's death—but more than that, to expose the meaninglessness now of the samurai code.

Here the first flashback occurs that removes us to another world, a world more like our own, of daily cares and desires; it seems preternaturally lyrical, a dimension that deepens the action of the film conspicuously.

We follow the care of the bearded ronin for his two young charges and the increasing poverty and difficulty of their circumstances and the boy's increasing awareness that he must, in the face of winter, an ill wife and an ill infant, somehow provide. And we see how, out of the warmest human commitment, he foregoes the pride of position, risks his life in the fateful strategem, one that was successful for others.

Needless to say, the underlord gets impatient at the delays in securing a second, and as the ronin draws out these details. The situation becomes more anguished as more becomes known. And we ourselves feel the boy's terrible self-immolation alter from one of deceit and cowardice (for how could we know?) to one of bravery and humanity to one finally of transforming beauty. But the seconding samurai are not to be found. These are, as it is revealed, the very three who had particularly pushed the boy's death, who despised him most, made game of him, and who, scornfully, brought the body back to the poor family—in a sequence that prepares us, tightening our attitudes, for the final wordless release of action.

The dialetical center occurs when the lord contemptuously recalls the boy's being upset at the prospect of death. He "should have taken it like a man, faced his death, without excuse, like a true samurai." But the ronin says movingly that he is proud precisely because the boy *was* upset, "For even a samurai is a human being, with blood in his veins, and cannot live off mist . . . those who have never faced the difficulties of providing, under pressure, daily for the life of others, will not understand his hesitation, but what would they do in like situation? After all, a samurai's dignity is mere decoration."

At this the ronin reveals the reason for the absence of the three warriors. He tosses their topknots out upon the white gravel. They have feigned illness as their excuse, but as samurai, they should have committed suicide. With the third topknot produced (and each has its appropriate flashback, briefly but effectively presented) the unravelling commences in earnest and maintains a *kakeri*-like pace to the end. (The *kakeri* is the climactic warrior dance in a Noh play, in quick tempo.) The underlord, fearful and embarrassed, removes himself to a large dark empty room with a low ceiling and "listens" to the battle waged by the ronin against a host of guards outside. And it is a battle royal, that crashes through walls, splashes gore about, blotting the family escutcheon notably, and the ronin dispenses with quite a number of the foe, before the end. By then he has fought his way, though wounded, into the sanctuary where the dread empty armor and helmet and sword of the ancestral spirit is perched. In his extremity, and as if to prove the emptiness of the image, he tears it apart and uses it as a shield, until, ironically, a row of warriors confront him with muskets!—But just before they fire he applies the coup de grâce himself in the prescribed ritual manner.

The rest is a cleaning-up, literally. The debris and carnage of late afternoon, by the torchlight of evening, are quietly removed, the gravel raked smooth (as a Zen garden), the stains removed. The three absent warriors are sent instructions to commit suicide. Now the

underlord completes his annals, telling us, however, that to preserve the honor of his family he must omit the truth (what we have seen). The camera closes on the reconstructed warrior deity, more ghostly and hollower than before.

The film-economy here is suggestive of the Noh and it is a quite legitimate resource, to say nothing of being a stimulating one. The camerawork is apt, felt only when attention wants scoring. The editing is crisp and clear, tactful (i.e., neither arty by worrying a pretty picture into metaphysical sense nor slick with sudden splices and devices for shock effect). The music is also sparse, marking transitions, quiet moments, sustaining pitch, building drive, not melodic but accentual. There is the *biwa* (Japanese lute), sometimes subdued and whispering throatily and sometimes harshly jangling, and there is the *hari-ogi* (slapping fan used in Noh study) with its rhythmic snapping whack. The performances of Rentaro Mikuni as the underlord and Tatsuya Nakadai as the bearded ronin are excellent.

But the beauty of the film seems largely due to Kobayashi's underlying firmness of conception and prevailing spirit, by an unevasive concern for cinematic values. He speaks for human responsibility (without calling attention to himself in the process) as the pervasive human dignity, and tells us again that the local, if we sound it, provides the universal with whatever meaning it may have.

—Cid Corman

BILLY LIAR

Director: John Schlesinger. Scenario: Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall, from the novel by Waterhouse. Photography: Denys Coop. Music: Richard Rodney Bennett. Continental.

Nine A.M. in a BBC studio. A suave middle-aged disc jockey puts a smile on his face and begins to introduce a housewives' request program. . . . *Is this going to be another dollop of British satire?* The camera takes a long look at a semidetached suburban house, and then moves off past row after row of identical houses, apartment buildings, more identical houses. . . . *Is this going to be another hunk of British north-country "realism"?* Cut to Tom Courtenay, daydreaming in bed while sour-faced mam and dad yell at him from downstairs to bloody well get a move on. . . . *Is this going to be another apologia for an angry young man beset by uncomprehending barbarians?*

The answer to each of these questions turns out to be: yes and NO. The clichés of Room-at-the-Toppery are there, but well salted with reality. We're allowed to feel somewhat more than accidental sympathy for mam and dad, and there are glimpses of family fondness amid the naggings and yellings. Billy's boss, an undertaker by the name of Shadrack, seems to invite satire in the monolithic style of the young psychiatrist in *Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*—and yet Schlesinger avoids much of the temptation, granting Shadrack a surprising leaven of human dignity.

The fact is, Billy himself is not at all the conventional angry young iconoclast. His discontent is neither divine nor demonic, but all too human. Unlike Courtenay's hard-shelled, tough-willed runner, the character he plays here has a sensitive shell and a pliant will. As a would-be writer, Billy can complete a song lyric but hardly begin a novel. As a would-be rebel against the routine of home and job, he continually falls back on that trusty but ineffectual weapon, fantasy.

Billy lies on impulse, to make life more interesting—giving himself a nonexistent sister or depriving his father of an existent leg, pretending to be blind or overdramatizing the difficulty of getting rid of 270 trade calendars he neglected to mail. Then he lies to protect the first lie—or to replace it when exposed. And whenever he can he retreats into a dream land called Ambrosia, of which he is the benevolent and beloved dictator.

In his previous—and first—feature, *A Kind*

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In his previous—and first—feature, *A Kind*

of Loving, Schlesinger showed a talent for quiet but perspicuous realism. Unfortunately, the script was filled with realisms of the plodding kind, and the two realisms together bogged each other down. The script of *Billy Liar* offers a better foil for Schlesinger's talent: it sprawls all over the place, with a plot that ties itself in knots, and yet at heart (like Billy himself) it is quite serious. Schlesinger rises to the challenge. He treats the fantasy, the comedy and all the rest of the sprawl with gusto, but also with a strong sense of realism that binds them to the serious theme.

Realism is a word of many meanings. In Schlesinger's case, it is both livelier and more solid than in most so-called realistic films. Take the use of real locations. In many films (*A Taste of Honey* was one of the worst offenders) the locations are treated picturesquely: too artfully framed, torn from their own context and forced into the alien context of the screen play. But Billy Liar's city has a life of its own that continues off screen, and the lives of Billy and his friends weave easily in and out of it.

Billy strolls past a football stadium. Some of the spectators are visible in the background, cheering an unseen game. The next moment Billy is inside the stadium as dictator of Ambrosia, and the crowd is now cheering him. Here Schlesinger uses external reality as a springboard for Billy's fantasy—but that is just one part of his range. Late at night, Billy sits in a hospital waiting room: his grandmother is dying. Billy has planned to leave for London by a midnight train, but he is not sure whether he really wants or is able to go. Schlesinger holds his wide-screen camera still on this moment of stillness, while his microphone concentrates on a web of tiny sounds—whisperings, coughs, creakings, footfalls. Here the quiet, controlled realism invokes the reality that Billy has to face—the one big decision that he can neither lie nor daydream his way out of.

With his command of different modes and moods of realism, Schlesinger can give the film an immediacy and conviction that its script sometimes lacks. The most crucial example is the character of Liz, the one person to whom Billy can tell the truth. Waterhouse and Hall have crammed so much incident into their script that apparently they had no room left to show how Liz and Billy became friends or why this down-to-earth, free-as-air, delicious girl should be so fond of him. Perhaps no demonstration was possible, for Liz is a bit too much of a dreamgirl, a *dea ex machina* who is not only the antithesis of Billy but also the agent of his climactic decision.

If Liz *is* a dramatic device, she certainly doesn't look it. Julie Christie, who plays the role, has tremendous natural presence, and Schlesinger lets that presence come across as fully and freely as possible. He introduces her in an extended sequence in which she walks and skips through the city, followed by a zooming and panning camera. The sequence has practically no dramatic significance at all. Who is the bearded man in the store whom Liz stops to greet through the window? We don't know and we don't care. He is just an excuse for Schlesinger to give us a closer view of Liz, to rivet our attention on her gangling gracefulness as we strain—like the bearded man—to hear her barely audible voice through the plate glass. This vivid introductory sequence gives Liz enough momentum of reality to carry her through the more mechanical aspects of the role.

If Schlesinger is stimulated to brilliance by weak spots in the script, he responds quite differently—but with equal aptness—to the strong points. The most impressive of these is the whole of the ending, from the hospital sequence onward. By contrast with most of the film, these last ten minutes or so are pitched in a quiet key—much of it the quietness of suspense. Billy arrives at the railroad station early and goes into the cafeteria. Here as in the hospital, there is a finely orchestrated web of background noises, but they are sharper—the rapidly muttered advice of a mother to her departing soldier son, the steaming and clanking of distant trains. There are brief outbursts of louder sounds—an encounter with

one of Billy's ex-girlfriends, a passing group of boisterous travelers—which emphasize the midnight deadness that returns afterward. And as Billy's moment of decision arrives, Schlesinger makes almost nerve-racking use of the clunk of coins inserted into a milk-dispensing machine. Since it would be unfair to reveal what Billy finally decides, I'll only say that his last fantasy—simple, quiet and brief—has the force of a knockout blow.

I nearly began this review by saying that half of *Billy Liar* is a failure. This may be true, but it's certainly misleading. Where the film misfires, it does so from attempting too much — attempting, above all, to sustain a rich mixture of comedy, pathos, gaiety, bitterness, bravado and all the other ingredients that can make up an imaginative young man's world. The ingredients are out of balance, but Schlesinger prepares them with such skill that the dish turns out, even so, to be both tasty and nourishing. If Schlesinger gets as challenging a script for his next film, I'm sure he'll make this praise of *Billy Liar* seem like overpraise. He is one British director who can be both profound and exciting.

—William Johnson

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

Director: David Lean. Producer: Sam Spiegel. Photography: F. A. Young. Screenplay by Robert Bolt, based on "Seven Pillars of Wisdom," by T. E. Lawrence. Music: Maurice Jarre.

Millions of printed words about "Lawrence of Arabia" have gone by since his death in 1935, and all of them have tended to blur what faint line of demarcation there ever was between fact and fancy in the life of the twentieth century's most uneasy adventurer. Film's contribution to the enigma—physically and visually an outstanding motion picture—is also the newest source of folk-history about Lawrence. History tends to blend with popular or literary treatments of it, and with Lawrence there has been no exception: in fact he speeded the process along in his own lifetime, helping (or goading) writers into creating elements of his own myth, as well as doing part of the job himself. Sometimes this was done by emphasizing one side of him: the quiet archeologist from Oxford; the white-garbed, jeweled-daggered knight on a camel of Lowell Thomas's book; the military genius of Liddell Hart's biography; the shy, ubiquitous ex-colonel Private Meek of Bernard Shaw's play *Too True To Be Good*; the tortured, introspective leader of men of his own *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*; the ascetic, masochistic recruit of his service chronicle, *The Mint*.

T. E. Lawrence permitted no film about him during his lifetime, telling Sir Alexander Korda—who had placed G.B.S.'s "Private Meek" (Walter Hudd) under option for the purpose—to wait until he was dead. Only a year later he hurtled to his death in a motorcycle accident (seen now beneath the opening credits of the cinematic "Lawrence"), but Korda made no film. Nevertheless, the legend kept growing as new Lawrences kept emerging—the pathological liar and exhibitionist of Richard Aldington's "biographical enquiry" of 1954, the archetype of the horror-haunted twentieth-century intellectual in the 1955 biography by the French historian Jean Beraud Villars, and the physically and spiritually broken recluse of Terence Rattigan's 1960 play *Ross*.

T. E., characteristically deprecating his desert adventures, once told his brother Arnold that the most appropriate film medium for *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* would be a Disney cartoon. This might actually have been true in the 'thirties, and a decade ago his adventures might have been transformed in a Middle Eastern "Western." We now live in the age of the film spectacular, however, and one critic has ventured to call the film the first spectacular for adults. Whatever the virtues of the film's stunning desert photography, its Lawrence bears much the same relation to Col. Thomas Edward Lawrence that Elizabeth Taylor's Cleopatra does to that famous lady, whose record and reputation have been subjected to nearly a hundred times as many years of enrichment and improvement by the

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The new-model, bloodthirsty Lawrence.

civilized arts.

Film producers and critics alike excuse tampering with history in the name of "dramatic condensation" and "poetic license," pointing to such earlier practitioners as Shakespeare and Sophocles. Audiences forget these liberties—if ever they knew about them (which Richard III do we know?)—and take home, etched upon their memories to a depth proportionate to the work's dramatic power, a new set of "historical facts." And our new set of facts about Lawrence, *via* Robert Bolt's literate, dramatic film script, includes a new diagnosis of the riddle of Lawrence's character.

The film's casual attitude toward measurable fact was appropriately symbolized by the casting—as the puny-figured, prognathous Lawrence—of a handsome screen idol nearly a foot taller than history's hero. Since far more people saw the film each month than have read the books by or about Lawrence, it will not take very long until the image of a Lawrence of heroic stature will obscure the evidence of his service physical examination. Still, in another but related sense, the film has been faithful to the testimony of Lawrence's service contemporaries—that (in spite of his unprepossessing figure) he was one of the most charismatic leaders of men since Joan of Arc.

In *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, near the successful end of the march to Damascus, Lawrence writes of encountering, in the village of Tafas, Turkish atrocities of such ghastliness that in revulsion at the sight he gave orders to exact revenge if the guilty enemy units could be overtaken. "By my order," he writes (Ch. 117), "we took no prisoners, for the only time in our war." Lawrence never forgave himself, although at that point no order of his could have stopped the enraged, vengeance-seeking Arabs. From the Tafas episode the Bolt script builds a portrait of a Lawrence driven by (although ashamed of) blood-lust.

Regularly Lawrence tried—and sometimes failed—to check the Arab killing of captured Turks, an impossibly difficult task. To the Arabs, after centuries of tribal rivalries, plunder and murder of the enemy were basic to warfare. British officers who accompanied Lawrence testified later to his efforts to prevent wanton killing both in, and on the way to, Damascus. Wherever it was possible—in desert country often devoid of food and water and shelter—Lawrence insisted that his men take prisoners as well as booty. But he chronicles also that "the Turks did not take Arab prisoners. Indeed, they used to kill them horribly; so, in mercy, we were finishing those of our badly wounded who would have to be left helpless on abandoned ground."

Possibly Bolt, turning from *A Man for All Seasons* to his homework for the film script of *Lawrence*, came upon Villars' biography. Villars suggests that T. E.'s wartime activities "filled him with horror as did the sudden flushes of cruelty which he often felt rising in him. He realized with fear that he had within him the stuff and tastes of a killer. . .," and paradoxically follows this with a tale from *Seven Pillars* which describes Lawrence, re-

connoitering alone far in advance of his lines, coming upon a Turkish soldier asleep. Awakened, the Turk gazed in panic at the pistol which T. E. held in his hand, and then looked desperately at his own rifle, which lay where he had left it, now out of reach. Lawrence said to him quietly, "God is merciful," and continued on.

The film "establishes" Lawrence's pathological sadism early, through his confession to General Allenby at their first meeting that he once led an Arab servant to his death in quicksand and executed another Arab with a pistol, and "didn't like" his discovery that he had actually "enjoyed it." According to Lawrence in *Seven Pillars*, however, the servant-boy Daud died of exposure at Azrak, when Lawrence was far away to the south. However Daud's companion Farraj is later mortally wounded, and (acting on prearranged agreement among themselves) rather than let him fall into Turkish hands—the Turks were then burning alive the hapless wounded they encountered—it falls to Lawrence to kill him. "I knelt down beside him," Lawrence recalled, "holding my pistol near the ground, by his head, so that he should not see my purpose; but he must have guessed it, for he opened his eyes and clutched me with his harsh, scaly hand. . . . I waited a moment and he said 'Daud will be angry with you,' the old smile coming back so strangely to his grey shrinking face. I replied 'Salute him from me.' He returned the formal answer 'God will give you peace,' and at last wearily closed his eyes."

Nevertheless, neither Farraj nor Daud is "Gasim"—who is executed by Lawrence in the film. This is apparently Gasim el Shimt, whom Lawrence does rescue from abandonment in the desert, and who is only referred to briefly afterwards. However, the "Gasim" of the film is telescoped with Hamed the Moor, who earlier (Ch. 21) had wantonly murdered Salem, of the Ageyl tribe, while they were on a journey with Lawrence. The Ageyl cried out for vengeance, and with a blood feud between the Ageyl and his Moroccans in the offing, Lawrence—his head aching with fever—"desperately" suggested a formal execution: "I told Hamed [in the film he does not know at first that the villain is the man he saved] that he must die for punishment, and laid the burden of his killing on myself. Perhaps they would count me not qualified for feud. At least no revenge could lie against my followers; for I was a stranger and kinless." The account of the killing—which, to his horror, Lawrence first bungles—follows. The task leaves his night sleepless, and sick with fever and horror, he has to be lifted into his camel's saddle as they depart the area in pre-dawn darkness. Only the fact that Lawrence describes everything—the majestic and the sordid—with graphic brilliance provides any excuse for the screen interpretation, since it can be argued that what one lingers over in horror is what—at least subconsciously—is actually appealing.

Necessary film reticences skimp another vital episode—the one upon which Rattigan based *Ross*. But Lawrence's capture, torture, and homosexual humiliation by the Turks is hardly material for widescreen color. Nevertheless, it was far more significant in terms of the motivation for T. E.'s later behavior than can be understood from a suggestive pinch and a beating, followed by being tossed into the street. Equally skimped—for less understandable reasons—is any picture of the real General Allenby, the only other major English figure not disguised in the film. Allenby becomes the stage English general, discussing confidential military strategy at the top of his voice in the officer's mess and talking to Lawrence as much about poetry and the growing of roses as about battle plans.

Emir Feisal, about whom Lawrence vainly centered his hopes for Arab unity, is an equally romantic figure. In reality a lover of Arab bards and Turkish gossip, he becomes the heir of the Arab intellectual zenith, musing to Lawrence that the medieval Arab city of Cordova had two miles of publicly lit streets at a time when London was still a village. His English guest adds, "And the Caliphs studied Plato when the Kings of England couldn't

write." Yes, sighs Feisal with romantic despair, the Moslems *were* a great nation nine centuries ago. Mildly (according to the screen directions) the film Lawrence suggests, "Time to be great again, my lord." The conversation is part of a manufactured episode early in the film which telescopes and romanticizes the scenes in which Lawrence visits the Arab chiefs as an inexperienced young lieutenant and comes away convinced of the military value of a general Arab rising against the Turks. The screenplay presents Sherif Ali at first (on practically no foundation whatever) as a jealous, narrow-minded rival of Lawrence's for influence upon Feisal (Ali's brother), and in a "Colonel Brighton" an amalgam of all the officers who found fault with Lawrence's schemes for developing and using Arab nationalism. Most misleading is the theatrically English name given the colonel, for he is compounded mostly of elements of the French Colonel Bremond, who saw France's colonial designs upon Syria jeopardized by any movement to unite traditionally splintered Arab tribes and clans and encourage national aspirations among them.

In a final, ironic distortion, the screen Lawrence becomes an unwitting traitor, not to the British, but to the Arab cause, for (supposedly) stupified with wanton slaughter that leaves his white Bedouin robes red, his arms bloody to the elbows, and his face twisted with fiendish joy, he allows Allenby and the British Army to march into Damascus while the orgy goes on nearby, losing the chance to seize, unaided, the symbol of an Arab Arabia. The implication that earlier occupation of Damascus would have thwarted an Anglo-French division of Middle Eastern spoils agreed to years earlier is naive, at best. The suggestion that Allenby and his troops cynically took advantage of Lawrence's alleged indulgences in sadism to reach Damascus first is false: an Anzac patrol entered the city fifty minutes before Lawrence's men, but this had no effect upon the situation, nor was it a result of the Deraa massacre. The portrait of Lawrence gleefully up to his elbows in gore is not "the madness born of the horror of Tafas" about which Lawrence has written, and the supposed emotional irresponsibility which sells out the Arabs at the moment before triumph is good film melodrama but not good history.

Since most names recognizable to Westerners have been changed anyway in the transition to the wide screen, it might have been best—except for the box-office—to have made a thorough job of the alterations, and not to have felt obliged to keep within hailing distance of history. But perhaps the "real" Lawrence had already vanished.

—STANLEY WEINTRAUB

THE FIANCÉS

(I Fidanzati) Director: Ermanno Olmi. Script: Olmi. Producer: Attilio Tonicelli for Titanus Sicilia, 1963. Photography: Lamberto Caimi. Music: Gianni Ferrio. Janus.

By a fluke I saw Olmi's second film, *The Fiancés,* without seeing his first, *The Sound of Trumpets* (*Il Posto*) which had a very short first run in New York, was included in Bosley Crowther's Best Ten of 1963 (bless him), came out again probably on the strength of that, but ran for only two weeks. Meanwhile *The Fiancés* had been shown at the New York Festival, where the reaction was much cooler than in London. (In the annual box-score of some 30 festival films among the *Sight and Sound* critics only Ozu's *An Autumn Afternoon* did better.) At the risk of alienating even further my American friends who did not like the last two Antonioni films, I have to side with the English. Maybe it is the puritan in me—liking all that bleak inaction. Better to be miserable than do anything you'd regret.

At a first viewing I was impressed, seeing an Italian story which could be transplanted without change of any but a few details to (say) Scotland or Sweden. After a second viewing I am even more impressed, more moved, and now think that this must be the most accurate and the best film about the working class yet made. Beside it, *Kameradschaft* in memory now seems like opera and

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the British films of the 'forties through the 'sixties like wild romantic dreams.

"But nothing happens!" It would be nonsense to hide the fact that with this film, as with the most recent Antonioni and with a lot of *cinéma-vérité,* we are in the midst of a debate.

I am moved by this tale, simple and determinedly unallegorical, of the strain which develops between a worker and his girl when he is offered a promotion to a new plant in Sicily for eighteen months, and the girl questions his motives for going. It is an empirical film, its experiences rarely profound, often quite banal. But the banality is there, not *instead* of a real event, but as a function of it. Scenes end abruptly, unresolved, as if the last shots of a conventionally developed scene were removed and we are plunged without resolution into the midst of the next. This is true to life. Events have no neat beginning or end. The mind can see them that way if one is in a formative mood. Otherwise real experiences are jostled together, unsatisfactorily. An example of this is when Giovanni, sitting alone in the streets of the small village which neighbors his plant, is accompanied only by a ridiculously small Fiat whose roof-speaker is advertising the loss of a wallet. He escapes into a church and observes a cleric chastising a group of children. A dog comes in and in a moment the children are rushing about, "helping" to get the dog out. Giovanni is amused. But the sequence ends with a general view of the action, not with his amusement. The next cut is to Giovanni in his wretched "private" room in an old apartment—leaning against the wall behind his bed, suffocating in the afternoon heat. The juxtaposition suggests the draining of joy. The immediate effect is truncated, but the over all emotionality of the film is increased.

I hoped, before seeing this film, while watching many of the recent *cinéma-vérité* examples, that it should be enough to find your way, through the cinema, to the event itself—face to face—and make the event speak for itself; selected and therefore (from the film-maker's point of view) of some interest, but not made to fit the dramatic cliché, and not "interpreted" by an excessive formalism. If *The Fiancés* does not work, then this theory does not work. The fact that *The Fiancés* moves me may not be very important—since I might have been lying in wait for a film to justify the theory. But I cannot believe this for two reasons. First, I do not want to believe it; second, I like formal movies too and like any movie in fact in which the film-maker has found a consistently personal way to present character and event which is illuminating and checks with my own experience of how people and events are. It is for this reason that I think *The Fiancés* is not an accident. When I say it could just as well take place in Scotland this makes it a certain kind of film—concrete enough to be true of its own characters, and abstract enough to be open to other local interpretations. This does not make it allegorical—it is simply of general application; a European realist film.

Olmi begins with an empty dance hall. The clientele and the two-piece band gradually arrive. A man scatters powder to slick the floor. This is slow and atmospheric. The American version uses this as a background for the credits. I wonder if Olmi wanted that. By itself it would be even slower and, in the conventional sense, more puzzling—what is going on that is so important we must watch it? The stage is being set, and the setting of it is part of the action. Giovanni and Liliana are then put in the scene—*mis en scène.* When the band begins the first on the floor are two fat and elderly women. The game begins. At this moment Liliana and Giovanni are drifting apart. Soon he will leave and it is only later, through letters, that they will say the things they are too tongue-tied and shy to say aloud. Olmi emphasizes this in two ways—first by contrasting the scenes of silence and doubt and mistrust at the beginning with the openness and relief of the exchange of letters. Both are shown speaking their letters, and cut as if listening to the other reading aloud. But also, after this change has been established, we see

Anna Canzi and Carlo Cabrini in THE FIANCÉS.

Giovanni, on a whim, calling Liliana, and he is no looser of tongue than before. But now his awkwardness will be acceptable to her.

It is in these last scenes that Olmi's characters are most obviously revealed as simple and banal. Their problem may be one of education, but less dubiously comes from temperament and a false notion of what is expected of them. The arrogant silence of someone who prefers to believe that he (she) should be understood without words, has in the end to give way to speech. As the cafe philosopher says in *Vivre Sa Vie*: if we don't talk, we could not live. This is as true for Liliana and Giovanni as for Nana and Brice Parain. And in *The Silence* of Bergman, Ester and Anna must finally say to each other what their conduct has said already to us. This is not dramatic redundancy—exposition in the eighth reel—unless you look at these films as being conventionally about action which grows continually in a straight line instead of proceeding in circles which never really close.

Olmi comes from documentary and his method places his characters in situations which allow him to document his scenes. At first Giovanni is isolated by his newness from the other men, soon they are confiding and advising—better not bring down the family if you want to save money; the locals used to rent low but they soon caught on; the Sicilians do not take to factory work—they have been too many generations in the fields. Giovanni walks along the salt flats, greets a peasant who is rigging his windmill but is ignored. Too set in their northern ways, and too unimaginative, the workers create no kind of social life around their work, and although Giovanni is promoted to skilled worker he has no contacts with the engineers. It is all blander in words than in Lamberto Caimi's camera. At the end Giovanni is caught in a downpour. The peasants watch from the shelter of their huts while Giovanni stands against the wall of a new apartment building, protecting his head from the rain with a board that juts out like a smaller version of the thin balconies stuck onto the stucco wall.

Olmi's subject is also loneliness, but the loneliness could just as well belong to people who are never separated as Giovanni and Liliana are. So in that sense the alienation is again similar to that of the two sisters in *The Silence*. Their presence in a foreign place, where they do not speak the language, emphasizes their isolation. But it would exist anywhere. Olmi makes us wait for a smile, but when it comes it is just as engaging, and finally just as haunting as the charm of *Jules and Jim* (please forgive me, Pauline Kael), because it has just as much to do with the human condition. Too big a price to pay for this information? Perhaps not.—COLIN YOUNG

BYE-BYE BIRDIE

Director: George Sidney. Producer: Fred Kohlmas. Screenplay: Irving Brecher, based on the musical of the same name. Columbia.

The exploitation of the absurdity and mayhem of popular culture is in itself a pop standard, a set-up whose points of reference and "attack" are as easily picked up by any audience as a hummable tune. As a popular stage musical, *Bye-Bye Birdie* depended on this standard for its "satire"—the quotes are used to point to the by now common equation of satire with

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sauciness. Even mere sauciness, however, provides for some critical examination, or "distancing," of a subject, enough to allow an audience a halfway decent perspective on it, as well as a margin of free-and-easy response. Such margin and perspective have been blocked out of the film version, whose effect, depressingly like that of a pop painting, is a neat reminder that nowhere is the unexamined life less feasible than on film.

In the show's "Normal American Boy" number, for example, a team dependent on the fortunes of a pop singer about to be drafted wards off reporters' questions about the singer's lechery, bastardy, drunkenness, and draft-dodging with a vehement, uncoördinated spiel about his loving-kindness, his brotherly interest in actresses, his exotic and/or homey places of birth and his normal-boy's eagerness to get at ". . . those dirty Jerries . . . or Japs . . . or whoever it is this year." Thus a critical commonplace about the vapidities of publicity is worked for a laugh or two, as the material gains tone and definition. This bit is left out of the film, as is the "Spanish Rose" song in which Rosie, fed up with the attempt of her fiancé-team-mate's mother to fix her in the image of "hot-blooded" tomato, sings and dances free of the fix in an all-out parody of it. But, then, Chita Rivera, who played Rosie, is not in the film either—and the difference between the stage and movie versions may be summed up in the difference between her assertive style and the numb-and-void glossness of her film counterpart, Janet Leigh; in the dance sequence of the Rosie number, which the film retains, Leigh hasn't obviously any notion of what the thing's about. Instead of fighting for freedom, she remains the stunned ingenue, a wide-eyed abstraction in a black wig.

More of a surprise is how the role of the fiancé becomes curiously secondary, too; amidst the decor of the wide screen Dick Van Dyke moves ill-at-ease, a blear-eyed abstraction. Television's fetching boy-man next door, the handsomely gauche suburbanite perfectly at home on the small screen, is here withered, pouchy, and uncertain—he looks throughout as if he's had a bad night.

The characters who take over the film, who manage now and then to move into the foreground of the décor, are those with the knack of throwing their sex around while at the same time meeting the demands of the all-subduing abstractness. As Van Dyke's bossy mother, Maureen Stapleton shows Glorious Method to be equal to the demands of Glorious Technicolor. Like pop itself, Method has generally depended on mood rather than intellect; intimacy rather than assertion; acceptance rather than illumination; the frenzied, symbolic type rather than the problematic, distinctive individual. Method gets motive across without the interference of thought. It is simplistic and existential-like in its drive for nothing-but Sincerity.

The narcissism of the Mom never becomes challengingly obnoxious, is never asserted to the point where it has to be confronted or critically viewed. Rather, Stapleton's tough pushing about is held, mostly, within the bounds of being "a part of things," one more fixture among the rest of the décor and so beyond question quite unexistential-like, the film presents a world without choice, or any hint that the pathos of choice is a fact of life. This lack of elemental pathos in the current Hollywood productions is what makes their glittering surface so mercilessly hard.

Stapleton waggles slightly free of the surface because her Method-sure narcissism succeeds in posing a character not altogether sexless. The pop singer Birdie breaks away from abstractness even more for he, of course, plays the Prince of Sex and his song, "It's Gotta Be Sincere" is the strongest, and most remarkably defined thing in the film. On a publicity stunt before being drafted, Birdie has come to Sweet Apple, Ohio, to bestow a televised kiss on a typical fan. As the plot carefully explains, this one kiss will represent the Prince's parting blessing on his collective fandom ("Ah, a symbol," cried Ed Sullivan, the

perfect catcher of such points.) Like a god out of the blue, or like one of the cycling demons out of *Orpheus*, Birdie zooms across the grounds of Sweet Apple's Town Hall and up onto its steps where he prepares to show his stuff to the assembled townsfolk. The high school boys stand by, callow, eunuch-like, hands in pockets, envious. The mayor and his gaunt wife stand by baffled, not knowing what to expect. The school girls themselves are all set for orgy.

In the show, Birdie's song is led into by a shrieking query from the girls about How He Does It—as true-blue vulgarians they seek to know what Birdie's angle is. To which he responds with his line on Sincerity. The comic "distancing" of the line respects the audience's own consciousness, thereby releasing the audience to respond to a yoking of moral inanity with bumptious tunefulness in the fun-for-all spirit common to such musicals.

In keeping with its aim of nothing-but stupefaction, in its dumb imperviousness to implication, the film naturally omits the "satirical" lead-in. To even grosser effect. For abruptly and aimlessly sent up into a lighter-than-idea abstractness, the Sincerity pitch can go for only one thing: a squarely done, noncommittal pseudo-sex orgy.

With his first strum and hum, Birdie lays low the mayor's wife, who, prone on the cement, keeps flapping her legs back and forth in their purple skirts. Returned to throughout the number, this close-up shot is more startling and obscene than anything you will find in the ripest of art films. As Birdie sings and wiggles his way along the great crowd, everyone falls in one orgastic faint after another. When the last note sobs away on the Sweet Apple breeze, the camera brings to the foreground a perpendicular monument, which looms over the grounds and all the fallen as symbol of phallus triumphant.

A most fleeting win, needless to say, for Birdie's style is polarized by his opposite number and actually, key antagonist, the intended recipient of his kiss, and seemingly most reverent fan, the bouncy yet unbounced Kim, the teen-age sweetheart of all America, who looms perforce as the film's real heroine and most dominating presence. And the only question that matters in the film is: Will she or won't she receive the Kiss? Chief obstacle is Hugo to whom she's pinned. Hugo represents all the boys of Sweet Apple and it will be their loss if she gets kissed. They insist that she forego her long-dreamed-of chance in order to keep intact what the union between her and Hugo signifies. What it signifies is rather nicely pointed up in the occupations of the sweethearts' Dads: Hugo's is an undertaker, while Kim's is a manure salesman. Here, as always in Hollywood pictures, even at their most abstract, the deadliness of suburban life is unwittingly assumed. It is clear that Dad is devoted to manure on two levels: on the job he slings manure, and in his leisure he revels, like the rest of his family, in the pop-manure slung at him. Suburbia, then, equals a Hugo-like deathly sexlessness and a Kim-like deathly vulgarity. The suburban team is composed of specialists in death and the crapulous; the opposite team of Birdie and his publicists specializes, less complicatedly, in the merely crapulous. Mergers between the two camps are therefore easily arranged and the bridge between the two is none other than Science.

When the Dad learns that the songwriter is a frustrated biochemist (in the show he's a frustrated English teacher) who has developed a new pep pill, he invites the latter to join him in the business of marketing it. The song man accepts for he can now, much to his fiancée's glee, sling his wares from the more reputable and safe of the camps (and be an acceptable image of success like the owner of the notorious night-club who, whatever his club may be, himself is duly plain).

With the techniques of suburbia, pop, and science thus pooled together on the side of the undertaker, the cavorting Prince of Sex is left to stand on the other side, alone. With the prize, Kim, still to be fought for between him and them. In the last round, as Birdie is about

to bestow his kiss, Hugo leaps to the stage and knocks him flat: the Kiss of Sex downed by the Sock of Death to save the paragon of Sweet Apple for—what fate?

The audience in the New Jersey town where I saw the movie burst into applause at the great sock; it evinced the same relish an audience shows in the finale of a Bible spectacular when it leans back with a contented sigh of "bad girl!" "bad girl!" as the lead dancing girl, whose grunts and gambols it had been intent on viewing for a couple of hours, at last gets hers by a falling pillar in the neck or stray arrow in the gut.

What, in contrast, does an audience feel about good girl Kim, and the nature of her triumph? Who and what is she that all America reveres her?

Flashed motif-like through the film are close-ups of Kim's teasing eyes to suggest a "mysterious girlhood" quality. A cat's green-blue, these eyes suggest, however, neither outright coyness nor a mysterious seeking femininity but the rich, savoring, self-containing stare of a winner, the sure bet in any contest. Kim, too, must stand alone: the immobile champion and goddess of an unconscious world and non-civilization where whatever is, is crap. With or without team support we can be sure this cat can take on any bird and come out ahead. Or any Hugo, whose "boss" she's shown to be, of course, in her exchanges with him—the sweetheart as boss-girl. She's naturally boss of her family too—the queen of Pop. And the boss of any audience—the beaming goddess of its stasis. In the highly touted finale she smiles in solitary splendor from a wide screen of blue, the inviolate homespun sexpot of the billboards, and sings "Bye-Bye Birdie" while making, in her flourish of adieu, what looked to some of us in the audience very much like an up-yours gesture, grandly aimed not only at Birdie and Hugo and Rosie and Dad and Mom but at the audience who also, this time, get the shaft. Which is only to be expected from gods or goddesses, however benign.

—T. J. Ross

FREAKS

Produced and directed by Tod Browning. Story: Tod Robbins, from his novel "Spurs." Scenario: Willis Goldbeck and Leon Gordon. Dialogue: Edgar Allan Woolf and Al Boasberg. Photography: Merrit B. Gerstad. MGM, 1932

First released in this country in 1932, Tod Browning's *Freaks* quickly vanished into the maw of the 42nd St. movie houses, there to be spat out as indigestible by puzzled audiences who found other Browning films like *Dracula* and *Mark of the Vampire* more comprehensibly horrifying. The film then went to Europe, where it slowly gained a reputation that gradually filtered back to the United States, raising some interest but few revivals. Finally, at the 1962 Cannes Festival Repertory, *Freaks* was selected to represent the horror film category, and later in the year played for the first time in Great Britain. Now, after more than 30 years, it has come back to the country of its birth.

Since most revivals are disappointing, let it be said from the outset that *Freaks* will disappoint no one but the mindless children who consume most horror films. *Freaks* is, in its own way, a minor masterpiece. Certainly it is macabre, and the final sequence in which the freaks stalk and mutilate their victims is enough to scare the hell out of anybody. But the point is that *Freaks* is not really a horror film at all, though it contains some horrifying sequences. The conventional horror film is one of our responses to the nonhuman element in the world, the incomprehensible objective world that threatens to render life meaningless. The movie monster is the embodiment of the nonhuman, the irrational, the inexplicable. It is through his destruction by fire, sunlight, or crucifix that we are purged of our own fear of the nonhuman. We must therefore identify with the victims of the movie monster, and find our release in the monster's ultimate death. In *Freaks* we are asked to identify with the ostensibly nonhuman, to turn against what we normally think of as our "own kind" and to

to bestow his kiss, Hugo leaps to the stage and knocks him flat: the Kiss of Sex downed by the Sock of Death to save the paragon of Sweet Apple for—what fate?

The audience in the New Jersey town where I saw the movie burst into applause at the great sock; it evinced the same relish an audience shows in the finale of a Bible spectacular when it leans back with a contented sigh of "bad girl!" "bad girl!" as the lead dancing girl, whose grunts and gambols it had been intent on viewing for a couple of hours, at last gets hers by a falling pillar in the neck or stray arrow in the gut.

What, in contrast, does an audience feel about good girl Kim, and the nature of her triumph? Who and what is she that all America reveres her?

Flashed motif-like through the film are close-ups of Kim's teasing eyes to suggest a "mysterious girlhood" quality. A cat's green-blue, these eyes suggest, however, neither outright coyness nor a mysterious seeking femininity but the rich, savoring, self-containing stare of a winner, the sure bet in any contest. Kim, too, must stand alone: the immobile champion and goddess of an unconscious world and non-civilization where whatever is, is crap. With or without team support we can be sure this cat can take on any bird and come out ahead. Or any Hugo, whose "boss" she's shown to be, of course, in her exchanges with him—the sweetheart as boss-girl. She's naturally boss of her family too—the queen of Pop. And the boss of any audience—the beaming goddess of its stasis. In the highly touted finale she smiles in solitary splendor from a wide screen of blue, the inviolate homespun sexpot of the billboards, and sings "Bye-Bye Birdie" while making, in her flourish of adieu, what looked to some of us in the audience very much like an up-yours gesture, grandly aimed not only at Birdie and Hugo and Rosie and Dad and Mom but at the audience who also, this time, get the shaft. Which is only to be expected from gods or goddesses, however benign.

—T. J. Ross

FREAKS

Produced and directed by Tod Browning. Story: Tod Robbins, from his novel "Spurs." Scenario: Willis Goldbeck and Leon Gordon. Dialogue: Edgar Allan Woolf and Al Boasberg. Photography: Merrit B. Gerstad. MGM, 1932

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discover in the humanity of the freaks a moral center for the universe.

The routine plot is merely a structure upon which Browning can work to achieve this remarkable reversal. Hans, a circus midget, is engaged to Frieda, another midget, but is attracted to Cleopatra, an Amazon high-wire performer. Cleopatra is enjoying her own affair with Hercules, the circus strong man, but encourages Hans because of the secret pleasure she finds in ridiculing him. When she discovers that Hans has inherited a large fortune, she plans with Hercules to marry the midget and then poison him. The plot is discovered, and the other freaks hunt down the villains and mutilate them, transforming Cleopatra herself into a freak.

Apart from the normal players, most of the roles are taken by real circus freaks assembled by Browning from all over the world—dwarfs, midgets, pinheads, bearded ladies, human worms, Siamese twins.

The crucial scenes in the movie are those which show the daily routine of the freaks, the individual adjustment of the freaks to their handicaps being almost clinically observed. We watch the armless woman drink beer from a glass grasped by a prehensile foot; while the human worm, both armless and legless, lights his own cigarettes with his teeth. Having selected a new dress, the pinhead Slitzy flirts charmingly with the clown—Wallace Ford, one of the few normal characters who treats the freaks as equals, and acts as a link between the two worlds. Slitzy's normal womanly reactions are matched by those of Frieda, whose romance with Hans is so managed as to appear more mature, more dignified, despite squeaky voices and stiff gestures, than the comparable affair of Cleopatra and Hercules. It is through these and similar scenes that Browning effects the inversion of values that lies at the heart of the film.

The freaks, as the movie is at pains to point out, live in a world of their own, created by themselves, but open to all of their own kind and to any normal person good enough to accept them. They are very much *in* this world, determined to make the best of it. It is only the nonaccepting attitude of some of the normals which precipitates the crisis that finally turns those normals themselves into freaks.

What, then, are we to make of this as a "horror" film? Can the freaks be seen both as objects of sympathy and as nightmarish incarnations of the nonhuman? Browning does evoke both responses, creating a tension within the viewer which could ruin the movie but which in fact enriches it. The use of the freaks for the creation of macabre effects is skillful enough, but always, until the last scene, mixed with a warm appreciation of their humanity.

For instance, we are first introduced to them during an outing in the country, when the camera, peering through the trees, comes upon a grotesque round dance of hopping, squirming, crawling things. Then, as the camera draws closer, the monsters resolve suddenly into people—"just children," as the normal woman with them explains—transformed from agents of terror to objects of compassion within moments.

Then there is the justifiably famous wedding feast, with Cleopatra and Hercules the only normals present, a ritual celebration of freak culture. Leading a macabre chant, "We accept her, we accept her, gobble gobble, one of us, one of us," a dwarf dances across the banquet table bearing a huge communal wine bowl, offering it at last to Cleopatra to drink from as her token of induction into the world of the freaks. There can be no surprise at Cleopatra's revulsion at this point, but any sympathy one might have for her collapses as she later humiliates Hans in front of his friends by riding him about on her shoulders. Once again the openness of the freaks is contrasted with the intolerance and false security of the "normals."

Certainly the final sequence in which the freaks hunt down and mutilate Cleopatra and

Hercules is as ghoulish as anyone could wish. Amidst a jumble of wrecked circus trailers, lightning splitting sky and sound track, the ground a muddy ooze, the darkness swarms with crawling, hopping shapes, lit grotesquely by momentary flashes, all humanity seemingly erased.

This is our last image of the freaks, and perhaps it may be counted an artistic mistake. If the picture is really an attempt to evoke sympathy, can it end with the freaks transformed into monsters?

It can, and does, because the ground has been so carefully prepared that the audience must, at the end of the film, react against its own revulsion. We are horrified, but we are simultaneously ashamed of our horror; for we remember that these are not monsters at all but people like us, and we know that we have again been betrayed by our own primal fears. Had the picture ended on a more idyllic note we might have been self-satisfied, stuffed with our own tolerant virtue. Instead, we are plunged back into the abyss of our own sick selves, to recall once again that the most fearful inhumanity we can know is our own. With this final scene, then, the double image is complete.—JOHN THOMAS

R. M. HODGENS*

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bizarre murder mystery—with no more bizarre aspect than the five deaths detailed therein, the most grotesque of them being James Coburn's smothered with his head in a plastic bag—with Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn doing no more than playing themselves and doing it marvelously. Grant ages beautifully and this performance is a paradox: It is the first time his age—he in his mid-50s—really shows, and he isn't slowed down a bit by it. Age achieved gracefully, without senility, is delightful to watch; this is Grant's best acting job in years, or, at least, since his last Hitchcock, *North by Northwest*, of which *Charade* is reminiscent in more ways than Grant: in its chase format; in its slender but nonantiseptic heroine; in its subtle comic relief and smooth-as-silk lead villain, here one and the same as impersonated, now hilarious, now beautifully despicable, by Walter Matthau, a superb character actor with no delusions of grandeur. Henry Mancini's score fits in; in fact, that is the film's secret, never mind the inadequacy of description: everything "fits," everything is "right." Everything, with one minor exception—Coburn's performance, the most obnoxious this year or last. All else is all right. Just entertainment, to be sure, but splendidly executed. I hope Hitchcock sees it.

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4 For Texas. Having encroached on the reputations of Lewis Milestone (*Ocean's* 11) and John Sturges (*Sergeants* 3), the Sinatra clan now drags Robert Aldrich through the dirt and only his hardiest fans can emerge unscathed. Basically a return to the Errol Flynn days of Warner Bros. yore, the film suffers from vacillation of intent revealing Aldrich's futile effort to salvage his first script from Clannish in-jokes. The opening scene, a stagecoach holdup, is Aldrich at his visually grandest, utilizing four top photographers (Ernest Laszlo, Joseph Biroc, Carl Guthrie, Burnett Guffey) and a top second-unit director (Oscar Rudolph). Charles Bronson is a splendid villain and, for a while at least, Dean Martin seems on the road back to his best characterization, the good baddie in Hawks' *Rio Bravo*. Then indecision sets in. Aldrich stalwarts—Marjorie Bennett, Wesley Addy, Dave Willock, Paul Langton—make token appearances. Arthur Godfrey "guest stars" and the Three Stooges have a scene. In a film that cries for Max Steiner, Nelson Riddle's score melodramatically emphasizes the wrong points when it isn't Mickey Mouse-ing the others. Aldrich, nervous that his first script (co-written with Teddi Sherman) is too visual and not enough verbal, hastily adds dubbed-in lines back at Culver City. What began as a serious "fun" picture ends up more fun in the making than the viewing; a "throw-away" movie, as it were. Thus is achieved Aldrich's absolute worst picture, surpassing *Sodom and Gomorrah*, heretofore an unthinkable achievement.—DANIEL BATES.

Lilies of the Field. Consider the singing nuns of the desert. Since "everybody wants to give," they cajole and cudgel everybody into realizing it, and then the Lord provides. Their principal victim, Homer Smith (Sidney Poitier), is too willing for sympathy; he always wanted to build something, so he builds them their chapel. Before he goes off singing happily (but badly dubbed), he manages to trick Mother Maria (Lilia Skala) into saying "thank you," too. Of course, it might have been worse; they might have seduced him to their Romish ways. The stars occasionally make this uncommonly unappealing tale come alive, but most of the time Miss Skala is merely fierce and Poitier hangs desperately by his charm. The nuns' colossal gall is matched by producer-director Ralph Nelson and perhaps by adapter James Poe as well: the end of their ninety-four minutes of bare competence is signified by the word "Amen."

Love with the Proper Stranger. Rocky (Steve McQueen) got Angie (Natalie Wood) pregnant, but then they get acquainted and, after considering abortion, behave properly. Apart from its powerful plea for legalizing the operation, the film is a comedy in the "warm, human" manner. Under Robert Mulligan's direction, the cast seems uncertain of the warmth and humanity of Arnold Schulman's screenplay, but Elmer Bernstein's score makes it quite plain, especially when the title-song comes on the radio just before the young couple's initial plans prove abortive.

Mary, Mary is notable among the more recent filmed comic plays (*Critic's Choice, Irma la Douce, Take Her, She's Mine, Toys in the Attic, Under the Yum-Yum Tree, Wives and Lovers*) for the impression it creates that adults made it. On one hand, it is the *Long Day's Journey into Night* of comedy (though it is no longer than 125 minutes): the camera keeps getting in the way; one feels that one ought to be able to see the entire stage. On the other, it does not often leer, and the bright lines that fall flat are merely that, not insults to the intelligence. Unfortunately, it's easy to see why Bob (Barry Nelson) and Mary (Debbie Reynolds) split up and why they get together again. Both of them continually behave as if they were on a stage. It would be trying for anyone, even in so large an apartment; but obviously the two were made, if not necessarily for each other, for no one else. The play is by Jean Kerr, Richard L. Breen

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