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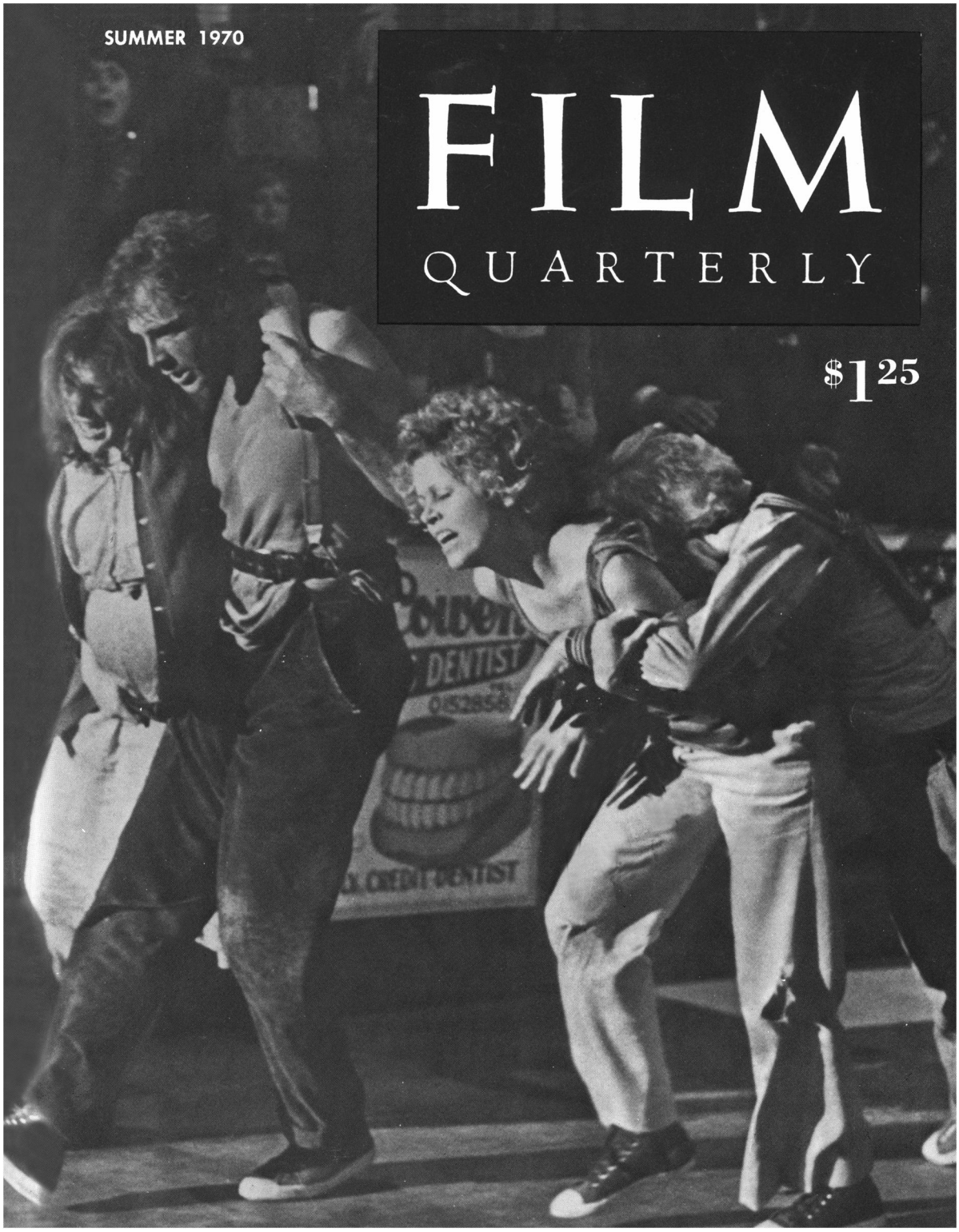

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Kinopraxis (50¢ from 2533 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley, Ca. 94704) is a broadside publication; its first number is devoted to very extensive translations from Godard's interviews during the past three years. Whatever you think of Godard's recent films, it is impossible not to try to come to terms with his ideas; and this publication, with its excellent English renderings by one Jack Flash, is the best available documentation of what Godard has been thinking lately.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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JOSEPH McBRIDE AND
MICHAEL WILMINGTON

The Private Life of Billy Wilder

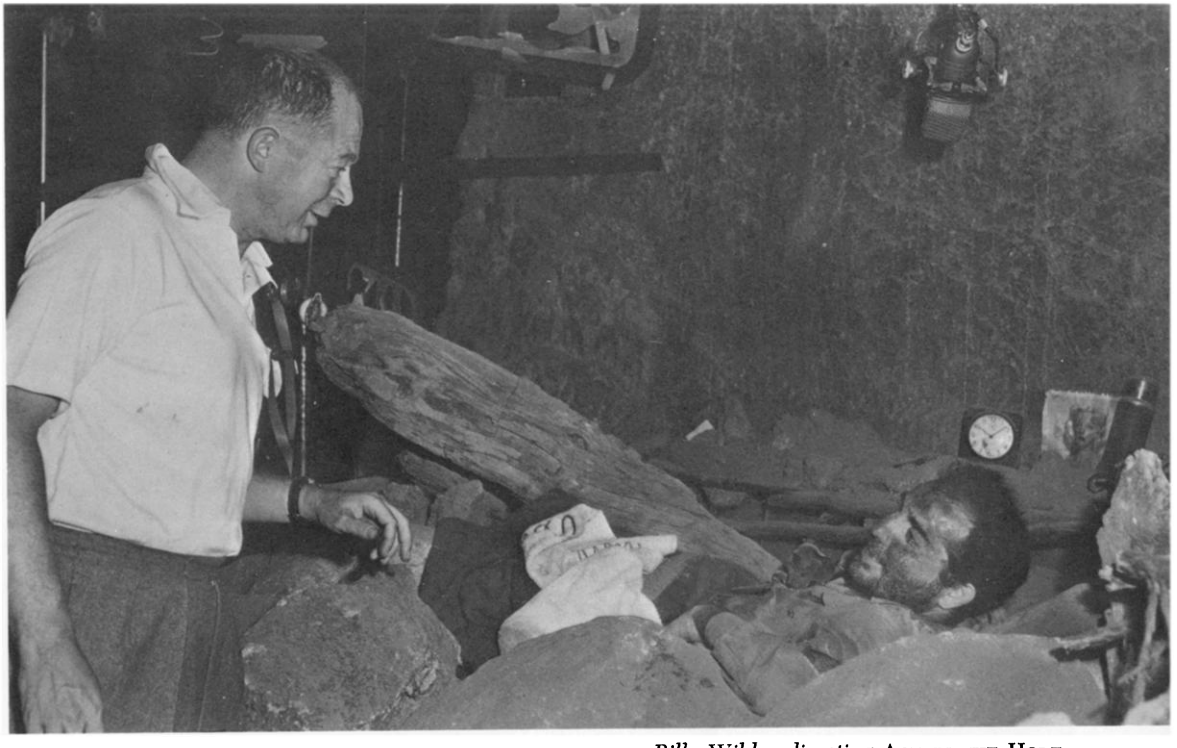
"There is no such thing as a comedy."
—WILDER

What is Billy Wilder serious about? To interviewers, he professes himself a modestly clever showman with no "deep-dish" aspirations. More privately—as evidenced, perhaps, by the large picture of Ernst Lubitsch hanging on the wall above his desk—he seems to cherish an ideal of grace and elegance. His detractors correctly find that he lacks Lubitsch's mellowness and go on to conclude, in Andrew Sarris's words, that he is "too cynical to believe even his own cynicism." Others accuse him of being a secret sentimentalist, or worse, an entertainer who spoils the fun by sneaking across little messages about human rottenness. The most damning criticism, though, is that he has "contempt" for his characters.

What made Lubitsch great was his capacity to stand outside his characters without caricaturing them. Wilder slams away at his targets, piling on the ironies as cheerfully as Hitchcock spins off plot-twists. He ridicules the young Communist in *One, Two, Three* by having him shout "From now on it's Piffl against everyone and everything!" but the satire strikes so close to center that the gag sticks in our throats. Wilder makes nihilistic sport of every political and moral idea and ideal held by each of the conflicting characters, and his gags about Nazis are surprisingly flippant for an Austrian Jew who lost members of his family in Auschwitz. Wilder's profusion of gags seems to mask a desperation—a fear, perhaps, of telling the truth about his own emotions. If everything is foolish, then nothing is unbearable. (We recall Neitzsche's words, "A joke is an epitaph on an emotion.") Only in the superb, unjustly slighted *Ace in the Hole* does Wilder give full vent to the disgust buried deep beneath his blasé exterior.

The popular and indeed quite beguiling Wilder image has been summarized in two recent books, Axel Madsen's *Billy Wilder* and Tom Wood's *The Bright Side of Billy Wilder, Primarily,* neither of which rises much above the level of dinner-table japery. Wilder's quipster posture, unfortunately, also encourages a wise-guy approach to his films. It is easy to pick at his view of life, to call him a junior-grade Swift; these books do nothing to answer such accusations. Neither goes beyond a "you-won't-believe-*this*" attitude toward his outrageous plots and characters to uncover the man himself. His considerable talent is hardly touched upon. Perhaps the darker Wilder of *Ace in the Hole* can be introduced as his defense. It may not possess the multi-levelled dexterity of his masterpiece, *Some Like It Hot,* but it is an unguarded glimpse into Wilder of which he speaks warmly in his interviews—"the runt of my litter," he once called it.

Wilder's forte is the great American con-game. In practically all of his movies (original stories and adaptations alike) the plot revolves around some sort of swindle. On the most harmless level the deception is a romantic intrigue, as in *Sabrina* and *Love in the Afternoon.* More culpable are the husband of *The Seven Year Itch,* ineptly attempting to cheat on his wife, and Jack Lemmon, the young executive on the make in *The Apartment,* lending his apartment as a base for his boss's extramarital affairs. From



Billy Wilder directing ACE IN THE HOLE

there we move on to the dipsomaniac in *The Lost Weekend* and the gigolo of *Sunset Boulevard,* moral weaklings trapped in situations in which they must lie to live. And the scale increases until we finally reach the murderous couples of *Double Indemnity* and *Witness for the Prosecution,* the secretive Nazis of *Five Graves to Cairo,* and the conniving reporter of *Ace in the Hole,* who builds his career on the plight of a man trapped in a cave.

In Wilder's view, sex and money are inextricably linked. His characters use sex to obtain cash and position and involve themselves in frauds to get sex. Sometimes, however, greed and lechery conflict, and the whole scheme blows up—as in *The Fortune Cookie,* when the supposedly paralytic Lemmon can't restrain himself from making a lunge at his beautiful, bitchy wife while the insurance investigators are watching, or in Lemmon's mad jealousy after he settles down as Shirley MacLaine's pimp in *Irma la Douce.* Even compromises are compromised. This kind of mordancy is often charming but sometimes, in more serious situations, makes Wilder's attitude seem repulsively petty. A more generous director such as George Cukor scores his points against Hollywood phoniness in *A Star is Born,* but the film has an understanding of the need for illusion and a maturity toward the love-relationship that makes the romanticized muck-raking of *Sunset Boulevard* look juvenile. Wilder uses the sex-greed conflict as a comment on human frailty; nature won't even let people be *evil,* just weak. Only in a few cases is he entirely sympathetic to their swindles—at the very lowest level, where they do little harm, or when the characters are actually trapped in a situation which has robbed them of choice: William Holden and the other POW's in *Stalag 17* or the two musicians fleeing from the mob in *Some Like It Hot.* Wilder simultaneously indulges in an irresponsible delight in the intricacies of deception and a curious moral sense which almost always leads him to condemn his characters for their weakness.

And it is perhaps too simple to suggest that Wilder's central characters are all con-men; usually there is an unholy alliance of sorts involving an innocent and a corrupt partner. We

see this relationship in its most obvious form in *Double Indemnity* and *The Fortune Cookie,* both of which revolve around insurance swindles, with one partner, an innocent, romantic dupe, exploited to another's advantage (and the innocent in *The Fortune Cookie* has an innocent *he* exploits). But this perverse partnership is also present in, for instance, the friendship of Tony Curtis and Lemmon in *Some Like It Hot* —Curtis is constantly bilking and frustrating his friend. Wilder's is a world of sophisticated pimpery, and in *Irma la Douce* he goes so far as to present the whore and the pimp as the innocent, natural hero and heroine, an idea he had already toyed with in *The Apartment,* with the same actor and actress.

In general, Wilder's point of view is that of an innocent fascinated by the world's corruption and attempting, with some success and a great deal of comic tension, to join in on it. But the innocence is his ideal, and he ultimately returns to it (as in the memorably boyish ending scene of *The Fortune Cookie,* with Lemmon and his black buddy tossing a football in the hazy deserted stadium) or else works out an appropriate retribution, frequently death, for his most absorbingly repellent characters. Wilder's material is almost always serious, and his approach almost always farcical and ironic. Like his winsome hero and heroine Lemmon and MacLaine, he wants to be loved. In Wilder we can see perhaps one of the most interesting examples of a conflict between box-office values and uncompromising intentions. He works hard to come up with genuinely happy endings for most of his films, feeling that the audience deserves "a little bonus at the end because they sat still for what we had to tell." He is making exactly the films he wants to make, but there is a continual tension between his darker fascinations and his sense of audience communication—which probably accounts for his curious charm. When Wilder "goes too far," as most critics said of *Kiss Me, Stupid,* it may be because he has misjudged how much fooling with depravity and horror his audience will sit still for. A partial reason for that film's failure, and for the utter disaster of *Ace in the Hole* (which had to be retitled *The Big Carnival),* may well have been the presence of aggressive rather than sensitive actors in the central roles. As a British critic noted, "When this singularly dispassionate man makes a film without infallible charm stars, like Jack Lemmon or Marilyn Monroe, there is an appalled pursing of lips and wrinkling of noses, as though he had made a nasty mistake, like a puppy that isn't quite house-trained." Wilder's humor, like all great comedy, springs from threatening situations. "Good taste" is a joke to him, because he plunges the audience into the sordid and the unbearable.

A secondary but pervasive Wilder "touch" is his cynical-romantic use of movie legends. Like Lenny Bruce and Terry Southern, Wilder likes to graft show-business argot and mannerisms onto the outside world. In almost every one of his films, there is a playful recalling of the movie past, often re-enacted by one of the original participants. In a way, Wilder is a quintessential fan. When he refers to silent movies in *Sunset Boulevard,* it is less the quotation the younger French directors employ than an exposé, giving the audience the voyeuristic pleasure of penetrating beneath the surface, of seeing demi-gods at play. In "exposing" faded glamor even while succumbing to its seductiveness, Wilder is again supplying the metaphor of the con-game. (This probably accounts for what James Agee diagnosed as a condescension toward silent movies.) Wilder exhibits a sort of *saftig* Pirandellianism when he has Monroe, Marlene Dietrich, and Dean Martin play mockeries of themselves in several of his films; when he makes up Barbara Stanwyck to look like Dietrich and has her play "Lola Dietrichson" in *Double Indemnity;* when he has Tony Curtis spoof Gary Grant in *Some Like It Hot* and James Cagney recreate the grapefruit scene from *The Public Enemy* in *One, Two, Three.* Sometimes the worm turns—in *Some Like It Hot,* Edward G. Robinson Jr. flips a coin *à la* George Raft in *Scarface* and Raft, angered, snatches away the coin.

Wilder's conception of life as a game, with the swifties on one side and the law on the other, may also account for his fondness for sports. He often names his characters after ath-

letes, especially after college football players. A football game is the perfect stylization of the con-game; it is played out in the open, enforced rigorously by uniformed officials, it is action through grace and strategy—but the underbelly is gambling and commercialism. Wilder would probably enjoy reducing life to the rules of sports (or of card playing, another of his obsessions).* His twin ideals seem to be the innocent whore and the innocent athlete, livers of a life at once instinctual and encircled with corruption, an irony which he, the clever pimp, can enjoy. Shirley MacLaine in *Irma* and Ron Rich, the black football player in *The Fortune Cookie*, are variants of the same character.

Pimp and whore work out their balancing act between innocence and evil with two other typical characters in attendance—the policeman, instrument of society, and the morally vacuous "observer." The pattern varies considerably from film to film, however; sometimes both are present, sometimes they are combined into one unnerving character. The observer usually functions as both a refuge and a goad for the hero—witness the bartenders in *The Lost Weekend* and *Irma*, Erich von Stroheim's butler in *Sunset Boulevard*, the spineless editor in *Ace in the Hole*, the tongue-clucking Jewish couple in *The Apartment*. The observer is the voice of conscience, a more wrenching but less urgent character than the voice of authority—a gallery of types that includes Edward G. Robinson's paternalistic boss in *Double Indemnity*, Frank Faylen's creepy orderly in *The Lost Weekend*, Charles Laughton's driving barrister in *Witness*, and Cliff Osmond's snide detective in *The Fortune Cookie*. This figure is often emotionally involved with the pimp, either by protecting him or by reproving him. And in rejecting the representative of normality (who can often be seen as a father-figure), the pimp is risking total alienation; to return from the abyss, he must domesticate his whore, or abandon her. Vice is fun, says Wilder, but you'll always get caught. For a notorious cynic, he has a remarkably moralistic attitude, rather like Fellini's.

*This may explain the most incongruous of Wilder's projects, *The Spirit of St. Louis*. Charles Lindbergh probably appealed to his latent hero-worship.

II.

"Some joke!"
—George Raft's dying words
in *Some Like It Hot*

Some Like It Hot opens in one of those lurid vintage Warner Brothers nights, saturated with death and hip cynicism. This gayest of Wilder's comedies, his most highpowered piece of gag creation, hovers constantly on the edge of the macabre. The first things we see are a hearse, a gun battle, and a raid on a speakeasy fronting as a funeral parlor. Before long we have edged into the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, a scene of straight-faced brio and cold carnage capped by the immaculately shod "Spats" Colombo (Raft) kicking a toothpick from the mouth of a well-ventilated corpse. The psychotic intensity of the backdrop throws the boisterous vulgarity of the blue humor into a kind of limbo between innocence and depravity. The movie's ostentatious artificiality—the outrageous coincidences that keep the plot moving, the filthy stream of *double-entendre*, the many obvious grabs from old movies—all this seals us off from the desolation lurking in the wings. Seesawing between nightmare and farce, Wilder keeps a heady jump or two ahead of any kind of reality.

You have to go back to *Stalag 17*—also rife with transvestite jokes—to find a similar contrapuntal use of gags and backdrop, or a more extreme justification for the characters' irresponsibility. Joe and Jerry (Curtis and Lemmon), the accidental witnesses to the massacre, are dead ducks unless they flee to Miami disguised as women, an act which calls up curious resonances of *Midnight Cowboy*. Their only options are death or transvestism. They choose the fate worse than death. Joe exploits women's dress to heterosexual advantage, but Jerry camps up his role, giggling and shrieking like a slapstick drag queen. Their sexual dissonance may have been suggested to Wilder by the tensions in the Martin and Lewis comedy act; there

is even a little joking innuendo in their musical instruments. Joe plays a tenor sax and Jerry thumps along on a big, maternal bass fiddle whose case is riddled with bullets.

The Chicago third of the movie plays gags against the existential terror of gangsterism; the Miami two-thirds sends up something even more terrifying, the blurring of sexual distinctions. The movie winds up as a frantic erotic roundelay. Sugar (Marilyn Monroe) is out to hustle a millionaire; Joe and Jerry are both after Sugar but are handicapped by their transvestism; Joe disguises himself as a millionaire, wins Sugar, and acts as Jerry's pimp; Jerry winds up engaged to a real millionaire, the ineffable Osgood Fielding III (Joe E. Brown). The movie ends with the four of them speeding off into the sunset in Fielding's motorboat after Fielding greets Jerry's declaration of masculinity with that classic punchline, "Well, nobody's perfect."

Once again, there is an elaborate in-joke substructure. The obvious influence is Howard Hawks's *Scarface,* which Robin Wood perceptively places with Hawks's comedies because of the hero's state of arrested development. Wilder lifts from the earlier, greater film the dandified hoods, George Raft and his coin-flipping *schtick,* the ritualistic massacre, and even the joke about illiterate thugs and the opera ("Us? We was wit' you at Rigoletto's"). He plays with the familiar Hawks motif of the sexually aggressive female and the shy male, with Curtis repeating—round glasses, faint lisp and all—that absently suave Grant character from *Bringing Up Baby* and *Monkey Business.* He lifts the Monroe gold-digging chanteuse from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and even repeats the joke from *Monkey Business* about Grant recognizing Monroe from her legs. The transvestism recalls Hawks's own favorite among his comedies, *I Was a Male War Bride,* also with Grant.

The directorial influences in Wilder's films are less straightforward than his parodies of actors; they are more in the nature of a private game. He assimilates anonymously, like the warrior eating the heart of his opponent. He makes *Some Like It Hot* a Hawks anthology; he loves Lubitsch, so he makes *Love in the Afternoon* in the Lubitsch style; he admires Stroheim, so he emulates his fatalism, even to the point of having Stroheim personally set up the last shot in *Sunset Boulevard.* But when he actually does bring a director on camera, the effect is always equivocal. Hero-worship is tinctured with a bit of professional oneupmanship. He shows us either someone like Cecil B. DeMille, whom one doubts is a real influence and probably just brings to the screen his status as a big Hollywood Personality, or else he plays a black joke on reality by having Stroheim play a director-turned-butler or Otto Preminger play a Nazi in *Stalag 17.*

Wilder's flippancy toward plot and characterization in *Some Like It Hot,* droll as it is, only underscores the fact that he shares what Leslie Fiedler diagnosed as the shortcomings of many American story-tellers: a proclivity for edgy sex and violence and an inability to deal maturely

with love and death. His source, *Scarface,* deals with love and death and even dares to face a situation of threatening currency with equanimity. Wilder gingerly places quote marks around the action. His limitations, minimized here by the film's deliberate artificiality, became pronounced in the more ambitious and realistic *Ace in the Hole.*

III.

"If you want to tell people the truth, you'd better make them laugh or they'll kill you." —Bernard Shaw

The reporter in *Ace in the Hole* is an unmitigated son of a bitch. The unusual vehemence of the film perhaps stems from the fact that Chuck Tatum (Kirk Douglas) is presented as cynical and his actions presented as heinous. A man suffers torture and eventually dies—far different from most of Wilder's other victims, who seem to allow themselves to be used. The actions of the gigolo in *Sunset Boulevard* are certainly cruel, for instance, but he is vindicated somewhat by the fact that he is hurting himself more than he is hurting the woman; he at least adds some excitement to her life. And even Leo, the victim of *Ace in the Hole,* plays along. Tatum wins his friendship by leading the "rescue" operations, and Leo is naively thrilled by the tumult: "My picture in the paper? No kidding?" But the injustice is monstrous and totally unprovoked. It is in the nature of things for the strong to prey on the weak, but for the strong to prey on the helpless adds a dimension to Wilder's vision.

The sexual aspect of the story is ferocious. Leo's sluttish wife is overjoyed when he falls down the hole—she's rid of him at last. The excitement seems to stimulate her sexually, and she throws herself at Tatum, who uses her to seal the bargain. When Tatum kisses her, his hand in large close-up grasping at her platinum hair, Wilder dissolves to the big drill "pounding and driving towards Leo" (the radio announcer's words). Even the title has a faintly anal ring to it, and the descents into the cave have implications not only of the underworld and

the id but also of the female organ and the womb. Wilder comes right out with the undertones in the obscene ditty warbled by a cowboy singer to the thousands of spectators outside the cave:

> We're coming, we're coming, Leo,
> Leo, don't despair—
> While you're in the cave a-hopin'
> We are up above you gropin'
> And we soon will make an openin'
> Oh Leo!

Wilder's exposition of the events is not merely clever, it is a shrewd commentary on human nature. The way, for example, that the golden goose is killed. First Tatum bribes the sheriff (by promising to make him the hero of the "rescue") into drilling from the top of the mountain instead of going through the cave opening, thus delaying the rescue by a week so the story can be built up. The sheriff forces compliance of the construction foreman, a worried and rather gentle man, by threatening to bust him to truck driver. It becomes a matter of his life's work against Leo's life, a hard choice. Then, after several days of drilling, Leo gets pneumonia. Tatum decides to have him taken out the easy way, but it's too late—the drilling has dislodged the structure of the cave, making rescue through the entrance impossible. So Leo dies. The narrative has the purity of a mathematical formula, abetted by the almost documentary veracity of the physical details and the characters' behavior.

Even more audacious than the sexual satire are the connotations of blasphemy. Tatum builds his story around the angle of a "curse" put on Leo by the Indian spirits inhabiting the mountain, which is known as The Mountain of the Seven Vultures. Leo believes in the curse, and Tatum encourages him. But later Tatum's glibness backfires, and the curse takes on a strange reality. There is a grim moment when Leo, maddened by the constant pounding of the drill, tells Tatum, "It's enough to wake the dead." And when Leo is being given the last rites, Wilder cuts to an extreme close-up of Tatum on the words, "Bless me, father, for I have sinned." Finally, when Leo dies, Tatum mounts a crane platform and rises high into the air, overlooking the crowd like a god as he ascends to the top of the mountain. His sermon is brief: "The circus is over . . . " Wilder is not implying a dormant religious sense awakened in Tatum. He is invoking instead the violation of taboo.

Cynic that Tatum is, there is something that affects him, some remnant of fear in his nature that surfaces when his actions get out of control. Wilder is usually tolerant of almost anything his characters do, and there is only the merest iota of religious satire in his other work. But the religious aspects of *Ace in the Hole* are the vehicle for his deep revulsion at Tatum's actions. This, perhaps, and not *Stalag 17*, is Wilder's concentration-camp film. The arrogance which is so captivating in Wilder's other heroes is chilling in Tatum, but what is more chilling is that everyone lies down and plays dead before him. Wilder has more in common with that other Jewish humorist, Franz Kafka, than he would care to admit.

Perhaps the difficulty with some of Wilder's films is not "sentimentality" but a moralism which tends to overstate its case. The self-disgust exhibited by the gigolo in *Sunset Boulevard* is essentially a moral waste action, and the "pastel" flavor of the prostitution in *Irma la Douce* was no doubt intended as a reaction against heavily emotional treatments of the subject. Wilder skimps seriously on the "innocent" in *Ace in the Hole,* a young reporter fresh out of journalism school who is corrupted by Tatum's brash sophistication. The ease in the boy's change from an idealist to Tatum's hanger-on implies that he was shallow from the beginning. Which is the point, of course, but it does indicate a limitation in Wilder's perspective. What would he have done with a strong idealist? The editor is also a weak idealist, questioning Tatum's actions while doing nothing about them. One dismisses as jejune the complaint that met *Ace in the Hole* at the time of its release ("an unfair portrait of journalism"), but it is true that the film's case tends to be loaded. For Tatum's scheme to work, everybody involved had to be a push-over, either corrupt or naive.

Though Wilder shows an admirable tenacity in pursuing his premise, he builds his case in a way that Stroheim or Lubitsch, true cynics, would not. There is little sense in Wilder of human potentiality—as there is in Stroheim's McTeague and Trina in *Greed*—only a sense of more or less acquiescence to the rottenness of life. A true cynic (to be distinguished from a mere skeptic) has a conviction of the *uselessness* of life, a feeling in no way incompatible with grace, grandeur of spirit, and sympathy. The destruction of McTeague and Trina does not cancel out the value of their brief period of humanity. It indicates that such happiness can never last, not that it cannot exist. *Ace in the Hole* appalls but fails to move—*Greed* is profoundly moving—and remains a moral "demonstration." On that level it can be faulted for not opening itself to all the possibilities of human response.

Perhaps this analysis of Wilder gives the impression that he is pretentious. God forbid. As he once said, "If there's anything I dislike more than not being taken seriously, it's being taken too seriously." He would be the first to admit that *Ace in the Hole* should not be praised merely because it was a failure with the public; perhaps they were right in objecting to the insult. But if Wilder does not reach greatness with *Ace in the Hole,* he comes close enough to justify the comparison with *Greed.* His vision is perhaps too limited to permit its extension to an entire society; when he restricts himself to an

enclosed group (gangsters and entertainers) in *Some Like It Hot,* there is no friction between attempt and achievement. *Ace in the Hole,* for all its power, suggests that Wilder's talents are better attuned to the purely ridiculous than to the appallingly ridiculous. But what gives his comedy the urgency of a judgment on life is the blackness at the core of his heart. On with *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* . . .

ALAN ROSENTHAL

The Fiction Documentary

INTERVIEWS WITH THE MAKERS OF *A MARRIED COUPLE*

Though it is not yet in regular U.S. release,* A Married Couple *is already widely known as one of the most important of recent films using cinéma-vérité techniques. Where Allan King's previous film,* Warrendale, *was a remarkably intense portrait of life in a center for disturbed children,* A Married Couple *traces several months of a marriage in crisis: tensions, hang-ups, joys. Richard Leiterman's camera catches humdrum moments, revelatory moments of intimacy, and shattering fights. As edited by Arla Saare, the film is alternately funny, savage, and moving. The use of nonscripted, unstaged material to arrive at a fictional film is perhaps the central problem of film-making today—it raises difficult philosophical, technical, artistic, and personal issues. The following interviews bear out the originality of the approach in* A Married Couple, *and show something of the differing perspectives brought to even a small-scale, highly personal production by the creative individuals taking part.

THE PRODUCER-DIRECTOR: ALLAN KING

I was born in Vancouver, B.C. in 1930. I went to the University of British Columbia and took Honors Philosophy. Then I drove a taxi for nine months, went to Europe for a year and a half, traveling, hitchhiking, the sort of thing that one did then, and finally got a job in television in Vancouver as a production assistant. I did live television for two years, but in fact after six months switched primarily into film. The first film was *Skid Row,* then three or four more in Vancouver. Then I left Vancouver.

What were your jobs in these films, director, producer, production-assistant?

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What were your jobs in these films, director, producer, production-assistant?

Yes, director. We were very lucky out there because there weren't very many experienced people in the country and television expanded more rapidly than the availability of trained personnel. I was also heavily involved in film societies in Vancouver when I was a teenager, so one got to see just about everything that was of interest to see. After the Vancouver stint I went abroad and started independent production, first in Spain, then settled in London, and built up an office and production group there. I came back to Canada in 1967, and I've been settled here ever since.

How does your group work? As a cooperative?

More or less. Basically we all function as freelancers, except that we work together, are grouped together in one House, and pay a small percentage of our fees to the House. We all have shares in the House, and the House owns the equipment.

How did the concept of A Married Couple *arise? What was the first sparking point for it?*

I'm not really sure. I don't think there is ever a single point. I suppose the first point of real action was when I was pretty well to the end of *Warrendale,* and wondering what I was going to do next. I knew there was a spot open for an hour-and-a-half film on television at that time, and I thought I would like to do a film about a marriage, about a married couple, recording them over eight to ten weeks—to get some sense, in a way that I don't think has been possible before, of what happens between a couple. One knows that from one's own experience, one knows that from a certain kind of observation of friends which is pretty limited, one knows it from parents, from literature, drama, the arts, but those are all different kinds of knowledge, all useful in their own particular way. I thought it would be fascinating and illuminating to stay with the couple and observe.

Most particularly, I was concerned with a marriage in crisis, and wanted to observe the kinds of ways in which a couple misperceive each other, and carry into the relationship anxieties, childhood patterns, all the things that make up one's own personality and character. But these inevitably distort the other person, and make true intimacy or true connection difficult. As that difficulty gets greater, conflicts and tensions develop in a marriage so that it becomes less and less rewarding. That is what I wanted to explore. It was something I had been absorbed with since childhood. It had struck me, even when I was a kid in the thirties, that marriage didn't seem to be the kind of rewarding thing in reality that I read about in books, or fantasized was going to be mine when I grew up. It puzzled me that people always seemed to get less from marriage than they wanted, and less than they would like. My own parents separated when I was a kid; perhaps that gave me a particularly exacerbated view of marriage and made me rather more skeptical or more pessimistic or more aware of, and anxious about conflicts and difficulties in marriage, than say a child whose family had been fairly secure.

As the concept grew, did you have any particular friends or individuals in mind who you thought would be suitable for the film?

Not exactly. Billy and Antoinette, whom I ultimately chose, were possibilities, as were many other friends, but first I started talking to a lot of couples I got to through psychiatrists, social workers, and various counselors. Altogether, I talked fairly intensively with about ten couples. I didn't, during that early period, talk to Billy and Antoinette. Finally I decided I would talk to them and see if they were interested.

What was their reaction to the concept of living with a camera?

They had been fascinated for a long time with the idea of being in a film. At one stage or another in their lives both of them had dabbled in amateur or semiprofessional theater, and many of their friends are in the arts, so it always interested them as a possibility. When they knew I was making a film about a marriage in crisis, or a marriage in conflict, theirs was not in that critical a stage, or at least they didn't acknowledge it. When I finally approached them, Antoinette was ready to be involved in the movie, but Billy was very reluctant. He said, "Our marriage isn't in that much of a crisis at the moment, so you would have to make a

film simply about an everyday marriage." My own supposition was that the conflicts I sensed to be there, were there, and that they would emerge.

One is very conscious in the film of the style of repartee, and wit of the dialogue which goes on about nonessential things. Was this in the back of your mind when you ultimately chose them?

I guess it was the major factor—it was the plus that offset the minus that I was concerned about, plus the fact that they can be very funny, and very playful with each other, verbally anyway, and so that was a great advantage. I think a film like this, unrelieved by any lightness, could be very powerful, but it could also run the risk of being overpoweringly depressing and heavy.

Can we go now to preshooting production problems, planning, that sort of stage.

I had already chosen the cameraman during the year I was looking for couples and raising money. I had Richard in mind and Chris to do the sound. I needed Arla Saare to do the editing. I seem to work in a similar sort of pattern every time I set up a film, or once a film starts to go. Once I've had the notion and decide that is what I want to do, I work out a budget. The first thing to see is whether the project is financially possible, and then where am I going to get the money. So I was occupied with that pretty early on, and went through various attempts, and routes to finance the film.

First, it was going to be done as a three country coproduction for television. When the Canadian element, the CBC, dropped out, I decided to raise the money privately. A friend of mine thought he could do that and had a go at it, but it didn't work out. So then I went around and simply borrowed money. We set up a company in which the shareholders put in the investment to pay the heart of the cost of the production. They basically put up $75,000-$85,000 and we sold television rights to follow theatrical distribution in Canada and in England, which made the balance of our production budget. And at that point we were set. Actually, as the film developed, we went way over budget. One of the difficulties is that if you take a year to raise money, your budget is already 10% under right off the bat. We were budgeted at $130,000-$140,000, and we spent $203,000. This was partly because we went over in time, and partly because we shot a lot more film than I had anticipated.

Having sort of settled the financial questions, raised the money, we finally decided to ask Billy and Antoinette. After they accepted, we worked out a fee for them, which was basically union scale, which came in the end to about $5,000, for the two of them, plus a small percentage of the profits of the film. Though I have generally no particular commitment to a way of working or an ideology of working, I decided not to intervene in this film, not to direct, not to ask or require anything from Billy and Antoinette, but to allow them to take any initiatives that they might wish to take; this 'nonintervention' also covered Richard, and my soundman Chris Wangler. We would simply spend as much time as we could physically manage with the couple and record when we felt like it.

We established, also, that while we were all friends and knew each other, it wouldn't work if we had dinner with them, or if Antoinette was obliged to make coffee, or provide the kind of hospitality that one normally extends to people in one's house. We decided to dispense with all this, and to avoid conversation with Bill and Antoinette as much as possible, so that interactions of that kind wouldn't interfere with our ability to observe and record.

In making Warrendale *you spent three or four weeks with the cameras on location without doing any shooting; did you employ the same method here?*

In *Warrendale* it was necessary for me to find out something about the children as I didn't know them very well. I didn't know them at all when I started, and they needed a fair amount of time to look at me and get used to me and decide where I was going to fit into their lives. With Billy and Antoinette, that amount of time wasn't necessary, but we did need a bit of time not so much to get them un-camera-conscious or unself-conscious, but for them to work into more intimate feelings, the kind of real expression of strongly felt things. That took a lot of time. What we did do, was spend about two weeks with them lighting the house. We could have probably done it much faster but we sort of puttered and fiddled around.

Can you be more explicit on the lighting?

As with *Warrendale* we lit the entire house, which was basically the way we did most of our shooting. We had our own power source from the mains. We put a whole new power system in really, so that we could go in first thing in the morning and throw the switch and the whole house would be lit. Actually it took a fair while to work out a lighting pattern that allows you to shoot 360°, and shoot so that you are not hitting your own lights, or throwing shadows and all those kinds of problems; there is a certain amount of trial and error to that. Also, you can't really anticipate what are the most frequent patterns of movement until you've spent some time with people and get an instinctive sense of where they are going to move and when. That all took about two or three weeks. We also had to adjust the house a bit, and do some decorating. The front room was all walnut paneling, which is very very dark and just soaked up light. So we put in light paneling instead.

When Billy and Antoinette went on a three-week holiday to Maine and Vermont we followed, taking an extra lighting man. We had him go three days before to rig the two physical locations so that they would be all set, and we would just have to trim, so that again we would have the least possible technical interference with the lights.

Can we get into the actual shooting, and so on?

Clearly the ideal would be to spend 24 hours a day at the house, but that would have meant two crews and you would split your style. While there were variations, basically our pattern was to spend as much time with them as they were together with each other. Richard and Chris and the camera assistant would go in early in the morning, turn on the lights, go upstairs, and be around when Billy and Antoinette woke up. We would stay through breakfast until Billy went to work. Sometimes, though not often, we would stay with Billy, or with Antoinette and Bogart, and sometimes would go with Billy to work, and film at work. But the general pattern was to leave them at 9:30 or 10 o'clock. Richard and Chris and David would go home and get some sleep and a meal, and then come back about 4 o'clock to be there for 5 o'clock when Billy came home. Then they'd stay all through the evening until Billy and Antoinette finally went to sleep, and then back again the next morning. Of course, weekends were very tough. You would start at 5 o'clock Friday afternoon, and they would get maybe seven or eight hours sleep, and time off in the middle of Friday night and Saturday night and Sunday night—that was very exhausting.

For the first three or four weeks I was around the house a lot. Later, I found it worked best for me to stay away. A director in that sort of situation is a bit irrelevant. You need enough time to observe a lot of things and you drop in. But there is no need, for me at any rate, to stand and tell a cameraman, "Point here, point there, turn on here, turn off there." All you do really is interfere.

Did you discuss with Richard the kind of things you were looking for?

I know Richard's style, and he knows my style, because we have worked together for years. So the question of style has been worked out over a long time. We had talked about the problems that anyone has shooting dialogue be-

tween two people with one camera—whether to pan back and forth and so on—before we started filming. It was difficult for Richard to dictate where the camera was going rather than have it dictated by the dialogue. But he very quickly got onto that. What would happen is that we would talk a great deal about the rushes. Either he would see them, or certainly I would always see them. We'd say this or that didn't work, or that seems to be working very well, something seems to be happening here, how do you feel it—and so we would do a great deal of talking on the phone, or before or after work, or wherever it was necessary, so that we could check with each other, on what we felt was significant. In the end I very specifically gave Richard a credit as Associate Director, because the contribution that he made to the filming was so very, very important. There was no way of doing that kind of a film without an exceptional person shooting, because he had to make the basic choices of when he was going to shoot, and when not. We talked a lot about strategy, and something about tactics as we were working, but often it was the choice that Richard made, and in a very real sense, he is the associate director.

How much does the camera interfere? How much do people put on for the camera?

It depends on the cameraman. If you get a dumb, insensitive, obtrusive cameraman, the interference is enormous. If you have a sensitive, intelligent, quiet, responsive, unobtrusive, and unjudging, unpersonally critical cameraman, or camera crew, then not only is the camera not inhibitive, but it stimulates the couple to talk, in the same way an analyst or therapist does. You can talk if you want to, you don't have to talk if you don't want to, you do what you want. If you choose to put up smoke screens, or you choose to put on a dialogue or you try to hide something—this would be evident to anybody with any sort of sensitivity. It isn't possible for people to produce material out of thin air irrelevant to their character. Whatever occurs is relevant to the character, and it gives us that overall sense we have of the person. So I felt for a long time that we were not concerned with the question, "Is it the real person?" or those kinds of questions. These are really ways in which an audience or some elements of an audience tend to evade the actual feelings they are getting from the film. "Is that really real?"—what the hell does that mean? Either the film means something to you, or it doesn't. On the question again of interference, I think it is well to allow the person to express stuff in perhaps a little more concentrated period of time.

Did you sense that anyone was putting on an act for the camera?

There were various places in the film where they do, but there are two kinds of acting. If you say, "Are they acting for the camera?" you can say, "No," and a little while along you would have to say, "Yes." It depends on how much space you have in which to explain. They performed for the camera in the same way they perform for friends. Friends come together, and often they would get into 15 minutes of bantering back and forth, teasing each other—they'd have a mock row, or they'd set up a whole line of dialogue which they could carry for 15 or 20 minutes as a way of entertaining themselves and their friends. You can see them do that in the film.

The only thing one has to remember is that we all, at all times, and to varying degrees perform, or perform as if we were different people. At different times we are different people with different people. I am aware of myself behaving a little differently with a businessman, with a student, with a critic, with my office staff, with my girlfriend, or with my parents. Each of those situations provides a different context and you behave differently. Ideally, when you are totally your own person, you are always the same, you are a consistent character throughout, in all transactions; but that's not the way most people are most of the time.

Did they impose any restrictions on you? Obviously you would be getting some very intimate material. Did they see the rushes, or did they only see the final print?

Billy wanted the right to veto anything that he thought was unbearably embarrassing. We had a long protracted negotiation about it, and

I was profoundly reluctant to allow them to do that—oddly enough not so much because I really felt it would be exercised, but because I thought they would in fact deprive themselves of some of the benefits which would occur from the filming. If they were going to have that right, there would be some area of cheating in the film and some area of withholding. However, Billy felt that he could not be uninhibited, could not be free, unless he had some protection. Oddly enough, Antoinette didn't ask for that until Billy had thought of it, and so she said if Billy has it, I want it. In fact, the right wasn't exercised. I didn't allow them to see any film except a little bit to show them that there were images on the celluloid, and it was going all right. I didn't allow them to see any film until we had finished shooting, and then they screened all 70 hours.

At that stage did they want to cut anything out?

No, they didn't. They didn't have the right of editing or anything like that.

Now, if you can come to the point of selection. The film is mainly Billy, Antoinette and Bogart—one sees very few friends except for an evening when Antoinette goes out with her girlfriend, and on the occasion of the party. Now, friends must have been over at other times. Was this limitation a choice on your part?

Yes, the stuff with other people just didn't work out. It wasn't significant. If you want dramatic structure, you want interchanges with other people if they are significant. But there wasn't very much happening with the other friends. For instance, Antoinette was not having an affair with the husband of one of their friends, or one of the couples they were friendly with. Had she been, of course that would have been very pertinent to the film. But just having people over for dinner usually ends up with no more than a scene of people sitting down and having dinner, and it's not very interesting.

Sometimes something explosive will happen at a party, particularly if there is a camera on. People get angry at the lights and so on, or resent other people being the focus of the film. In the first party we filmed, in Toronto, nothing very significant happened. The party in Maine was different. If I were using this technique again, and I wanted to involve more people, then I would have to find a particular way in which they were interacting with the other people in the film so that episodes would occur which were emotionally significant.

If we can move on to editing and structure. You shot 70 hours, you use an hour and a half. Were the choices difficult regarding what to omit?

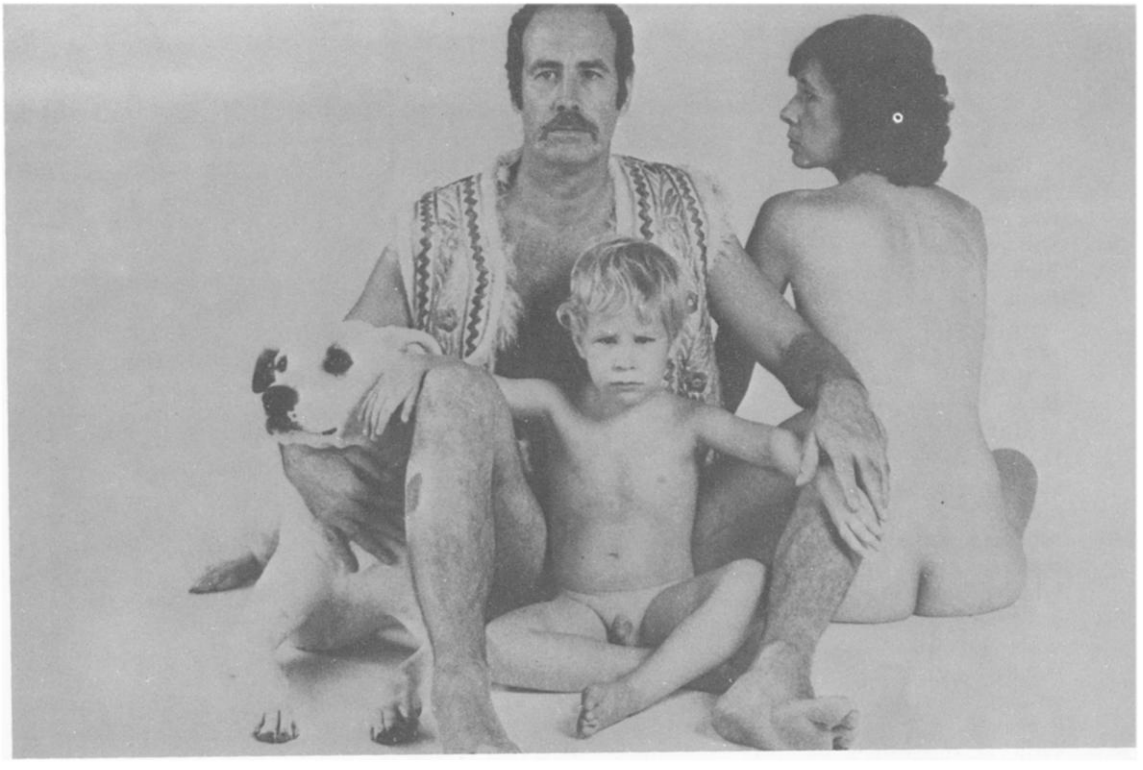
I can't remember—my memory is a bit foggy. I have a bad time once I've cut a sequence out; by and large, I forget it even existed. Yet when you're looking at a rough cut and you argue about what's to come out, you say, "I can't take that sequence out, I've got to have that sequence," but once you take it out, you very seldom miss it. However, I can't remember very much, I can't remember sequences, but there must be some which we had in and then took out. It was really much more a question of tightening sections, and making them work as sequences, and more than that, making the overall structure work.

Is the final film in chronological order?

No—the opening of the film was shot about two-thirds the way through, the breakfast scene was shot halfway through. Basically, the main arch of action is at the end of the film when they wake up—after they have had that moment of intimacy when she's sitting on his lap crying, and they wake up the next morning, and have a great fight and he throws her out of the house—that whole passage happened the week before we finished filming, and it was what we were waiting for. Not that it had to be a fight, it might have been a very happy episode; but you wait for one significant arch of events that hang together and give you a core. The holiday, and when they're at the lake and so on, and the party around that—they all occurred very early in the filming and are actually unrelated to the rest. All I do is take episodes and put them into a dramatic structure that works for me.

So you are aiming toward a kind of emotional fiction?

Yes. It is very often the case that episode A



is put together with episode B to produce a feeling of C, when in reality they don't have that connection. However, if feeling C doesn't have a feeling relationship or isn't true of the characters, then it won't work. What I'm doing is finding conjunctions of events which create for me the feeling I have about that couple and about life, and what I want to express.

One has to be very, very clear. Billy and Antoinette in the film are not Billy and Antoinette Edwards, the couple who exist and live at 323 Rushton Rd. They are characters, images on celluloid in a film drama. To say that they are in any other sense true, other than being true to our own experience of the world and people we have known and ourselves, is philosophical nonsense. There is no way 90 minutes in a film of Billy and Antoinette can be the same as the actual real life of Billy and Antoinette.

Did they make any comments on the time rearrangement in the final film?

No, because they clearly understood that we would do that. But it was hard at first for Antoinette to handle. For example, there is little shown where she is very giving or very tender; there is little shown of how she is with other people, which is often very warm; little is shown of how she is with her child, or the fact that she's a good cook. At other times and in other circumstances, she is all those things. In the middle of a major crisis or conflict, she couldn't be very giving, and much of the time was very tense; it was a very tough time. So she comes out of the film, or rather as the character in the film, as someone caught up in those devastating demands of that moment.

Can we come back to the dramatic structure and your preparation work with Arla. I am thinking of it as a dramatist, how you think it's going to work. For example, you have Antoinette talking with her girlfriend about sexual hangups and relationships. Much later in the film this ties up with her talking to the red-shirted guy at the party, and the final discussion with Billy. Can you tell me what choices you were playing around with?

First, I think you perceive certain kinds of things, certain things that happened that week, and seemed to be something that was a consistent preoccupation, say of Antoinette or Billy. First of all, we went through all the material twice (we went through all the rushes as we were shooting) we went through it all once or twice after that, and then chucked out 50 hours.

What were you looking for, when you went through the material?

Stuff that connects with other stuff, episodes that connect and illuminate each other. Stuff that contrasts, and stuff that is alive. The trouble with a lot of shooting is that nothing happens, so it's aborted; or you miss half of it because you come in late. You end up with a set of sequences which are alive and are funny, moving, sad, and have emotional values. Those are what you start with, and you then try to find an order of those events in which the feelings are amplified, and amplified and amplified, until they've reached a peak. Then you try to resolve them again—rather I suppose in the way you construct a piece of music.

Can you tell me how you work with Arla?

Basically, it seems to me that you and the editor always perceive things a little differently. The director has a different notion of what's happening than the editor does. But as I say, I chucked out about 50 hours so we had about 20 to work with, and if Arla felt she needed something or was stuck, she would go back into that 50 hours; but we then basically screened the 20 hours. We had a list of what those sequences were, and a rough idea of what the order of events would be. The 20 hours represented roughly 20 sequences, 20 episodes, and each was roughly an hour long.

We would sit down in the morning and go through an hour. I would say what I liked, and what I thought the shape was, and Arla would say what she liked and what she thought the shape was; and we would usually very quickly agree on the rough shape of the sequence. Then she would go ahead, pull it out and cut it. The next morning we would come back and screen the rough cut of that sequence, and decide that such and such worked, and such and such didn't, or what needed ordering or how we could fix it; and then she would do that, or sometimes she simply set it aside and we would go on to the next one. Arla works extremely quickly, and we would tend to do almost a sequence a day until we had the rough assembly; and then we started polishing.

How long did the assembly take you?

The assembly, which was about four or five hours, took about six weeks. Then we were stuck for a month trying to get a shape that would work, and we tried juggling it this way and that way.

Can we tie it down to specifics. What were the alternate shapes you had in mind?

It doesn't seem so much like alternatives as you either have the feeling it works or it doesn't work; and if it doesn't work, it's not an alternative, and you keep juggling around until finally it does. But for example, there are two or three major fights in this film. There's the first little fight about the harpsichord. This is a joke fight, but sort of sets up many of the key strains that emerge later in the film; there's the car fight which is a very bitter fight, but isn't violent and sort of has a semi-resolve to it, and is left with a hooker at the end of it; and then there's the fight where he throws her out of the house. The harpsichord scene isn't a major fight—it's just sort of a way into the film. If you have one big fight at the beginning and one big fight at the end, and the first one is sort of left open and unresolved, all through the middle part you wait for the threads to be picked up. There may be all sorts of little threads in the middle which are significant, but you are really waiting to see what big thing is going to happen next, so it's a matter of how you get those threads to develop and amplify each other.

The biggest problem was to put the car fight where it was able to pick up the threads of conflict, so that the earlier clues were expanded and amplified. Another problem was how to make Antoinette's desire for other relationships apparent, rather than merely talked about. She discusses them with her girlfriend, but the discussion is transferred into action when she starts the flirtation with that guy in the red shirt.

You get the development of intensity of their arguments, which serve to increase the tension, but you also have several other sequences, which in a sense, could be placed anywhere—the holiday sequence, and an explanation of Billy at work. How did you play around with these in the order?

It is largely how much relaxation you want from your tension, and so it's merely a matter of gauging the emotional charge, or the degree of relaxation that you want before you build to a higher degree. The choices, ultimately, have simply to do with relaxing and heightening tension.

Jack Gold, the English director, has said that when he does a straight documentary, he may have 20 sequences. He then puts those on cards, and in a sense he edits the cards. Do you work at all in this way?

I just jot ideas down on paper: that feels right, this, then this, then this, and you work out a sequence, and then you think, "But if I do that, this isn't going to work here because it's too early, or it's too late, or it doesn't connect with what follows after," and then you try another juggle. And whether you do it on cards, or do it by numbers on a piece of paper, it is the same process.

I asked you before whether Billy and Antoinette had the power of censorship. Now I am wondering if there were points when you were using your own taste—saying, "No, I've got this scene, but I don't really think it should be used as a matter of taste." Can you give me some examples there?

Well, at that time, Billy had been going to a psychiatrist to help resolve some of the problems he was having. I recorded four sessions with the psychiatrist, and they were absolutely fascinating, and indeed hair-raising as there was some extraordinary material involved. But I decided not to use the material; in some ways it was like a red herring. When a person is talking to a psychiatrist and talking about something that they feel is quite horrific that they've done, an audience may seize upon that and jump to all sorts of conclusions about the person—which are misleading, or allow them to classify the other person, or to depersonalize the other person. So I didn't use these scenes. They were very tempting, and there was a lot of revealing material in them, but I felt they were misleading.

Billy is very funny when he is reading some advertising. Did you catch much of him at work?

We spent two-three-four days with him at work, and there were some other funny passages, but you are really looking for that passage that you can get in a minute or 30 seconds which stands for all the things. There are several other episodes, but those were the best ones. There was a long talk with some guy in Saskatchewan. They were planning a Centennial campaign for Saskatchewan, and Saskatchewan wanted to look like Expo, but for only $200,000 or something like that, and the dialogue was very funny.

I was a little unhappy about a couple of sequences that technically didn't work, showing Billy's strength and his forcefulness with other people, because he's rather a different person at work than he is at home. At home, at that point anyway, he was a little more insecure about various kinds of things than he was at work. That extra dimension would have been nice to get included. We did do one other thing. I had a screening with some friends, 30 or 40 people, when I had the first sort of rough cut. This was in order to see it with an audience, and get a sense of the way other people responded. I did it again in the final cut, and then once more, and they were very helpful. It's not so much that people can tell you how to fix a film or what's not working, but you get the sense of an additional perspective, which is very helpful.

Can you remember any of the things said after the rough cut?

Yes. There was a lot of imbalance in the reaction to Billy and Antoinette. At one time, people were generally much more responsive to Antoinette, and then there was another point at which they were much more responsive to Billy, and I wanted a balance. It is still the case in the final film that it almost acts as a Rorschach test. People either identify with Billy or with Antoinette, or reject them both, or think

they are both marvelous, and you get everything in between that; but you eventually have to decide what is the balance for yourself, and part of that you get from the way the audience is responding. It's also very helpful where jokes are concerned—what's working, and what's very funny to you but is not funny to anybody else, how much pause you need after for the laughter to subside, so that you don't lose lines. We finally blew the film up to 35mm when we had a cut that was one hour and 57 minutes. I knew it was long, but I got to the point that I was too close to the film to decide how much more to cut it; so we blew it up at that point, and had a number of screenings in New York with other people, and then I cut another 20 minutes, and got it down to 97 minutes.

Was this basically just shortening sequences, or taking sequences out?

Shortening—we didn't take any sequences out, we just tightened up the slack. I took out parts of sequences—after the major fight, after dinner, and after their very funny episode when Bogart picks up a little piece of shit on the floor, which is an extraordinary reliever of the tension of the moment. There was another sequence when they are talking on the bed upstairs. The telephone rings, Antoinette wants to answer it, but Billy doesn't want her to leave the bed and get out of the discussion that they are having, and they have a fight about that. It was a fascinating exchange, but it was just one too many, and I thought, I just cannot take one more fight, so I took it out. In order to tighten up another sequence I cut one bit that I really regret: Billy and Antoinette are in bed the second time in the film. She has been in her bed, and he takes her into his bed. He wants to be intimate with her, and she rejects him; I shortened it a bit and in consequence lost a passage where one really experienced more strongly the anguish and humiliation that Billy felt in being rejected. One still gets a lot out of the sequence, but is a little diminished.

You said you went way over budget. What are the things that blew up the budget?

We budgeted for seven weeks of shooting, and we shot for ten; we were budgeted for 80,000 feet of film, and I shot virtually 140,000 feet. Those were the major things. My own time was double what I said it would be. Editing time wasn't as much as we had anticipated. Our lighting costs were more; we had the trip to Vermont and Maine which wasn't in the budget. Promotion costs were a lot more than I had anticipated—I had budgeted $14,000 to promote the film, and I spent $30,000.

When you finished the film, how did you go about selling it? You said you had a certain number of precommitments on television, but these commitments pay relatively little. How did you begin to get the money back?

It wasn't too much of a problem in Canada, except for the amount of time required to do it and the amount of speaking engagements and screenings you have to have. I find with a film that it helps a lot if you get out to many locations, wherever the theater happens to be. You go along to see the film, to see the press, and so on, and it all helps. The main problem is getting good distribution. This wasn't much of a problem in Canada because we had that settled. But we had a long, long battle with censorship in Ontario which was very costly, and took a lot of time.

What were the problems brought up in censorship?

The language, which was virtually unprecedented in Canada. The amount of swearing in the film hadn't been used in a film before in Canada—that was really the crux of the problem. The first censor to have to tackle it had a good deal of difficulty deciding whether it was going to arouse a great public reaction, and whether it was within the tolerances of community standards, which is the real basis of most censorship.

How did you eventually win them around—what were the compromises?

I made three cuts in Ontario. I haven't had to make any cuts thereafter in any of the other provinces so far, and no cuts in the States because there just isn't any censorship in the States any more—or at least no government or state censorship. The key to persuading the censor was that after it became a public controversy,

it was clear that more people were going to be upset by the cuts in the film than would be upset by the language in the film. It tends to be a political thing.

You said Canadian distribution was easy—what about American?

America was much harder, and we still haven't found an adequate solution to the problem. I have also found greater difficulty with the film in the States, and I am not quite sure why. I noticed very early on that our screenings in New York had quite a different flavor than in Canada. People in the States seem to find the film more threatening, personally threatening, personally heavy and painful. I would guess this could be, particularly in New York, because personal relationships there are more strenuous and less secure, and therefore the film seems more painful. In the early American reviews, for example, there was virtually no mention of the fact that the film is very funny in the first half—virtually no mention whatsoever. The reviews have been of three kinds: from young critics, very responsive and very good reviews; from sort of middle-aged critics or middle-aged married people, an intense involvement in the film, but the reviews tend to say as much about the reviewer as they do about the film (at least that is what we drew from between the lines); with older critics, and this particularly affected us in New York with Judith Crist and a couple of others, a rejection of the film as ugly, and the characters as distasteful. There was a total inability to take in the film and accept it. In Canada, audiences are a lot more open and easy, especially if there is a very large house, which somehow socializes the experience. In the States, there seems to be a great taste for fantasy at the moment—everybody seems to want an escape. *Easy Rider* is enormously popular. It's a good film but I often wonder how much of its appeal is that it romanticizes and fantasizes an experience.

Has the film covered its costs yet?

No. It will eventually in Canada, and in England. What will happen in the States is still very much up in the air. But I am not terribly optimistic about the States.

This question of using vérité *technique, and the nonfiction drama, where do you think it is going from here? Do you think you will use the process again?*

I think I will probably use it on my next film —I am quite sure I will—but more as a way of setting up and recording that kind of feeling exchange: the kind of dynamic that arises out of direct interchange between the characters and the film. But in the next film, I don't think the people will have had actual past relationships with each other. They will be characters that I've deliberately put together in a film, and asked to interact and interrelate.

THE CAMERAMAN/ASSOC. DIRECTOR: RICHARD LEITERMAN

Getting into film was something I didn't decide on. Film has never been anything that I really thought about as a life career. I didn't finish university—I went two years, and then bummed around Europe doing a number of jobs. I met Allan King in Europe, and the work he was doing then was documentaries for the CBC—very low budget—and I asked him if there was some way I could get on with him. It seemed like a pretty good thing. They travelled a lot, and I was interested in travelling and seeing a lot of people. It's kind of a joke now in documentary or films, when people say "Oh, aren't you lucky, to be able to travel so many places and meet so many fantastic people, and do so many interesting things!" But then, it seemed a pretty romantic idea. Anyway, Allan didn't have anything for me at the time, and suggested maybe I find a film school and get the basic grounding, as I had no idea of what still photography was about, let alone movies. He suggested the British Film Institute, suggested trying to get in with the CBC or NFB, and things like that. At any rate, I came back to Vancouver and took the University's first summer course on "be your own film director in six weeks."

It was Saturdays and Sundays for six weeks. They had an old Bolex, and a Bell & Howell windup. Stan Fox had set the course up, and it was in its first year. So I went to that and

learned basics about film, and what made an image on a piece of film, how it was cut, rewinds, all that. It was a general, basic, all-round course, and we turned out a little seven-minute film. They asked us why we were in the course, and I firmly said that there was a lot of things that could be done a lot more interestingly, more artistically and better than were being turned out by people in documentaries and news, and things like that. I did the course, and bought my own little Bolex windup with some money I had, and shot a couple of news stories out in Vancouver.

They were just freak stories. One was a storm. I lived at the waterfront, so I just went out the front door and shot some waves, sea gulls, and water pouring down, and sold it to the Vancouver news for $35. I thought it was pretty terrific—an easy way to make a dollar. During the next couple of months I tried to do more of that but I didn't have any luck. CBC wasn't interested, and there weren't any more freak storms.

So I went back to the job I had, which was out in the tugboats.

Meanwhile I had written Allan and said if there was any chance that I could get on just for subsistence fees, just as second camera assistant or whatever, to let me know, and I would come over to London. I told him it wouldn't cost him any money and I did know something about the business now. I was very lucky. He called back about two months later to say I could come in as second cameraman on one of their CBC documentaries about the common market. So I got on second camera with an Auricon which I had never seen before and didn't know how to use, and it went like that. Allan said if it worked out it might be worthwhile me staying in London. If it didn't work out there would be enough money for me and my wife to get back to tugboating or whatever. However, it panned out nicely. I stayed in London, and I got a credit by CBC news in London, and did a fair amount of work for them.

Most of this photography, was it self-taught, or did you learn from the other cameraman?

On the first job, the one with Allan, the senior cameraman was a very good, a very painstaking lighting man, and as I had never done any lighting as such, he took the time to show me the basic lighting set-ups, how to put a back light in, and a fill light down the hall if you're shooting one room and seeing through to another. So it was kind of an apprenticeship except that I wasn't looked on as an apprentice. I had to learn and shoot at the same time. It came very easy somehow, I don't know particularly how, and it worked out extremely well.

Allan's films would come up about once every six months or so, when he would get one of his own productions going, so in between we were shooting news for CBC out of London and Paris, or we'd go to Germany. It was interesting shooting news. I think I learned more about how to shoot a documentary in the way that I felt a documentary should be shot. The stuff I had done previously for CBC on documentary, was kind of a set-up deal where you have person A walk from here to there to show you what was in the background, which might be called C; they would sit down on a chair which was already pre-lit, and go into what was supposed to be spontaneous talk about whatever the social problem was. That wasn't my idea of doing documentary.

What year are we talking about?

This was in '61. Basically we would go out to do a story, find out where the action was and shoot it, and shoot it as many ways as possible. You had to be fast. You had a lighting set-up to do, you had to go bong, bong, bong, and have

your lights up. The guy came in and you shot it. You tried to frame it right, you tried to make it look as nice as possible, and ten minutes later he was gone. If it was action news, you worked the same way. There was no director to tell you where the action was, you were on your own. Sometimes, you'd have a sort of briefing, and off you would go, with an Arriflex or whatever, and shoot it; it was the kind of experience which I found invaluable in learning how to shoot straight documentaries.

What were the key documentaries you shot during '61 and after?

The one I liked best was a profile on Lynn Seymour, a Canadian ballerina who was working at Covent Gardens; I shot it and Allan directed. That worked out very nicely—she's a lovely girl, and it went well. You did walk-in, you did portable synch, all kinds of things. In 1964 I came over to America and shot *One More River,* which was directed by my brother for Intertel. I guess that was the first long show that I did on my own. Doug was there a lot of the time, but a lot of the time there was just Beryl Fox and myself scooting around the Southern states, looking for it. Then I got into a series of Intertels, for NET. One was on the color problem in Britain called *Colour in Britain* directed by Mike Sklar. Then we did schools in England and America, which was a deadly show.

Did you work freelance the whole time?

All this time I was freelance. I've been with Allan King Associates since it originated in England, but on a freelance basis. I worked for the company, but I could also go out and hustle on my own. I could work for whomsoever I wished. I'm not under any obligation to Allan King Assoiiates. This has always been the way with all of us in England.

Can we get on to A Married Couple. *Can you tell me how Allan approached you and discussed the problem with you?*

This was after *Warrendale.* Allan said the next film he did he wanted to be a real film about a married couple. It sounded a very interesting idea, but I wasn't sure if it would come off or not. I wasn't sure how I would feel about walking into a couple's house and being there, filming them, recording them.

I gather it was fairly clear from the beginning that it was to be a marriage in crisis; how did you feel about that element?

It was a bit upsetting to me. Due to my being out of town an awful lot on various assignments and various pictures, I did not have the ideal marriage, although it's going well, and we have overcome a lot of the differences. But to go and observe some married couple in some kind of difficulty, well who needs that. I could just shoot in my own house. It did seem to me though that perhaps out of this would come things that would be particularly interesting, not only to myself, but to a great audience especially in America, where marriages seem to be off and on, in and out, almost like the tide. If we could get something down on film that would be good, that people could look at and say, "All right, they're not much different from us, and they are still making it, and if they're not making it, why aren't they?" They could look at themselves through Billy and Antoinette and find out why some of the niggly things blow up into such great things. Maybe it's a kind of visual therapy. Basically that's what we came around to, and said, now let's do it and as real as we can. When Billy and Antoinette were chosen, I felt well that's fine, I know them. I knew them from when we lived in Spain, but it wasn't a close knowledge. They are both vocal, somewhat inclined to be exhibitionists, but pleasant, and they seemed right. I guess I would sooner have gone into their house than into a stranger's.

Once they agreed that you could shoot there, how did you set up preparing the photographic side of it?

That was difficult. The first two weeks we were around, testing and thinking. We wanted to be able to shoot anywhere in the house, and we wanted to be able to go indoors and outdoors, and not be too affected by changing film stock or magazines. That was pretty much the reason for using the fast Ektachrome daylight stock, so that I could go in and out, and could make use of the daylight coming in the windows as supplementary lighting. We set up

lights around the house, and made special brackets to fit in the living room, and special brackets to put in the dining room, and upstairs. We tried to hide them behind closet doors, hang them from the ceiling, and put blue dichroic filters over them to balance with the daylight coming in the windows. It was a trial, but still I couldn't get enough useable light after setting it all up because the dichroics take away approximately one-third of the illumination. There just wasn't enough light in the house, but to put any more light in would have cooked us, literally, because it was summer and it was hot. We therefore went back to the method of using tungsten, and taking the dichroics off, and gelling all the windows with filters, and using tungsten light inside. So we ended up shooting on tungsten film, and when we went outside, we had to change and put a conversion filter on.

One of our basic things was to make it as natural as possible, and as far as thinking of key light or fills or anything like that, that was pretty much impossible because we never knew where the action was going to take place. My next thing was to put my lights in the places where I could put them, which were in the corners of the rooms, mostly to give me access to shoot all round the room and in any direction without catching light. The odd time I caught a flare was when they were hung from the ceiling and from corner brackets. There was no key light, it was all fill. Well, let's say it was all key light with some bounced light for fill, consisting of 1000 watt adjustable floods in three of the four corners, going in toward the center of the room. In addition we bounced minilight 650's from the ceiling and had photofloods in the practical light fixtures like table lamps and stand lamps. In total in the living room I guess we had about 4500 watts, including some Lowell lights which I found most practical because you can put a 500 watt flood in, and gauze it a bit, and you can fill out areas and hide that light just about anywhere.

It was very hard to get any kind of dramatic feeling in the rooms because we didn't know where the action was going to be. I didn't want to have to go out and start turning on and off lights when they moved to one corner rather than another; so then the thing was to try and position oneself where the light was best. Also, during the first two weeks of testing lights and testing Billy and Antoinette, I was also testing for where I could shoot and get good results.

Can you say something about choice of camera?

We started with the brand new professional Bolex 16mm self-blimped camera, which had just come over here. It has mechanized zoom, mechanized focus, and detachable magazines, and it all seemed very fancy and very new and very nice. It took a while to get used to it; it's basically a whole different concept because it is all on finger-tip control, rather than manual control. There were certain things wrong with it—the zoom and the focus were on the same motors, and if you wanted a slow zoom and a fast focus, it was impossible, you could only have a slow zoom with a slow focus and vice versa.

During the first days that we used it, we got a particular scratch on the film, and we took it back to the Bolex people. They looked through it, couldn't find anything wrong, and gave it back to us. It ended up that the gate was not set up to use the thicker, softer emulsion stock of 7542; it was too narrow to allow the free passage of the film. The camera we finally chose was the Eclair, which was ideal in fact for the job. When they brought it out years ago, it had certain problems and that's why I never used it before. I only used my own Auricon which I cut down and remade into a shoulder camera. It was balanced very well, and that's why I didn't like the Eclair, because its balance is all forwards, although it is the most comfortable camera there is on the market today for portable hand holding. But I didn't want to use the Auricon because it was even noisier than the Eclair, and it didn't have reflex viewing. The Arriflex BL is just too hard to hold. I don't like being encumbered with shoulder braces, or belly braces of any kind, and the weight of it is certainly something that you can't comfortably hold. It's just too impractical. The brace means you can't get down to get low-angle shots, and you can't bend and get the high-angle shots. You're

strapped into shooting straight in front of you.

What procedures did you set up with Billy and Antoinette?

We went in with a kind of ground rule that we would have no communication with them, nor would they communicate anything to us. We put up an invisible barrier between us, Dutch, myself, and Chris the soundman. If we came at any time, they were not to act surprised or to change what they were doing to something else, and they would not make any exception to what they were doing just because of our presence. We walked in in the middle of the night—so we walked in in the middle of the night, and if we didn't come that day, we didn't come that day. It was just to get them used to us being around, whether we were fiddling with the lights, or whether we were following them around with the camera; it also served the purpose of getting them used to our presence.

How natural were they before the cameras? Did you see a change in them from the beginning to the end? Did you notice things that you would say were put on for you?

The presence of the camera tends to distort at the beginning of any real filming. People are trying their best to be normal people, but in doing so, I would think that the majority of them find they are acting, and we certainly noticed this in the first two or three weeks, but the first two or three weeks are not in the final cut of the film.

Can you give me specific cases?

Some of the dialogue that they would come up with—you could tell that it was for our benefit. Some of the antics that they went through; they are both, as I said before, kind of exhibitionist people. For example, Antoinette might be downstairs in the kitchen and Billy would make his entrance, maybe from work, or from upstairs watching television. If we were filming Antoinette downstairs, he would make an entrance with a terrific wisecrack, or a smash-bang, or bring a beer bottle down and plunk it down in front of Antoinette to make sure that we knew he was there, and to feel that he was making his entrance in the finest possible way. I think that there were times when Antoinette might have worn a little less make-up toward the beginning of the film. She wasn't quite her natural self—she was doing a fair amount of primping, I guess, mainly when we weren't filming. They were aware of us, they were making jokes to fill time, they couldn't sit quietly for any length of time as normal people would do. Even Billy and Antoinette will sit quietly and not say anything to one another, but in the beginning their time was nearly always full of conversation.

How was the child in the film?

Bogart was excellent. We explained to him the first day we were there what we were going to do—we were going to make a movie in his house, and when we brought the cameras and sound gear in, I explained to him what the camera was, and I let him look through it. But I told him once we started working that he was to leave us alone; and Chris did the same thing—he let him listen in the earphones, and told him that we didn't want him bothering us, and Billy and Antoinette also told him that he was to leave us alone. Bogart did pretty well. Every now and then he would get bored, feel that he wasn't getting enough attention, and he would come over and try and poke his head in the lens but it was very seldom, and certainly not on a crucial occasion.

How long did it take before you think they became relatively natural?

I think it was during the third week. They just seemed to slow down, things weren't so rushed, weren't so hurried, weren't so nervous, and they didn't make so much noise. Maybe they weren't quite so funny when there was no need for it.

How did you set yourself a pattern for shooting and what was your relationship with Allan at this stage?

The first few weeks, Allan was around in the house quite a bit, and he would sometimes go down to the office and screen the previous day's rushes. When he was actually in the house, just sitting in the living room or dining room trying to be inconspicuous, it became very difficult for him because he was just sitting there, and he had nothing to hide behind—he wasn't doing

anything. He couldn't make himself useful in any way, and was just an extra person without a thing. Chris was fine. He could sneak behind his Nagra or fiddle with it; it was something he was doing, rather than sitting nakedly. And I was behind my camera, and could polish the lens if I wasn't shooting anything, or could just sit there. But Allan's presence was a bit inhibiting to Billy and Antoinette because he had nothing to do except just be there, kind of observing. And because he had nothing to do, he was more liable to be brought in or looked at in a way—"Are we doing the right thing now?"

To come back to the selection of what to shoot; you have five or six weeks at the beginning which then extends. How do you know when to make your choice, to turn on and turn off? When Antoinette and Billy are together, it seems obvious that you are there, but when they are separate how do you know which one to stay with?

It was very difficult to start with. I was first trying to see if there was any pattern to what they were doing after dinner. Did Antoinette always go and do the dishes, or did Billy sit down with a magazine, or did he go upstairs? They didn't seem to follow any set pattern, so a lot of the times it was a case of who was doing what. When they were separate, Billy would be upstairs or at work; when they were both in the house, it was a question of who was doing the most interesting thing—how valid was it to what we were doing—was it good to have, should we cover it, how well will it develop. I think these are the key words in the kind of shooting we were doing: "Will it develop into anything?" and secondly "Can you possibly use it for a cutaway, or maybe just a silent music-over sequence?" Are they doing something alone which can be used to show something significant about their joint lives; or can it be used as just a simple little sequence by itself of something beautiful and softening, that's happening? So you take it from there. Perhaps we would shoot Antoinette in the kitchen for a while, but we wouldn't know what Billy was doing upstairs; so we would make sure and first cover the sequence of what Antoinette was doing, and then we'd beat it upstairs and see what Billy was doing in case we needed some of that to go with what Antoinette was doing.

Normally if you were working as the photographer you concentrate on what is within your frame and the director can concentrate on what is being said; here, you had to combine the two. Had you done much of this kind of thing before —was it an extra problem?

I must say that I have kind of conditioned myself to do it because that is the kind of filming I have done, and have done well. It's a matter of anticipating a movement, anticipating what's going to come next, where your dialogue might come from. You find if you shoot a classroom in a similar way you immediately sort out the guys who are going to be the first to put their hands up. You sense this so that you can almost get there before them. But it's hard because you're not ready most of the time. You just try and out guess them, or first-guess them.

Could you say something about shooting with only one camera, and things only happening once?

When shooting with only one camera, there are no chances for retakes, there is no chance for questions being asked again—it is a one-shot thing. And you also have to cover yourself so that the film will cut. In many occasions Billy and Antoinette would get into a discussion across the room, one sitting on one side and the other sitting on the other side. You cannot bear to be continually panning back and forth unless the action needs it, unless the action really necessitates it. If the action is fast and furious you can only gain by some quick pans back and forth, but basically if you can see something starting, if you can anticipate that this is going to be an argument, and this is going to be a fairly important argument—they have been needling around, they've been at it for awhile, and they've settled themselves in for it—then you have to cover yourself and listen very hard to what they are saying. You try to get what is important to be in synch on frame, and when you can sneak off and get the silent cutaways of the other one, and try not to lose too much important synch dialogue.

Can we come down to some particular things about the film. There are a number of very intimate sequences in the film, such as the bedroom sequences. Did you find the camera interfering with the reactions of Billy and Antoinette?

In the first bedroom scene, both of them were very self-conscious about us being there, and whether they should or could make love before us. The first intimate scene in the film, was actually the first time that we did any long shooting in the bedroom, and there was a certain amount of tomfoolery. The lights were very hot, and I really didn't have them set the way I would like to have had them, had I been able to shoot up there previously, or had more time to reset them. It was a very hard, overall light, not at all a dramatic light, and here was Billy and Antoinette in bed—with Billy trying to get sexy toward his wife. He didn't know how far he was going to go, and she certainly didn't feel like she wanted to have anything to do with it. It was a time when I found that the camera was at its noisiest, and that the floors squeaked every time we moved to get another angle.

Where, in fact were you shooting from?

I was shooting from bedside, very close to bedside. I guess I wasn't more than four feet from the bed at any time, except for wide cover shots, for which I went back and shot through the door. Christian, I think, was as embarrassed as they were or I was, and was trying to get the sound without being any closer than he needed to be. It was my first encounter with that kind of a scene in a real situation, and I just found that it wasn't going to happen. There was nothing more going to happen. They weren't going to make love for us, or for themselves—it was too difficult—and I decided that there was not much sense in staying on any longer with them.

How could you judge when it was appropriate to shoot in the bedroom?

Well, when they had a particularly good day, and felt very kind toward each other I sometimes sensed I might get something important upstairs. For instance, the night they got the stereo set, and were having a marvelous time, and were both very happy. Without really thinking about it, we knew we would stay. You could stay to a point, but when there was nothing else coming, my reasoning was that you had to leave. Otherwise you were forcing them to do something that perhaps they didn't want to do, and if you got it, how real was it? If they had made love for us in front of the camera, I'd have wondered how much they were forcing it, and whether it was really necessary, and I think that my whole thing is that it wasn't really necessary—at least not within our film. There were many happier times that were easier to film that come across with more "togetherness" than the bedroom scene.

When you weren't filming, and were just sitting around, at what point did you make a decision, "Let's turn it on?" Can you give me a specific case?

The dinner table was one of the biggest action spots for us. Dinner might start in the usual manner, but it was the place where most things were discussed. We never missed a dinner or evening meal. The events of the day would be gone over, and you'd set the scene. You would shoot cover shots just in case something came up, and you wanted the table with them bringing the food on. We would make sure we got some cover shot so as to set whatever outfit they were wearing, and to try and keep some semblance of continuity. Billy might come on with, "Well, what did you do today?" You could almost sense when this was going to happen, and we'd shoot that. Then they would go on idly about Antoinette, maybe she went to Mary Jane's blah, blah, and you could tell there wasn't anything. I guess a lot of the times we missed the important question from either one or the other. The food for the dog sequence comes to mind. Billy was angry when he came in—he was angry from work, I can't remember why, but I know he was angry—and I knew that something was going to happen. We didn't shoot for a while, and it was kind of a silent meal, not like usual, and I guess maybe it was second sense, or maybe I just turned on because he was chewing his food rather strangely. It's something you watch for.

There are two things, or three things, that

look as if they might have been set up, and I wonder if you can comment on them. One is Billy always appearing in his underwear; the second thing is the scene where Antoinette is scratching her crotch in a pretty unladylike way; and the third one is the shooting at the Café de la Paix, where Antoinette talks about sex to her girlfriend.

Billy was quite comfortable wandering around the house in his altogether. When he comes home from work, he immediately strips —this was almost a ritual with him. He wears red shorts, I guess he has 7 or 8 pairs of them. They weren't set up by us for color coordination or anything like that. He said do you want me to wander around naked, or do you think I should wear a pair of shorts; and our feeling was, that unreal as it might be, let's cover you up in a pair of shorts. But it certainly was not set up, and I am sure if Billy had had his way he would have been naked most of the time. The first week we were shooting, we were there for morning wakeup and Billy got out of bed and tramped around the house, went down and called the dog, and then went out in the backyard and played with the dog—all this completely naked; we felt that maybe that particular thing was set up for us—maybe he was doing it for our benefit—but it was just Billy acting normally.

Antoinette scratching—I guess she did a lot of things like that, and I suppose it was her nature. There's another scene of her pulling the hair under her armpits that one critic took exception to in New York. It is a thing Antoinette does. Her scratching her leg or her crotch, I never took it as anything else. Maybe she was trying to provoke Billy, but she has a number of mannerisms like that, and maybe it is part of her make-up as a woman who likes to do these kinds of things to provoke, or maybe it's just a nice feeling for her.

Café de la Paix was set up. We asked Antoinette to invite one of her friends whom she confided in, so that we would have a background on their marriage.

Did you tell her what to talk about?

No, not in any real terms. We told her that we would like the two of them to talk about Antoinette's feelings. Perhaps her friend, Mary Jane could question her on this. We wanted them just to talk about the background and present feelings of Antoinette towards Billy and thought that perhaps this could be brought out by a second person. We shot an awful lot that afternoon, about two and a half hours of them chit-chatting. I had a pair of earphones because I was back too far to hear what they were talking about, and tried to pick my shots, and anticipate where the action was going to come from. Allan was also listening on a set of earphones. At one time he did in fact interrupt, when their conversation was drifting, and asked them to get back to what was more pertinent, which was the subject of Billy and Antoinette.

Once the filming was beginning to develop, did you see the rushes, or did Allan ask you to concentrate on any one particular thing or another?

I guess to begin with, we had fights. We had fights over color stocks, we had fights about what we should be filming, but they weren't fights, they were just talks. Finally we did get it over with one night when I asked Allan what I should be shooting, and he said, "What you are shooting is really fine, but you're being a bit hasty—you're not staying long enough with the subject, you're not staying long enough for the sequence to develop. Be a little more selective, be a little more steady, in terms of holding onto a subject before you go back. Don't be so anxious to cover yourself because you're missing what might be a lot of the real action—you can afford to stay on Antoinette even if she is not saying something and Billy is, but try and *think* more." He's good like that, he will seldom call you down, but he will make it seem that maybe you're doing the wrong thing, or you're being a little hasty or something like that.

What did you find the most difficult scene to shoot?

The most physically difficult, as far as setup of the thing goes, was the car fight where they are in the living room—one is on the red couch, and one is on the gold couch. Neither was in a particularly good position for light, and the

spread of the room was too great to follow the dialogue easily on camera or mike. Chris was using the 804 microphone, and he would have to move it around, and try and anticipate them; he couldn't follow my directions because sometimes I was picking up or getting ready for a reaction shot while the dialogue was still going on, and I wanted him to stay on the active line, while I got ready for the reaction. I couldn't shoot it standing up because the angle just didn't look very good; I couldn't cross the axis at this point to get a new angle because there was no way of doing it continuously, and without interrupting their line of thought. If I walked in front of them, or walked between them, I didn't feel it would have done any of us any good. They would have been broken up a bit just because of it, although they would have covered well, I am sure. The one blessing of that whole sequence, which went on for about an hour and a half, was when the phone rang, and I could follow Antoinette out. At the phone I could then flip around and shoot the reaction of Billy, and still have enough time to get back to Antoinette hanging up and saying goodbye. I could then take up a new angle as I followed Antoinette back into the room. I guess the second most difficult scene was the bedroom sequence where they are both trying very hard to get to where they're at, to a point almost embarrassing to both of them, and I had a feeling myself that they weren't getting anywhere. They would break and go down and have a coke or something, and I would follow them down, and I felt very sad, and very sympathetic to both of them.

What about the shooting of the party?

Had we been able to use the party in Maine, maybe just as a half-hour film by itself, it might have been great because there were a lot of things happening. There was this guy Bill painting away, and Billy was taking photographs of Bill painting; plus there was a party going on in the other part of the building and people were being very intellectual and doing all kinds of hand movements, drinking and smoking, and it was fine that way. But when it came down to Antoinette's flirtation with the chap in the red shirt, that was hard, because we had to establish them sitting there, we had to establish that the rest of the party was going on, and there was a terrific clatter that Chris had trouble with. Meanwhile, in the back, Billy was going somewhere or doing something when a lot of the pertinent stuff between Antoinette and Red Shirt was taking place. Billy, in fact, was disengaging himself from the whole party, and doing his own thing, taking stills with his camera.

Had you forewarned the people at the party?

Yes, we asked them to have a party, and get their friends around. It was set up for the purpose of filming the contemporaries that Billy and Antoinette socialized with, to let the audience know that their friends were a bit kooky. But I am sure there would have been a party sooner or later.

Could you say something about filming what I call the "record love sequence?"

This is one where they got the stereo set and the Beatle records. They had bought a hi-fi, and Billy brought it home, and they talked about getting the records. We shot them right through, from the beginning of Billy bringing in the cartons and opening them up, and there was an air of excitement. They hadn't had any kind of record player in the house, and they both dug music, so it was kind of exciting, and it was going to be nice. They put on the records, they started dancing—the dancing is great, the music is great, how can anything be any better, but how could you do the shots without getting in their way. We did all the usual shots, low-angle shots, shots up between them, holding the camera above them, getting close—I guess that's where the window came in for variety. The particular choice of where the music stopped fitted in quite well, and using the music, through the window to me was very exciting. That was just a beautiful sequence!

What about arguments between a cameraman and director in the sense that the cameraman thinks he has a magnificent series of shots, and the director doesn't want to use them. Was there any sequence you would like to have seen used purely from a photographic point of view?

Yes. There was another dance, done that same stereo night, which I liked very much. They were just kind of fooling around, and just swinging each other round and round and I framed so that you would see Billy's full face framed grinning away, and the next moment with a natural wipe of hair or something, you see Antoinette coming in and filling the same frame, and I went across her, and you get them going away from each other. I argued a fair bit about those, and Allan had them both in to start with, but there wasn't room for them, and he took that one out. I am glad he left the one he did in, but I was sorry to see the other one go. Another one was in Maine, down by the water front of the little town they were in. They were walking around, looking at boats, and the color of it seemed just very soft. It was a bit blue—it wasn't color-color, but had a very pleasant atmosphere to it.

In terms of color did you tell Billy or Antoinette what to wear?

No, only on a couple of occasions for continuity's sake—Allan would ask Billy to wear a particular suit and shirt to the office, and maybe he would ask Antoinette to come downstairs in the morning wearing a particular dressing gown or housecoat to try and keep a bit of continuity from a scene that he had seen in the rushes that he felt might be quite pertinent.

Are there any things about the photography or direction that we haven't gone over?

FICTION DOCUMENTARY

I guess the most significant thing in that kind of shooting is the trust the director has in the camera crew, and the confidence that the cameraman has in the director, that the director is telling him the truth, that what he is doing is right or wrong. There's also the question of trust and confidence between the crew and the principals. I guess one of the nicest things in this regard happened at the end of shooting, when both Billy and Antoinette said "We could never have done this film with anyone else," which meant to me that we had done the right thing.

THE EDITOR: ARLA SAARE

I started as a medical photographer in a hospital. During the war I applied to the National Film Board which was being organized under John Grierson, and started as a cutter; I then went into the optical and special effects department (fades, dissolves, special effects of all kinds, shooting animation) and shot some of McLaren's early animation on the animation stand. When the CBC started in Toronto in 1952, I applied there as an editor, and worked there for a year cutting news, news magazines, sport shows. Then when Vancouver television opened up, I transferred over, and it was there that we set up a small, very active film unit—Ron Kelly was there, Darrel Duke, Allan King, and various other young film enthusiasts. After a while, most of the film work came to be based on Toronto, so I left the CBC and came here as a free-lancer. At that point, I worked on mostly CBC shows, for three years. I was doing "Telescopes," which is a documentary style mostly centered on some prominent person—a profile. I did various shows, *Open Grave* for instance, hour-long shows for Intertel, a Nature series, and so on.

How long have you been associated with Allan King?

I met Allan in Vancouver in 1964 where I cut his film *Skid Row*. Then when *A Married Couple* came up, he asked me if I would cut it, but the CBC wouldn't release me, so dear old Allan waited for five months for me to get free of my contract.

Could you give me your method of working with Allan on this film?

I suppose in a sense this was quite different from any other kind of film I've done, because Allan had screened all 63 hours of the film many times. The first 10 hours were not acceptable technically, and possibly also from the point of view of the two people involved; and so when I first began to work with Allan, it was rather strange. Normally I would screen a film with a director, and if he had a point of view, or a structure, he would explain it, and let me carry on; after a rough assembly he would look at it, make some changes before the fine cut, and then the film would be frozen. But in this instance, I found it rather curious that Allan and I would sit here, and he would say, "Well now, roll 102 has some interesting stuff, let's look at it." He wouldn't look at the film on the Moviola, but would watch my reaction to it. He knew pretty well what he wanted, I think, but he was interested in having a fresh point of view, maybe even a woman's point of view, I don't know, but I could see him watching me rather intently, and if I reacted favorably, it was put aside, and we would say then, "Let's use this."

Can you recall some of the favorable and unfavorable reactions?

I suppose what always interested me in screening the rushes was the sense of humor through the whole thing, and the quickness of the repartee. I would often laugh uproariously at the Moviola, certainly on the opening, when Billy and Antoinette close the door on the outside world, and start talking about the harpsichord. I felt that was a very good opening because it showed both of them sort of egging the other on and laughing at each other, and just seeing how far each could push the other.

You said a moment ago you couldn't use things because they were technically wrong, but also because they were wrong from the point of view of Billy and Antoinette. Can you think of anything which you considered was wrong or in bad taste and therefore not used?

I can't think of anything that was in bad taste. I'm simply speaking in terms of interest within a situation. Something would develop and not carry through; a great deal of the footage was very boring. For instance, the general routine of the marriage—the cooking, the cleaning, and reading the paper, the tantrums of little Bogart, people calling—all that sort of general routine that had to be covered in order to get a broad picture of their married life. Some of it was good but a lot of it was extremely boring.

Okay, so you take out 10 or so hours. Where do you go from there?

Then we started to pull out all the things that interested us, and to assemble them. We tried right off to have some sort of vague general order, or general structure.

Did you order that structure, or did Allan compose that structure?

Allan did it originally, in order for us to have a starting point. He said, "Now I think we might begin here, and go on to here, and here," and so on; and certainly, at the very beginning, his structure was wrong. From the show-biz point of view, he felt that right off the bat we should have a violent argument. However, we could see in our first three-and-a-half hour screening that it was too violent. Possibly four of us looked at the very rough assembly of all the material that Allan and I found interesting, and it was apparent, even before we pared it down, that our major problem was going to be structure.

So you pulled all the interesting material, and cut it into sequences without having any idea as to the eventual order?

Yes, we cut it into sequences because of the way it was shot—possibly ten minutes on one segment without a camera stop. Allan and I would view it on the Moviola and say, "Out of this ten minutes, the first three minutes is good, and then it goes flat, so let's take out a minute there, and pick it up again, and pick this up"; and out of the ten minutes, we would possibly end up with five minutes, without any sort of refinement whatsoever. The segments we chose had to interest us from some point of view—humor, violence and antagonism, tenderness, whatever.

You then have twenty or thirty segments which you can label violence or humor and put on rolls?

They weren't really labelled violence or humor or tenderness; they were labelled strangely enough: "Argument about a Harpsichord"; or "Lunch at the Café de la Paix—Antoinette and her friend"; or "Playing horsey with Bogart"; or "Petula Clark, dance record."

How did you decide on the beginning and the end of the film?

Well the beginning remained pretty well the way we had started originally. It was very difficult to find the beginning. It's so much easier in a film that is structured from the very beginning; in one minute, you can set a scene. When there is no structure, when it is *vérité*, it takes much longer because the scenes aren't shot in that way, and therefore, you have to find some device.

You start with the discussion about the harpsichord. Had you any alternatives for the beginning in mind?

We had three. Allan originally thought we should begin right off the bat and show an argument. Then he also toyed with the idea of beginning with that wonderful scene where Antoinette is sitting on Billy's lap and they are playing *The Magic Flute*, and she is weeping. Allan wanted to begin with that but then he thought, that will put off the average movie-going audience: who knows *The Magic Flute*, and what kind of arty film is this? So we stayed with the discussion about the harpsichord at the beginning. It was a little stilted, but I think it had humor to it, and right off the bat, they go upstairs and go to bed; and we begin to see a little bit of their problems about marriage, because Antoinette doesn't want Billy to bother her. Of course, at that point, we have to see what the house is like, find the child, see the dog, see what kind of a job he has, what kind of a person she is. This originally was quite long, and involved the boring mechanics of setting the scene, what kind of house they have and so on, and showing their status.

How far does Allan work over you, and how far does he leave you alone?

Normally, directors and producers leave me very much alone, but in this instance, because Allan was so conversant with the whole topic of the marriage in crisis, and I'm a single person, I never argued with him, because I could never find anything to argue with—except possibly later on. At our first screening with a large audience (maybe 30 people) it was quite evident that the film was sympathetic to Antoinette, and Billy was terribly unlikeable. And so at that point, Allan said, "We must soften Billy, get more interesting stuff of Billy, and cut Antoinette down a bit, so there will be more of a balance." Then Allan and I looked at all the materials that we had discarded, and were able jointly, and with no argument, to say, "This is just great, he looks fine here, he's sympathetic, he's funny, a little pathetic."

Can you give me an example of material which you added to make Billy appear more sympathetic?

There's a wonderful scene where they have unpacked their stereo equipment and are playing records and dancing. They are both very gay, and having a lot of fun, and then at the end of it, they go upstairs and to bed, and he sits on her bed and he says, "There are only three things in life I want, fame," (fame is what he wants most—I've forgotten the other two) and she says, "Not me, I want people to like me." He says, "You're such a liar, you want fame too, you want everyone around to say, 'There she is, there she goes, the beautiful Mrs. Edwards'." Obviously she is very desirable to him at that moment, so he picks her up and takes her into the master bed, and pleads with her to please stay there but she says, "Why do I have to stay here? Why can't I sleep in my own bed—for weeks you let me sleep in my own bed." Billy is still pleading with her, and she says, "That was the answer when we first got married, that was the answer—separate bedrooms," but that was ten years ago. So he was very pleading and very soft and I think it gave a full dimension at that point that we needed very badly.

Are you saying that the whole of this sequence was only inserted at a later stage?

Yes. It's a beautiful sequence, and I don't know why we didn't include it earlier. I suppose we were so interested in the car fight, and that terrible fight that still sends shivers up my spine

where he throws her out of the house. Another sequence we added later was that charming sequence about the new regime: "There's going to be a new thing in this house, we are going to sprinkle spiritual Lux around," that was added at a later time. In effect, we were adding a gay later sequence, and a little gay, soft, sympathetic to Billy sequence.

What were the other sequences that were filmed, but which you decided not to use?

There was one sequence that I was desperately anxious to have in. At the end of the party, in Maine, they go to bed, and it's 4 o'clock in the morning, and Antoinette says, "Bring the clock," and he says, "What do you want the clock for?" and she says, "So I can see what time it is when we get up," and he says, "I'm not going to bring it," and she snuggles down in bed, and says, "Bring it," and he says, "I won't"; she says, "You jerk." The whole sequence was so gay and so delightful that I hated to lose it. I suppose it was mostly the quality of the shooting, and the iron bedstead, and it was so obviously a cottage, and they had had a good time at the party and most of all Antoinette was so delighted to go to bed so late, and wanted that clock so badly, and he wouldn't bring it.

Allan said it was very difficult to cut the party sequence; can you explain why?

The party sequence gave us more trouble than anything else because we were trying to show Antoinette being very interested in another man. When we were looking at the rushes they lasted for a good hour. (Of her talking to this other guy at the party.) She was putting on for him, and he was interested in her, and there was the play of hands, and the unconscious play with wedding rings, and she was looking terribly sexy. Looking at this, it was so obvious to us that she was putting herself on for this man, that she was fascinated by him, and he was by her, but when it came to cutting it down, and telescoping it into four or five minutes, nothing worked. The sex part didn't come out, her dress slowly falling off, and this playing with wedding rings—nothing worked. I had it cut, I would say four times, and put everything back where it was originally, and we looked at it again, and tried to find other segments of it that would bring out this strange sort of interlude. But we couldn't make it work. Finally, we made it work by having Patricia Watson come in, and look at it with us again, and strangely in the end it did work, but not because we used the most sexy scenes, but because we used lines that had no real meaning at all. Pat suggested this business of taking sentences that really had no meaning, and putting them together so that we weren't following what they were saying so much as just watching. Originally, our problem had been one of trying to make their conversation make sense.

Can we talk about problems of structure?

I would say that, next to the party sequence in Maine, structure gave us the most trouble. We had three or four or five major ingredients. We had the car fight which was terribly important; we had the record-return fight, which was important; we had the lovely tender scene that was important. Originally, the tender scene followed a party in Toronto, and that party was shot by Richard, and obviously he wasn't interested in the party.

What do you call the lovely tender scene?

Where she is sitting on his lap and they are playing *The Magic Flute*. It now follows the sequence in Maine, so of course, we had to move that around. But the party in Toronto, as far as I was concerned, was a disaster—I couldn't make anything work in it, and it wasn't important anyway. We had trouble locating the tender scene, but it made sense to us to have it follow the party in Maine. In other words, you can take what you like out of why she is crying, after her session with the other man. As a viewer, and as an editor, I would say that when Antoinette is sitting on Billy's lap, weeping, and we hear the lovely *Magic Flute*, we take it—or I take it, as I think most of the audience takes it—that she regrets the session with the young attractive man whom she has just had a strange conversation with, and she regrets the misunderstandings and arguments that they have, and so in effect, she is weeping for everything that takes them apart from each other.

This of course, is fiction documentary, and

you put things together nonchronologically. Do you think that the audience has realized this is not a chronological sequence?

I am sure that the audience doesn't realize this, and I don't see why they should. I don't see why we shouldn't present something that makes sense in some form of structure of our own, because we can all take out of this film what we choose to take out of it, but I think it's rather wonderful that we were able to make that one scene so poignant by having it follow a flirtation scene—and she is a real flirt in that scene.

Did you have difficulties with the ending?

No, there were no alternative endings. The problem was where to put the car fight. We juggled, I would say for a good six weeks, Allan and I. We juggled the car fight, we had it early, we had it late, and finally we realized that we would have to have it within the first third of the film, in order to give the film strength and to give the film a meaning, because there were so many sequences in the film that were either just funny or routine, things that we had to get out of the way.

Coming back to basic problems of cutting, if you have say a ten-minute sequence, do you work from a transcript on which Allan underlines, "cut from here to here," or are you just looking at the viewer, and say, "All right we'll take it from here, from this point to this point?"

No, Allan and I screened every sequence pretty thoroughly, and on the Moviola we made up our minds as to where we should begin, and what segment out of that we would use. We had transcripts to work from, and of course originally we had chosen very long sequences, but after it was pared down, we were able to cut it rather finely. In fact it was very difficult to cut. Normally one's angle changes so often in a feature film. You have so many choices—you can do over-the-shoulder shots, you can go in for a close-up, you can get reaction shots, everything —but in this film, that was impossible, because the camera, although it was moving, didn't change framing that often; and so if we removed ten seconds here, and thirty seconds there, it caused great problems.

Normally, I would assume you would start your editing while the filming was still going on. So the editor can say to the photographer, I want this and this additional. Now here, the filming had been completely finished.

The filming had been completely finished and the footage had been sitting for roughly four or five months before we started on it. But in no way was this a director's film. Allan will verify this—he sat out in the hallway most of the time, because he didn't want to intrude. I think in only one instance was there any direction at all, any set up, and that was when Antoinette was in the Café de la Paix talking to her friend about her marriage. A lot of people have picked this up as one aspect of the film that doesn't ring true, that looks like an interview, and I think they are right.

If you had been around while Richard was shooting, is there anything you would have asked him for which would have made your editing task simpler?

No. There was no way I could say, "Richard, get me that close-up of Bogart at the table, get me this and get me that"—there was just nothing, no way, with all the shooting that was going on, no way I could possibly have foreseen.

What were the changes made between rough cut and fine cut?

Mostly paring out unessential setting-up scenes, mostly paring down within a sequence, cutting down the car fight (as fascinating as it was, I think possibly it is still a little long), altering structure. Where do we have a beginning and an end, how do we progress through it, how do we keep humor, argument, that whole very delicate balance of keeping a film moving. For a long time, we thought of having a flashback to Maine by using a sort of standard technique of showing slides, so we could see slides on the screen, and then get to the holiday in Maine and the swim, but that proved to be too artificial.

You said that this was very different from the way you normally cut a film.

Normally, cutting say a half-hour film for television, a director would come to me, and I would see with him possibly 10,000 feet of film, and he would say, "This is what interested me about this man, these are the things I liked; I've shot this of him for you walking through the

woods, and I've shot this, and I've got a shot showing him painting, and talking about his interests and his hobbies." It would then be up to me to structure it from there, and I would always have complete freedom except for a few changes that the director or producer would suggest. Within three weeks, the film would be finished, and it would be mostly my structure. But *A Married Couple* was so different because it needed the director and myself to talk constantly about the impact of scenes, to discuss structure, to cut it down where we felt either one was being maligned, or not being fair to another person. It was much more a twosome in this marriage film than any other film I had worked on.

What would you say was the biggest satisfaction you got out of this film?

When Allan first showed me the rushes, and asked me if I would cut it, he showed me the car fight, and I listened to it and I was horrified. I was taken aback by the language, taken back by the arguments, and I really disliked the couple. But at the end of the film I knew that, under my hand, we had isolated segments out of two people's lives, in a rather cohesive order, and it showed Billy and Antoinette in a very sympathetic light; and I think the film has charm, humor, violence, and that they are two very ordinary, very wonderful people.

JAY LEYDA

Between Explosions

(AN ATTEMPT TO REPAIR A MISTAKEN JUDGEMENT)

The patriotism and national pride aroused in the Soviet Union by its defense against German aggression may account for the drastic postwar reevaluation of the prerevolutionary Russian and Ukranian cinema. The historical value of reestablishing this cultural link is now generally recognized among Soviet writers who are concerned with film criticism, analysis, and history. The work of Bauer and Chardynin, among other prerevolutionary film-makers, can be examined today with respect—and that particular struggle against a mechanical division has been won.

There is, however, another division that remains, unjustly and harmfully. All accounts of Soviet film history (including my own*) display a too easy and complacent assumption related to the first years of Soviet films: that the films produced by state organizations were the only Soviet films in these years, and that the films made by private firms (which continued to work in Moscow, in the Ukraine, and on the Crimean coast) are merely remnants of a past that could not or should not be compared with the *genuine* Soviet films. Exceptions to this rule can be found, of course; Mayakovsky did most of his film work in these years for Neptune, a private firm with a reactionary reputation, yet his films are discussed as *Soviet* films.

Such exceptions, or indeed any second glance at our assumption, shatter this old generalization, or at the very least make one suspect it. At one time there may have been no opportunity to see whatever films survived from this period. Yet even without this opportunity, certain questions bubble up to the top of the mind.

Kino, a History of the Russian and Soviet Film (London, 1960).

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Kino, a History of the Russian and Soviet Film (London, 1960).

The people who made the first indisputably Soviet films—were they revolutionists either politically or artistically? The distinguished collective known as "Russ"—wasn't this a private company? What did people see on the screen in the whole year after the October Revolution, before any state organization made a fictional film? Is it Marxist to discard matters that interfere with one's arguments?

I feel the greatest private dissatisfaction about this part of my own work. I was conscious of an important transitional period after the October Revolution—when the new Bolshevik films contained repudiated ideologies as well as new, and the continuing productions from private firms were often the work of artists committed to the future (Mayakovsky is only the most notable instance of this)—for which I did not know the necessary films and materials. I should have pursued this problem with more persistence—but I did not. Since 1961, I've had no excuse for not facing the issue, for basic materials then became available.

The key document in making our delayed examination of this period is a "Catalogue of Films of Private Production (1917-1921)," added to the indices of the third volume in the admirable publication by Gosfilmofond of all *Soviet Fictional Films* (1961). This catalogue is noted as "prepared by V. Ye. Vishnevsky" (who died at the end of the war), but obviously further work was done on it later by the staff of Gosfilmofond; for example, it helpfully tells us whether each film, either wholly or partially, has been preserved. Less helpfully (and this is uncharacteristic of Vishnevsky) the whole list is published alphabetically, without divisions into years—though Vishnevsky always had a firm sense of the *time* for each film and each event. One way to disguise the significance of an event —whether in literary, art, or film history—is to remove or blur its time relationships to other events. I too enjoy establishing a chronological base for each study I begin, so I rearranged the 350 films of "private production"* into their years of production, to see what would emerge.

This is not an easy period to study in any case, for film production was scattered over a whole country deep in civil war, and we know little about the exact control of the production centers: Odessa and Yalta, for example, changed from Red to White hands, or from German to French occupation, with a dizzying suddenness that must have had a most unnerving effect on the desperately surviving film groups there. So no attempt at a purely chronological order could ever fully answer the questions of this period. Some films in the catalogue cannot be dated; some films may not even have been made (after their hopeful announcement) or completed; many films appear to have been made, but not shown, and a large proportion never reached Moscow audiences. Nor is this list complete: some films known to have been made are missing from it. The chaos reminds us (though with more violence) of the first years of cinema, twenty years earlier. With questionable intelligence one producer, Taldykin, buried his unreleased negatives to escape the nationalization order of August 1919 (that became operative in January 1920)—and ruined his treasure. For various reasons some films were released a considerable time after they were made. After the production in the winter of 1919 of *Polikushka,* the most famous (private!) film of this period, it was not until October 1922 that positive film could be bought abroad to print copies for public showings and distribution.

In the first month of new films released throughout Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution (as far as this month can be reconstructed from Vishnevsky's data) one cannot detect much change in the film diet offered by the private firms. The sensational and macabre subjects that were characteristic of the war years continue, with a sprinkling of "new" subjects made possible by the February Revolution and the overthrow of the monarchy. It took much longer for the October Revolution to influence the themes of Russian fictional films. On November 9, two days after the taking of the Win-

*Of these, parts of 48 films were reported in 1961 as preserved in the archive of Gosfilmofond; a few of these appear to be complete. More copies may have been discovered and added since.

ter Palace, the Petrograd and Moscow publics were offered *The Vampire Woman,* from the biggest producer, Yermoliev. It and all of the following had, of course, been begun during the summer of 1917 or earlier:

November 13—*Ah, How Did You, Evil Fate, Take Me to Siberia* (Neptune)*

November 19—*Dissolute Fellow* (Taldykin, reported from Astrakhan)

November 22—*Falling Flames* (Kharitonov, reported from Kursk); this was the first of three adaptations of a novel by Nemirovich-Danchenko, *Marsh Fires*

November 23—*Crucified Love* (Neptune)

November 25—*People of Burning Passions* (Biofilm, reported from Odessa)

November 27—*Take Care of the Hearth—The Fire Goes Out* (Kharitonov, reported from Kharkov); an important film of 1917, directed by Chardynin, with Kholodnaya, Maximov, and Runich

November 27—*The Sad One* (Kagan, reported from Rostov-na-Don)

November 28—*Behind the Screen* (Yermoliev); a drama of film-actors in which Mozhukhin and Lisenko played the roles of Mozhukhin and Lisenko (an incomplete copy of this film has been preserved).

A political film of this month, *Towards the People's Power,* produced by the Skobelev Committee, and directed by Wladyslaw Starewicz, had trouble, according to this note in the "Catalogue": "Menshevik-SR [Social-Revolutionaries] film on the elections to the Constituent Assembly was released in Moscow in November 1917. In January 1918 it was proposed to re-issue the film 'with changes,' but it was forbidden by the Kino Committee."

While the film producers maintained power in Moscow, it was the theater-owners in Petrograd who led the film opposition to the new government. As I already have given, in *Kino,* a rather detailed account of their private war, I need not summarize it here again, except to say that it must be kept in mind as an important factor in any analysis of this period. And it was their opposition (and devious practices) that caused the several restrictive decrees that led finally to full nationalization. The first successful attempts to bring trade union supervision into the film industry followed the February Revolution, and producers and theater-owners joined forces to combat the rise of any other authority. As the left wing creative workers, who then joined the movement for unionization, later produced some of the significant films of 1918, their names should be mentioned here: Perestiani, Chardynin, Gardin, Bonch-Tomashevsky.

The first thing that strikes one in examining a chronologically arranged list of the private films produced after the October Revolution is the great quantity made in 1918—and how many of them had "left" themes. Though it is a most unwise method to draw conclusions about films from printed sources, I am forced to this by not having seen all the fragments of this period—either of its private or state productions—that have survived. It is a situation comparable to an investigation of the films made during Hungary's soviet government of 1919—in the face of the physical destruction of the films themselves. Literary sources tell little about films' quality as films, though they do give us some information about the attitudes of this period. In examining the list of private films made in 1918 I am struck by the "advanced" level of their sources; the number of times, for instance, that Chekhov and Tolstoy were used, neither of whom could have been chosen for sensational reasons. Pushkin's stories are so ideal as film stories that one is not surprised to find them here, too, but the use of Dostoyevsky, Gogol, Lermontov, Pisemsky—and even Chernyshevsky and Sholom Aleichem—points distinctly to progress, in treatment as well as in theme. There is nothing here for Soviet historians to be ashamed of.

And the foreign literature used is notable, too. Even after discounting the wartime vogue for anything foreign, and the studios' use of

*A warning: It is a mistake to dismiss films because of titles that sound old-fashioned and laughable today—the film behind the "silly" title could be valuable.

cheap foreign successes (W. J. Locke, Georges Ohnet, Hall Caine, Maurice Leblanc) there is still much to catch our attention, though we can't see what the Russian film-makers did with it. From French literature it was as natural to draw from Maupassant's and Merimée's stories as from Pushkin's, but I am rather surprised at the number of Zola works found in this list: *Travail, La Béte Humaine, Thérèse Raquin, Docteur Pascal.* From England, besides the expected Locke favorites, there are the more unexpected *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett's satire, *Buried Alive,* and H. G. Wells's *Stolen Youth.* Elinor Glyn's *Three Weeks* (later treated solemnly in Hollywood) became Protazanov's base for a royal satire,* *The Queen's Secret.* I am also rather surprised to find, here, Ibsen's *When Will We Dead Awaken?*, Hauptmann's *Weavers, That Third One* by Sienkiewicz, Molnar's *Mr. Protector*—and even Sacher-Masoch's *Valeria Belmont!* (This last might not be regarded as progress in all quarters.)

In this period several new artists joined films. Mayakovsky had long been interested in films but he did not make a serious attempt to enter them, as writer and actor, until now—with *three* films in 1918. Fyodor Komissarzhevsky directed his first films now, but after emigration he returned to his first medium, the theater. Another director recruited from the theater was Boris Sushkevich, who brought the prestige of the Moscow Art Theater with him; another director from Stanislavsky's theater, Leopold Sullerzhitsky, agreed to make a film for Russ just before his early death. Khanshonkov, who encouraged so many debuts in the Russian cinema, introduced Olga Rakhmanova to film direction in 1918. Alexei Tolstoy wrote his first film scenario (*Love's Current,* for Neptune), and so did Vera Inber, and if a little more money had been offered to Alexander Blok, he too would have entered films as a scenarist in 1918. In spite of civil war, confused loyalties, and difficult physical conditions, it seems to have been a hopeful period for film-makers seeking new resolutions of the contradictions around them.

The great changes of 1917 had the effect of loosening traditions in all fields, including cinema. Things were tried now that might have been unthinkable in more "normal" days. With the help of Soifer the dancer Mikhail Mordkin filmed his new ballet, *Aziade* (partially preserved). Previously Georgia had been used only as a colorful location for films, but now the Georgian film came to life; *The Decapitated Corpse*† may not have been an auspicious beginning in 1919 for the Gilma Company in Tiflis, but they went on to better things—stories drawn from Georgian life and legend. The cameraman on these was Digmelov, who was to distinguish himself more conspicuously in the first Soviet Georgian films.

There was also an original genre of semi-biographical films that sounds worth investigation. *The Obmanov Family* was based on a new satirical novel about the Romanovs. *The Affairist* satirized the financial speculations of General Voyekov (a speculating general must be one of the most delicate of subjects!). *Saboteurs* dramatized the last years of Leonid Andreyev's life. *Apostle* is a biography of the Ukrainian philosopher Grigori Skovoroda. (Both the last two were made in Odessa.) Tiflis contributed *Fire-Worshippers* (1920), based on the life of the Persian poet Hafiz. And how I wish I could see the several films that were made in these years about film-makers and film-making! After *Behind the Screen* the producer Kharitonov entered the competition with a film about Kholodnaya, *Thorny Path to Glory,* acted by Kholodnaya, Runich, and Chardynin (playing the role of the cameraman). In Yalta, Drankov made *The Life of Garrison,* a "biography" of the popular Danish film actor, Valdemar Psilander (who had been given the name of "Garrison" by his Russian distributors). Soifer directed a

*One should note the large number of satires on the full list—a genre not encouraged before 1917 and rare in later years. But Umberto Notari's *Three Thieves* was used *four* times, in 1916, 1918, 1923 and 1926.

†Directed by Barsky, whose claim to a more permanent place in film history is as Captain Golikov in *Potemkin.*

drama of the film studios, *Let Death Come Tomorrow—Today We Live* (a revealing title), and Mayakovsky wrote *Shackled by Film* for Neptune.

Though the most influential of prerevolutionary Russian cinema artists, Yevgeni Bauer, died in Yalta in 1917 during Khanzhonkov's production of Bauer's last film, *The King of Paris,* many of his contemporaries continued interesting work through the next confusing years. Young Lev Kuleshov, who was to become the leading theoretician of the first decade of Soviet cinema, had worked as Bauer's designer and assistant, and in 1918 directed his first film, *Engineer Prite's Project,* also for Khanzhonkov. Between the universally acclaimed *Father Sergius* and his European period, Yakov Protazanov made nine films for Yermoliev, work that cannot be ignored. Only the three earliest of these films survive. (One of these, *Hero of the Soul,* is dismissed in the "Catalogue" with the note: "This film received a very poor press." Yet the press of March 1918 seems an inadequate judge—would it not be better to look at the film and try to judge it newly?*) At least half of the known directors followed their producers into emigration, but enough remained to provide some sort of continuity to Russian cinema before and after October. Most of these film-makers were so saturated in tradition that they cannot be said to have changed the Russian cinema into Soviet cinema except in a new range of subjects. So one finds, in the first years after nationalization, and even after the appearance of *Potemkin* and *Mother,* many forced marriages between new subjects and old methods—usually with the outworn methods preventing anything more than the surface of the new subjects from reaching their audience.

The first acknowledged Soviet films were shown for the first anniversary, in November 1918. All were made for the Moscow and Petrograd Kino Committees, but a glance at their directors reveals that these are the same directors who continued in 1918 and 1919 to work for the private film firms (for there were no other opportunities for film employment): Panteleyev, Kasyanov, Sushkevich, Arkatov (who died a few years ago in Hollywood), and Razumny (who is still alive in Moscow). Razumny was the first of the prerevolutionary directors who joined the Communist Party, but he had worked in Russian films too long for this to alter his methods fundamentally. Only some of the writers were new to films, Lunacharsky (then Commissar of Education) making his debut as a scenarist, and Serafimovich, the novelist. The cameramen were also borrowed from the private studios—but Tissé (for *Signal)* is a name from outside that circle, from the developing newsreel.

In 1919 the state organizations tried a new collaboration with the "old guard" to get their ideas to the public—commissioning each of the large studios to produce agitfilms *for* the Moscow and Petrograd committees, chiefly to celebrate the first birthday of the Red Army. The centenary of Turgenev's birth was also being celebrated, which accounts for the several Turgenev adaptations among these collaborations. The Yermoliev Company was assigned seven subjects (three by Turgenev), and they were directed by Sabinsky or Ivanovsky. Neptune was given eight varied subjects, none of them by Turgenev. Khanzhonkov was assigned two subjects, both political and directed by Perestiani. Russ was assigned four subjects, all directed by Zhelyabuzhsky.

Yuri Zhelyabuzhsky (1888-1955) is a key figure of this period, with his links to both left-intellectuals and right-producers, the worlds of art and administration (through his mother, the actress Andryeva, and her friend Gorky), and his enthusiasm for both the techniques and uses of his newly discovered medium, cinema. His

*But for a Yermoliev film, *Parasite* (directed in 1918 by Ivanovsky and Volkov), which has *not* been preserved, the "Catalogue" adds an unusually detailed synopsis: "An example of private firms adapting to the demands of the new public; the film shows the 'regeneration' of a rake, a general's son, under the influence of his love for a forester's daughter whom he marries; he then 'improves' the conditions of the peasants on his estate. In a revised editing this film was shown in workers' clubs in 1923-24 despite protests from worker-correspondents." (p. 258)

first film job was as assistant cutter in 1915 on Meyerhold's *Picture of Dorian Gray*. Through Andreyeva and Gorky his enthusiasm was later channeled to be of direct assistance to Lenin's program for educational films, but before this Zhelyabuzhsky had moved from camerawork to scenarios and direction (without giving up his camera job) at Russ, where he was totally responsible for one of the praised films of the transitional period, *Tsarevich Alexei*, and shared the direction with Sanin and Otsep of *Maids of the Mountain* and *Polikushka*. For the 1918 Russ series exposing religious sects there were various directors but the cameraman was always Zhelyabuzhsky—suggesting that he may have initiated the series.

After Trofimov, the owner of Russ, had left Russia, the members of the studio formed their own "artistic collective," continuing to operate as a private company, with the support of Lunacharsky, and the farsighted management of Moisei Aleinikov.* It was in the hard winter of 1919-20 that this group produced *Polikushka*, the first postrevolutionary film to gain fame abroad. Yet this was only one of several private Russian groups to make films after 1917 with more than a commercial motive.

After the October explosion of 1917 that shook the world it was nine years before Soviet films changed the film world, with the explosion of the work of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Vertov before the European film audiences, critics, and film-makers of 1926. This was so sudden and exciting that there has always been a general reluctance to investigate the years of preparation for that second explosion. It is time now, more than fifty years after the first explosion, to remove all the simplistic explanations that hold us from the vastly complicated and dramatically real reasons for the birth of *Battleship Potemkin*.

Eisenstein holds one key to this, the circumstances of Soviet society in 1925 hold another—and I believe that we can afford to neglect nothing that touched films in the preceding years in our search for more keys to this towering phenomenon of twentieth-century art.

*As time went on, and as Russ was amalgamated with Mezhrabpom to become the second largest Soviet studio, Aleinikov played a less positive role, placing studio profits ahead of artistic accomplishments and the creative welfare of the artists. Aleinikov is the author of the definitive biography of Protazanov (1961).

Reviews

SATYRICON

Director: Federico Fellini. Producer: Alberto Grimaldi. Screenplay: Fellini and Bernardino Zapponi. Photography: Guiseppe Rotunno. UA.

All of Fellini's films have been constructed around performances, from the feats of Zampano in *La Strada* to the dreams of Juliet in *Juliet of the Spirits;* his characters are all in some way theatrical, playing either on literal stages or in the theater of the mind. In *Satyricon* once again, theatricality is a central theme: there is the literal theater of Vernacchio, there is the pyramidal brothel, where all kinds of performances are available, there is the gladiatorial performance of Encolpius against Lichas or against the Minotaur; and there are other, more implicit kinds of performance, such as Trimalchio's feast, where all the banqueteers are performers, vying with each other for their host's favor, or the suicide of the patrician and his wife, staged to look like the sequence of events in a series of faded Pompeian frescos. For Fellini the situation of the actors is a profoundly suggestive archetype, one to which he constantly returns and from which he draws philosophical implications.

Critics of *Satyricon*, such as Alberto Moravia (*New York Review*, March 26, 1970) and John Simon (*New York Times*, May 10, 1970) fault the film for its dreamlike quality and the corresponding mechanization of its characters who repeat the same actions over and over instead of freely evolving in new configurations. In rebuttal of this quite gratuitous attack, I would like to point out that in such a picaresque or

first film job was as assistant cutter in 1915 on Meyerhold's *Picture of Dorian Gray*. Through Andreyeva and Gorky his enthusiasm was later channeled to be of direct assistance to Lenin's program for educational films, but before this Zhelyabuzhsky had moved from camerawork to scenarios and direction (without giving up his camera job) at Russ, where he was totally responsible for one of the praised films of the transitional period, *Tsarevich Alexei*, and shared the direction with Sanin and Otsep of *Maids of the Mountain* and *Polikushka*. For the 1918 Russ series exposing religious sects there were various directors but the cameraman was always Zhelyabuzhsky—suggesting that he may have initiated the series.

After Trofimov, the owner of Russ, had left Russia, the members of the studio formed their own "artistic collective," continuing to operate as a private company, with the support of Lunacharsky, and the farsighted management of Moisei Aleinikov.* It was in the hard winter of 1919-20 that this group produced *Polikushka*, the first postrevolutionary film to gain fame abroad. Yet this was only one of several private Russian groups to make films after 1917 with more than a commercial motive.

After the October explosion of 1917 that shook the world it was nine years before Soviet films changed the film world, with the explosion of the work of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Vertov before the European film audiences, critics, and film-makers of 1926. This was so sudden and exciting that there has always been a general reluctance to investigate the years of preparation for that second explosion. It is time now, more than fifty years after the first explosion, to remove all the simplistic explanations that hold us from the vastly complicated and dramatically real reasons for the birth of *Battleship Potemkin*.

Eisenstein holds one key to this, the circumstances of Soviet society in 1925 hold another—and I believe that we can afford to neglect nothing that touched films in the preceding years in our search for more keys to this towering phenomenon of twentieth-century art.

*As time went on, and as Russ was amalgamated with Mezhrabpom to become the second largest Soviet studio, Aleinikov played a less positive role, placing studio profits ahead of artistic accomplishments and the creative welfare of the artists. Aleinikov is the author of the definitive biography of Protazanov (1961).

Reviews

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All of Fellini's films have been constructed around performances, from the feats of Zampano in *La Strada* to the dreams of Juliet in *Juliet of the Spirits;* his characters are all in some way theatrical, playing either on literal stages or in the theater of the mind. In *Satyricon* once again, theatricality is a central theme: there is the literal theater of Vernacchio, there is the pyramidal brothel, where all kinds of performances are available, there is the gladiatorial performance of Encolpius against Lichas or against the Minotaur; and there are other, more implicit kinds of performance, such as Trimalchio's feast, where all the banqueteers are performers, vying with each other for their host's favor, or the suicide of the patrician and his wife, staged to look like the sequence of events in a series of faded Pompeian frescos. For Fellini the situation of the actors is a profoundly suggestive archetype, one to which he constantly returns and from which he draws philosophical implications.

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episodic film character *must* be unified, since character provides the continuity that holds the film together.

Neither Moravia nor Simon has seen how the monolithic consistency of character contributes to the expression of the film's theme nor how, under an ever-changing surface of shapes and colors, Fellini has given coherent expression to one of his principal themes. This theme, which might be called the fable of the monster, appears in a host of forms in *La Strada, La Dolce Vita,* and *Juliet of the Spirits;* it revolves around the ambiguity of the monstrous, and expresses itself in the proposition that man is inherently monstrous but can be redeemed by love *(La Strada),* or by understanding *(Juliet),* or perhaps cannot be redeemed *(La Dolce Vita).* In *Satyricon,* we have a series of theatrical representations in which the banally beautiful young heroes, quite ordinary young men who represent (Fellini has told us) the youth of today,* encounter a series of monstrous creatures or events, only to triumph over them not by strength or wits but by beauty. The monster is rendered harmless: Lichas is tamed, the Minotaur repents, the hermaphrodite proves to be not a god but a mortal, etc. Over and over the monstrous, the threatening, the overwhelming,

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*Fellini states:

> Mankind remains ever the same, and all the principal characters of the story seem up to date. Encolpius and Ascyltus, two students who are half bourgeois provincials, half beatnicks, such as we can see in our times on the Spanish Steps in Rome, or in Paris, Amsterdam and London, go from one adventure to another —even the most reckless—without the slightest remorse, with the natural innocence and splendid vitality of two young animals.
>
> (Interview in *Cinema,* Vol. 5, No. 3)

the terrible is cleansed of its threatening aspect by the gaiety and spontaneity of Encolpius and Ascyltus. On this level, the film becomes the wish-fulfillment dream of the adolescent who, confronting a terrible world, finds that he can wander through it unscathed, thanks to his youth and beauty.

The accusation that the film is "dreamlike" brings us to Moravia's critique which is the sharpest comment to date on *Satyricon*. Moravia claims that Fellini has betrayed the Petronian representation of classical antiquity by substituting a dreamlike montage for the realism of the original:

> So through this film, Fellini takes leave of antiquity, treating it as a dream, documentable and documented but inexplicable . . . To use a generic term, it must finally be said that *Satyricon* is an expressionist film. Less in the sense of historical expressionism than in that of a representation where subjectivity pushed to the borders of the unconscious signally prevails over objectivity.

Moravia concludes that this expressionism is Fellini's way of returning to the tone of the medieval religious epic, which is his chosen mode of expression; he has betrayed both antiquity and the Renaissance view of antiquity, giving us instead an eclectic expressionistic epic with religious overtones.

The "realism" of Petronius has been exaggerated both by Simon and Moravia (much of the book is devoted to tedious and irrelevant exercises in rhetoric); both critics, moreover, tend to fall into the dichotomies of an outworn vocabulary when they demand that films be "objective" or "realistic." Such demands are irrelevant to the intentions of this work which is subjective without being idiosyncratic, deep without being obscure, concrete while remaining coherent.

Looking at *Satyricon* is like nothing we have ever done before. There is a sense of wandering in a new zone of inner geography; and we understand why Fellini stated, in a recent interview, that the film was "science fiction." As we wander past the most unusual collection of faces that has ever been assembled in a film (including many monsters), the conviction grows that the film is *strange,* that indeed its strangeness is what we are pointing at when we call it "dreamlike" or "subjective" or "expressionistic" or "unreal."

The faces, and there are hundreds of them—of pimps, of actors, of slaves and Caesars, of banqueteers, of nymphomaniacs, of gods—are distortions of typical Mediterranean types (even though the cast is in fact international); the gestures—smacking of lips, winking of eyes, shaping of hands—are enlargements of idiosyncrasies we have seen in Roman crowds or in Parisian back-alleys or at bullfights in Madrid; and yet to recognize them is still not quite to understand them. Because they *are* strange. They speak of a world that is both familiar and unknown, both near and remote; it is not our world and yet, somehow, at the same time, it is. We are implicated in the obscene spectacle of Vernacchio's theater, in the casual amorality of Giton, in the cruelty of Lichas of Tarentum. The monumental city is our own city, the people who flow through its streets our compatriots. The film is therefore a fable for our own times, a commentary on our own society. Fellini himself admits the parallel: "I could say that declining Rome was quite similar to our world today, the same fury of enjoying life, the same violence, the same lack of moral principles and ideologies, the same despair and the same self-complacency."

Yet the strangeness which implicates us in the film also distances us from it, forces it away from us, provides us with a sense of historical perspective so that we see these people as different from and alien to ourselves. This too is part of Fellini's intention: "What interests me is the pagan attitude to life before the coming of the Christian conscience. One discovers this in Petronius and it is the chief thing that I will borrow from the text, which otherwise is but the fragment of a narrative."

No doubt Fellini has taken total liberty with the text of Petronius, often changing the order of events (for example, he puts the break-up of the two friends at the start instead of after the banquet; and he puts the Lichas incident, much

changed, after the banquet instead of before) and interpolating scenes either of his own invention or lifted from other classical sources (the "marriage" of Lichas and Encolpius, the fight with the Minotaur in the maze, the episode with the hermaphorditic demigod); but he has captured the bitter sarcasm of the original and its powerful unmasking of the ugliness of Roman life in the time of Nero. It is a partial view, of course, biased in favor of the horrible, the ugly, the grotesque, but not less true for that. To underline the ugliness Fellini has invented the scene, previously mentioned, in which a virtuous patrician and his wife bid farewell to their children and then commit suicide. They are an improvisation, like the other non-Petronian elements I have mentioned, brought in for an obvious contrast.

Throughout the film one feels the vigorous competition of Fellini's imagination with the original. Fellini never hesitates to place his own inventions on a par with those of Petronius; and we accept this because *La Dolce Vita* and *8½* place him directly in the line of the earlier satirist. Fellini here shows himself as inventive an artist as Petronius who drew on his knowledge of Roman life under Nero (by whom he was condemned to death after serving the Emperor, the legend says, as sometimes procurer).

The film's strangeness places it at the proper historical distance (since history is always alien and strange); this distancing effect allows us to see *Satyricon* as if it were, truly, in the past. True history, the discovery of temporality (hence decay and death), is always terrifying. We look into *Satyricon* as we might look into the hermaphrodite's pool, and there we see other human beings who ate, talked, loved, fought, bled and died just as we do. The past, their past, is validated. It is not a figment of our imagination, it happened. Those others, now vanished, were once as substantial as we are today. In this way authentic historical awareness fills us with dread of our own death. This may help account for the film's ability to upset and even terrorize some spectators.

In its ability to capture the mythical dimension of the past, and despite any disclaimer Fellini may have made in regard to its historical *vraisemblance,* the film is historically cogent and expressive: it is true history because it is true art.

Style is another aspect of the film's strangeness. It is obvious that Fellini has a personal style which reaches its zenith in *Satyricon;* but what this style is remains difficult to say. Perhaps more than anything else style is control of the mimetic devices by which the artist conveys his inner vision; it is the ability to model shapes and forms, to regulate the flow of images, to orchestrate sounds; it is the ability to control powerful characters so that they express a precise meaning; it is the ability to make the work determinate and specific while at the same time allowing it to be indeterminate and free. The style is as strange as a new language which we hear for the first time. It is true, as Vincent Canby points out, that there is considerable continuity between this work and other Fellini films; but it is also true that Fellini has never gone so far toward the stylization of his materials and the creation of an arcane visual language.

Canby comments accurately on the form of *Satyricon*:

> The form of *Satyricon* is that of the living fresco that was disguised in *La Dolce Vita* by the presence of the journalist, Marcello, the surrogate Fellini-figure through whose eyes the film was seen. There are no surrogate Fellinis in *Satyricon.* The film is a single vision, presented almost entirely without editorial comment. It unfolds as if it were a narrative movie, but the effect is that of a purely descriptive film—like a travelogue through an unknown galaxy. (*New York Times,* Sunday, March 15, 1970)

We might also add that the episodic structure is picaresque, characterized by the dance pattern found in novels such as *Moll Flanders* and *Gil Blas.*

Eventually the film's strangeness brings us to the cluster of images surrounding the notion of the monstrous. These include the sense of the vast, of the gigantic, of the monumental, and the terrifying. All of these interrelated archetypes fuse together in the atmosphere given off by the film, an atmosphere that is oppressive

and preeminently strange. Any criticism of the film's artistic unity runs counter to this knot of subjective impressions, generated in the viewer. The film is not an idle, arbitrary dream, as Moravia and Simon contend, but rather a carefully drafted masterwork designed to produce a specific gamut of responses. The sharpness, the clarity, the vividness, the power of the images convey no dreamlike essence. The images do not have the compulsiveness, the random distortion, the timelessness, the floating quality of dream images; rather they have the contour, color, and rhythm of authentic poetic expression. True, the depth and resonance of these images make it clear that they emanate from the artist's prereflexive experience; and the unconscious adds its necessary component in their generation before they are shaped by artistic craft and narrative genius. But the whole spectacle unfolds with a rhythm and logic that testify to the highest degree of conscious control. Fellini has been less dominated by his materials in *Satyricon* than in any of his other films. He stands at a greater distance from it, shapes it with greater assurance.

The film is not a dream but a poetic meditation on the great currents of human history: on love, on slavery, on pleasure, on terror, on the rise and fall of monarchs. We embark on this meditation with characters who are transparent as glass, so that while we see them we at the some time see through them. In the comic evolution of their lives (and Fellini is at bottom a stoic who sees human destiny as part of a natural process of decay and renewal) we experience the world in the immediacy of Fellini's own experience of it. It is given for us just as it is given for him, a creation of colors, movements, and elemental forces: for the two hours of its unfolding the film is existence itself. Than which nothing is more strange.

—Neal Oxenhandler

THEY SHOOT HORSES, DON'T THEY?

Director: Sydney Pollack. Producers: Irwin Winkler and Robert Chartoff. Screenplay by James Poe and Robert E. Thompson, based on the novel by Horace McCoy. Photography: Philip H. Lathrop. ABC-Cinerama.

Charlie Chaplin once thought of making a film from this story. At least that's the way rumor has it, according to the director of the film, Sydney Pollack, in an introduction he has written to the screenplay of *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (which has been published in a paperback volume with the original Horace McCoy novel). And this isn't very surprising. Neither the film nor the novel is "Chaplinesque," but the basic idea is. Like most of Chaplin's major films, *They Shoot Horses* is about individuals helplessly caught up in seemingly inexorable social forces and victimized by them. The idea of a marathon dance contest as brutally efficient as a machine would naturally fascinate the creator of the assembly line sequence of *Modern Times*. And it's not hard to imagine a Chaplin version of this story: either a slapstick-influenced, dialogueless comedy like *City Lights* or *Modern Times* or a more ponderous talkie along the lines of *Monsieur Verdoux*.

The film Pollack and his screenwriter, Robert E. Thompson, have made from the novel is much closer to the latter. It's a basically earnest, in some ways pretentious film (unlike the case of Chaplin, where the opportunity to talk became the main source of heavy empty philosophizing and didacticism, the few instances of lightness and humor in this film grow directly out of the dialogue). But it's also powerful, moving, intelligent, and occasionally brilliant.

After seeing Pollack's previous film, *Castle Keep*—surely one of the six or eight most disagreeable filmgoing experiences of my life—I vowed I'd never see another film he made. *Castle Keep* was an artificial, forced allegory which could never decide whether it was operating from a realistic base or from one of abstract poetic myth. On either level the film was awful—on one, all sense of time and place was haywire, on the other, characters were always going around making remarks like "We are civilization"—and the shift back and forth be-

and preeminently strange. Any criticism of the film's artistic unity runs counter to this knot of subjective impressions, generated in the viewer. The film is not an idle, arbitrary dream, as Moravia and Simon contend, but rather a carefully drafted masterwork designed to produce a specific gamut of responses. The sharpness, the clarity, the vividness, the power of the images convey no dreamlike essence. The images do not have the compulsiveness, the random distortion, the timelessness, the floating quality of dream images; rather they have the contour, color, and rhythm of authentic poetic expression. True, the depth and resonance of these images make it clear that they emanate from the artist's prereflexive experience; and the unconscious adds its necessary component in their generation before they are shaped by artistic craft and narrative genius. But the whole spectacle unfolds with a rhythm and logic that testify to the highest degree of conscious control. Fellini has been less dominated by his materials in *Satyricon* than in any of his other films. He stands at a greater distance from it, shapes it with greater assurance.

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tween the two levels was excruciating. But it was wrong to put all the blame on Pollack and to write him off: no one could have made anything but a terrible movie from that screenplay (though a more imaginative director might have been able to make the film a bit more fun).

Now, in McCoy's story, Pollack has found a very different sort of allegorical idea, with much greater potential and, by all appearances, very much suited to his particular talents. McCoy's story is about a marathon dance contest in the depths of the depression and the down-and-out Hollywood hangers-on who join it, hoping to win the cash prize and, in some cases, hoping also to be noticed by Hollywood talent scouts. But there is no winner, and all that the contestants get for their often incredible effort and endurance is exhaustion and defeat. (In the film this is sometimes to the point of madness or death.) The marathon merely confirms the hopelessness of the main character, Gloria, who at the end gets her partner Robert (the narrator of the novel) to shoot her in the head.

Both the novel and the film—not only through certain "signals" in the dialogue, but by their structure and by the very force of the material itself—invite us to take the marathon and its story as something beyond itself, as an allegory, or a metaphor, standing, if not for life itself, than for certain large aspects of experience. Yet the marathon is a metaphor almost a priori—one of those natural, organic metaphors which seem obvious when you see them but which take a certain brilliance to "discover" (and much greater brilliance to utilize well artistically), and which have enormous potential—because they grow out of the common core of our experience. Life sometimes feels, sometimes is, like a marathon dance contest—for all of us, if only very briefly. It is this *donnée* (the best thing about the novel) which the film-makers have taken over from McCoy. And like McCoy (although quite differently and with much greater success), they have, for the most part, wisely concentrated on developing the realistic drama, letting more general meanings grow out of that.

The most curious thing about Pollack's exceedingly curious introduction to the published screenplay is the compulsion he seems to feel to praise the original book and to deny the obvious truth when he compares it with the screenplay and the film. "The cases are not rare where very bad books have made very good films . . . But *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* is a splendid novel to begin with," he tells us—when this is an archetypal case of a terrible novel serving to make a good film. The novel is characterized by superficial, ready-made adolescent tough-guyism and sentimentality, and is written in a prose as vulnerable in its way as the "poetry" of Kilmer's "Trees." McCoy (by way of his narrator) is capable of such pseudo-truths as the following:

> There is no new experience in life. Something may happen to you that you think has never happened before, that you think is brand new, but you are mistaken. You have only to see or smell or hear or feel a certain something and you will discover that this experience you thought was new has happened before.

And McCoy means it—literally. The occasion for this observation is a strange girl's attempt to seduce Robert by crawling under the platform, calling "Come on," and pulling at his ankle. Robert suddenly remembers that when he was thirteen or fourteen, a girl his age named Mabel who lived next door had done "exactly the same thing," calling "Come on" and pulling at his ankle, in this case from under the front porch.

Gig Young and Jane Fonda

Since "there is no new experience in life," we must assume that another girl did the same thing when he was seven, and so on, in a backwards geometric progression.

Pollack goes on to explain how he and one of his screenwriters, Robert E. Thompson, "a man who both loved and understood the novel," translated the book into film terms. ". . . the stark simplicity of the book is essential to its power. But where Horace McCoy can give an extremely lean character line, relying on the reader to fill in the 'backs' and 'sides' of a character from his own imagination, a film director's problem is rather different. When a film maker stands a person on the screen, that character has [should have?] breadth and depth simply by virtue of being seen, and those dimensions must be filled in with action and dialogue in order for the character not to seem hollow." And so on. Either Pollack is unaware of the kinds of changes he and his screenwriters have made from the novel, and the reasons for them, or he's being disingenuous. Not only are the two parts of the last sentence contradictory (if a film character has breadth and depth simply by virtue of being seen, then those dimensions do *not* need to be filled in with action and dialogue), but the whole passage reflects an unusual view of the art of the novel as well as of the art of the film. McCoy gives an extremely lean character line, all right, but it's not the sort that encourages the reader to fill in the "backs" and "sides" with his own imagination. The words and actions of McCoys characters are so unreal —so much the product of unthought-out adolescent attitudes—that they immediately ossify the characters into two dimensions. Our imaginations can do nothing with these characters because McCoy's has done nothing with them.

What the film-makers have taken over from the novel is, basically, a skeleton: the skeleton of the marathon—of a frenetic marathon dance contest in the depression in which every character we care about is defeated; the "skeletons" of Gloria, the despairing heroine whose last ounce of hope the marathon finishes off, and of Robert, the naive partner who helps her die. The film-makers have taken these main elements—and a few other pieces scattered throughout the novel—and put flesh on them (*not* just by standing persons on the screen but by creating and changing dialogue and action) and very largely transformed them. For example, the attempted seduction of the hero, mentioned above—in the novel merely a gratuitous bit of sordidness involving a girl who is barely described and whom we never see before or after—is clearly the suggestion for an incident in the film which has so much more meaning and depth, and such a different tonality, that it becomes something entirely different. It becomes the attempt by Alice—a fully developed character—to seduce Robert, and we see it as a sudden, desperate effort to make some kind of human contact and fend off her increasing isolation and, finally, madness.

Alice—the anxious, mannered, vulnerable would-be actress, whose behavior (like her dramatic reading from *Saint Joan)* is always out of place—is one of the two most successfully created characters in the film (if one discounts that minor incident from the novel, she's been created entirely by the film-makers). And she's at least as much the creation of the actress as of anyone else involved: Susannah York's often brilliant performance is particularly astonishing if one remembers her often excellent performances in totally different roles (such as an ebullient upper-class coquette in the superb TV production of *The Importance of Being Earnest).*

One index of Hollywood's increasing sophistication over the years is the changes in its villains—away from the man who commits evil simply because he likes to, or because that's his function, toward more contradictory and human characters. The character of Rocky, the master of ceremonies, totally corrupt yet totally without malice, helps make evil interesting again; and Gig Young's performance has depth and control.

Although Gloria is also a character of great interest, I cannot go along with all the praise given to Jane Fonda's performance. "Jane Fonda goes all the way with [the part]," writes Pauline Kael, "as screen actresses rarely do once

they become stars. She doesn't try to save some ladylike parts of herself . . . [She] gives herself totally to the embodiment of this isolated, morbid girl." For me, this is just what she does *not* do. It's true that she (and Pollack) have foregone the temptation to give her even the slightest amount of glamor and that there are many good things in her performance. Nevertheless she tends to make Gloria's despair cute and ingratiating, a mere pose, so that her "suicide" goes beyond shock and surprise into implausibility.

This leads me to the flash-forwards. These flash-forwards—to Robert's interrogation and trial for the murder of Gloria—have been attacked in every review of the film I've seen. In the novel, the very brief quotes from Robert's death sentence, which are interspersed between the chapters, are time-present, and the chapters themselves—which deal with the marathon—are a flashback. In his introduction Pollack explains the change by saying that it seemed essential to have the marathon in the present. I have no objection on principle to flash-forwards, any more than to flashbacks. But in this film, I think the flashforwards are a kind of copout, a way of making us feel what the story of the marathon should be sufficient to make us feel (or should, at least, contribute to making us feel): the sense of Gloria's and Robert's impending doom. That the marathon-material is not sufficient to make us feel this is, it seems to me, largely due to the defects I mentioned in Jane Fonda's performance.

The flashbacks in the film are a different sort of problem. The film opens with a series of flashbacks to a single incident in Robert's childhood (the flashbacks alternate with shots from time-present). We see a small boy (Robert as a child) and an old man watching a horse run gracefully through a field. The horse suddenly falls, apparently breaking a leg, and the old man shoots him dead, as the boy watches in tears. The inclusion of this incident is redundant and literal-minded. The phrase "They shoot horses, don't they?," both as the title and as Robert's final remark, is powerful enough in itself—very powerful indeed—and this scene merely weakens it, not simply by being redundant, but by calling attention to the specific shooting of a specific horse and away from the idea which really gives the phrase its power: that there may be justice in putting any suffering animal (including a human being) out of its misery. (If the incident with the horse were developed to the point where we could really feel for this animal, then it might conceivably contribute something.) Before reading the novel, I felt sure this incident had been manufactured entirely for the film. It seemed just the sort of bogus opportunity that, in the late sixties, an insecure Hollywood director, eager to be "visual," would seize upon. It turned out that the incident *is* in the novel (perhaps as another illustration of the idea that "there's no new experience in life"?), and although I think it's a mistake there too, and for the same reasons, it's nevertheless one of the few things in the book which the film has changed for the worse. As Pauline Kael put it, "Oh these movie men, with their misplaced romantic imagery, giving us a wild, beautiful stallion running free before it stumbles instead of Old Nellie, the plow horse that McCoy's hero remembered, who was hitched to the plow when she broke her leg and still hitched to the plow when she was shot."

Apparently the horse-metaphor can cause another kind of confusion as well. I always assumed that horses with broken legs were shot because the leg could not be mended and therefore to put the horses out of their own inevitable misery. But Myron Magnet (*Commentary*, April, 1970)—in keeping with his basic thesis about the film—writes: "If horses live only to be useful to men, then men are right to shoot horses who can no longer fulfill their function," implying that this is also the film's view of how society treats persons. But even if this is the reason, or one of the reasons, that "they shoot horses" it's not the reason Robert shoots Gloria. Unlike the horse, Gloria can, and does, express the wish to die: she asks Robert to shoot her. And although it may well be society which has destroyed her will to live, serving society has nothing to do with her "suicide." "Useful-

ness to men" is no consideration whatever, in her mind or in Robert's.

Set, like the novel, in 1932 (the novel was published in 1935), the film is meant to recall not only a certain period in our history, but also, certain *films* of that period—specifically the gangster films which Robert Warshow discussed in his essay, "The Gangster as Tragic Hero." It's no accident that the director whom Rocky asks to stand up in the audience is Mervyn LeRoy, whose films of the period were *Little Caesar* and *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang.* (In the novel the director is Frank Borzage. LeRoy is a much better choice, not only because he's better known to present-day audiences, but because of the kind of film his name evokes. Borzage's films, like the beautiful *A Man's Castle,* are much more like the French poetic melodramas of the thirties.) In fact the film of *They Shoot Horses* seems to aim so directly at achieving some of the characteristics of gangster films which Warshow emphasized—such as the expression of "that sense of desperation and inevitable failure which optimism [in this case the optimism of the official American culture] helps to create"—that it might have been inspired not only by the films but also by the essay itself.

If, on the most superficial level, the gangster films demonstrated that "crime does not pay," *They Shoot Horses* demonstrates that "honest" effort doesn't pay either, or at least that those enticing *shortcuts* to success which are within legality are doomed to failure. If, on a deeper level, the gangster films undercut the promise of pre-eminent individual success and glory which America seems to hold out, *They Shoot Horses* undercuts America's more basic promise of simple security. Both the gangster films and *They Shoot Horses* tell us that success is impossible, but in the gangster films success is glory and power, whereas here it is simple survival.

The film's meanings are not always clearcut, and those which are clearcut—although rather sophisticated and, in some ways, quite perceptive—are perhaps too fashionable. Nevertheless I strongly disagree with Magnet's thesis in his attack on the film that the film can be taken as maintaining that "not a particular social system" but "any kind of society is alien to our humanity." Pretty clearly, if we are to take the marathon to represent a society, we should take it to represent a *fraudulent* society, a society which promises the individual the advantages a society can offer (and which the individual belongs to either because he believes the promises or because he has no choice) but which cheats him of these advantages and exploits him. In the film's marathon-society, according to Magnet, "one must obey the rules, even though those rules guarantee one's ultimate failure and humiliation." Magnet says this as though each marathon contestant knew full well, at the time he agreed to join and to obey the rules, that failure and humiliation are guaranteed—in other words, as though the film were saying that acceptance of failure is an explicit part of the social contract. But even Gloria, the character with the least hope, doesn't fully know or believe that failure is inevitable. All of the marathon contestants are *trying* to win on the assumption that winning is possible. (The *movement* of the film—although Magnet maintains that there is no movement or development—is toward the gradual dashing of the hopes of all the contestants, as well as toward their increasing exhaustion.)

The fraudulence of this society can be described in another way. If a real society, as Magnet puts it (referring to Freud), is a contract which "each man enters into . . . with other men to give up his unlimited freedom of aggression," "to put an end to this state of war [the state of nature], in which every man is in fear and danger of falling victim to the same aggressive instincts of others which he recognizes in himself," then the marathon-society is a society which has broken down and gone back very close to Freud's "state of nature," or which perhaps has never left it. (Whether the Freudian or Hobbsian concept actually describes any real animal or precivilized human world is debatable.) To be sure (except for Robert's killing of Gloria, which is outside the marathon and which we can look upon mainly as a suicide),

no one deliberately murders anyone. But Gloria, in one of the two or three crucial points of the film, chooses to ignore that the sailor is having a heart attack because she can't bear the idea of losing. The sailor may be dead and if he is, Gloria may have killed him. This episode bears a close resemblance to the episode in *The Wages of Fear* when Mario (Yves Montand) drives the truck over the legs of his friend Jo (Charles Vanel) because he's afraid the truck will get stuck in the lake of oil and he won't be able to get it out to deliver the nitroglycerin they're carrying and collect the enormous wage. Jo dies soon after. In both cases, a desperate greed in the main character has momentarily driven out all compassion and morality and caused him to destroy someone he basically likes, someone who only *accidentally* impedes his way.

Magnet goes on to say that the film has "more in common with certain horror films [than with Westerns and gangster films] in that it is intensely paranoid," like a horror film in which "mysterious alien beings, or forces, for some unknown reason, take over the bodies of men and rob them of their humanity." By this time he has moved kilometers away from the film. At different points in his article, Magnet has the film saying that "*any kind of society* is alien to our humanity" and has it saying that "the self [is] threatened and opposed by *all reality*"—(my italics). I don't think the film is saying either of these things, as I've tried to show. But also, these are two different views of the film which are hard to reconcile, and Magnet hasn't reconciled them.

"And all these wonderful kids deserve your cheers, folks," Rocky cries out into the microphone. "Because each one of them is fighting down pain, exhaustion, weariness . . . struggling to keep going . . . battling to win. And isn't that the American Way, folks?" This speech—like other similar speeches of Rocky's—makes explicit what is implicit in the rest of the film: that the marathon is a microcosm not of any society but, as I said, of a fraudulent society, and in particular American capitalistic society, which pretends to make comfort, security, and sufficient leisure possible for all its citizens, but does not; which claims to unite its members in a common bond and to subvert their natural aggression toward each other, but which in fact fosters—indeed prides itself in—competition and the carrying out of aggression (though not, or not overtly, to the point of actual murder). The film's marathon is, naturally, a *caricature* of America, but it's in many ways a good and accurate caricature, capturing the desperate, frenetic activity which is central to this country as it is to very few others.

But the film has the power to move and excite us beyond this meaning, because it touches upon a primary experience of every living being: the world's intractability, the resistance of the world to our efforts and desires, and the (not always painful and not necessarily defeating) struggle which results.

They Shoot Horses is a commendable film, in fact in many ways a remarkable one. There are moments of brilliance in the writing, acting, and direction, and the entire film has an integrity characterized by the single-minded devotion to a single theme, a single mood, a single point of view. Yet this single-mindedness, while it's the film's greatest strength, is also its great limitation. Although the film-makers have created a sense of life absent from the novel, one feels they have created only enough life to carry their theme convincingly. There are almost no moments which one feels are in the film for their own sake, for the sake of simple feeling or observation (as there are, say, in Irvin Kershner's *Loving*). The film is too programmatic and therefore finally (although rather pretentious) unambitious: it's not hard to achieve a unified vision when the material you're dealing with is without ambiguity or contradiction—and the film's lack of complexity makes much of its defeatism seem merely facile. One longs for just a moment of the kind of looseness, arbitrariness and openness to experience which is characteristic of the opposite kind of film, like *Stolen Kisses*. Yet a single moment from *Stolen Kisses* would explode the whole thing.

—PAUL WARSHOW

MANDABI

Director: Ousmane Sembene. Producer: Jean Maumy. Screenplay: Ousmane Sembene from a short story by Leopold S. Senghor. Photography: Paul Soulignac. Grove Press Films.

The arrival of a new motion picture talent is reason enough for notice. When that director is our first film emissary from black Africa, it is time to pay close attention. It appears likely that for the time being, Ousmane Sembene will speak for Africa to European and American audiences, just as Satyajit Ray has spoken for the Indian subcontinent.

In his third film, *Mandabi (The Money Order),* Sembene reveals himself as an artist of talent, commitment, and unselfconscious simplicity. For the western reviewer there is always the danger of being charmed by the appeal of "the exotic other." Paul Soulignac's photography is richly appealing and there is much in *Mandabi* to charm the eye, but it is always subordinate to the restrained urgency and clear-eyed honesty of the film. It may not be an overstatement to suggest that Sembene has done something so different from currently fashionable film styles that his work evokes the feeling of being witness to the rebirth of a long neglected creative attitude. He has given us a story film with a strictly chronological plot about pressing social issues in Senegal.

Mandabi is a comedy about a pompous old bumbler living in Dakar and his misadventures following the receipt of a money order from his nephew in Paris. The film opens with a close study of old Dieng being meticulously shaved by a street barber. With the abruptness of folk art the postman delivers the fatal money order and tells Dieng's wives of their great fortune. The two wives, who are the mothers of seven children, hasten to buy (on credit) a fine supply of food. Only after Dieng has been indulged to satiety do the wives tell him of the money order.

In the compounding of events that follow, the film resembles a French farce. The neighbors, aware of Dieng's new wealth—even before the money order has been read or negotiated—appeal to him for a share. His creditors arrive; also the "Imam" (a Moslem Bishop) who demands a pious contribution, and later, Dieng's sister who has been promised her share by the nephew. Poor women exploit the old man's instinctive show-off generosity. Through all of these interactions we recognize the natural expectations of African communal life with its social obligation to share. We come to understand that this old natural socialism has become a social anachronism in a country caught in transition between residual French colonialism and the neocolonialism of the black ruling class.

It is in the corrupt and ineffectual bureaucracy of black neocolonialism that the film finds the source of Dieng's misadventures. From the petty extortion of the post office official who reads and writes for the illiterate Dieng, to the sophisticated legalistic corruption of a nephew who finally steals everything the family owns, we watch a degrading spiral of events with horrified amusement.

In scene after scene the unhurried pace of the film allows time for a full understanding of both action and reaction. As in the films of Ozu, the important events are reactions and the mute comments of objects. A long, graceful pan from a minaret to a child asleep on the ground criticizes ecclesiastical wealth in a poor country. A blonde white baby-doll which is Dieng's daughter's only toy comments on the legacy of European colonialism. A red brassiere, sold by a street vendor to one of the wives, celebrates by contrast the long flowing gowns worn by the women of Senegal. Even these images are heavy comments in a film that is generally light and casual with its revelations. The women walking with sure grace express the gentle harmony of older African ways that conflict harshly with the vulgar manners and artifacts of the Europeanized black ruling class.

Sembene's use of black feminine grace was movingly demonstrated in his second film, *La Noire de . . .*, made in 1966. This short feature is concerned with a black girl in the domestic employ of a callous Parisian couple who exploit and isolate her so viciously that she is driven to suicide. *La Noire de . . .* is an unsophisticated film that uses a technique so spare

Dieng and his two wives: MANDABI

and limited that the very word technique seems inappropriate. The Europeans are blatant, two-dimensional caricatures of White Oppressors and quite unbelievable. The film is held together by the unforgettable presence of the black girl, Diowana, who glides from room to room with restrained dignity, every fibre in her body subtly conveying the film's theme of pride and humiliation.

One difficulty that may be experienced by European and American audiences is the generally unsophisticated and obvious character of Sembene's plots and their development. In the past decade we have become attuned to richly complex space and time structures, depth-probes into the intricacies of personality, the intellectual delights of ambiguity, distancing and crossed modalities. Thus Sembene's work frequently seems simplistic and highly predictable. Sembene is a worldly artist who is fully aware of the ways in which the language of the film has evolved. But as a politically aware Senegalese he believes that his primary task is to communicate with a large audience in Senegal. *Mandabi* is intended as a vehicle for social and political persuasion. Sembene has stated that he has little time for self-expressive intricacies. This does not provide him with critical immunity, but it does suggest that we view the film in the context of its pragmatic purpose and the relatively unsophisticated audience for which it is intended.

For each of the three films he has made Sembene has used nonprofessional actors. In *Mandabi* Dieng is played by Mamadou Guye, whom Sembene discovered working behind a desk in an airline office—he still works there. Guye's performance in *Mandabi* is extraordinary for its sense of living wholeness. Although the film is a serious plea for governmental justice and social rationality, Dieng's bouyant joy and natural resiliency continually humanize what could have become simply didactic.

Only at the end does the film disintegrate into bombast. Dieng, cheated and degraded by everyone, decides to become as crooked as those who have abused him. His wife declares that "a lie that unites people is better than the truth." The postman, however, advises Dieng that even though honesty may seem to be a sin in Senegal,

the honest old people must work to improve society. This is followed by a dated Soviet-style agitprop reprise that not only fails to suggest how change can occur but conflicts badly with the style of the rest of the film. Not all questions asked by a social problem film have to be answered, but this tub-thumping recapitulation of woes only serves to dampen the compassion that has been so carefully developed.

In his first short feature, *Borom Sarret (Horse Cart Driver*—1963); Sembene was effective in imparting the tragedy of those who are exploited by the avarice of others. The cart driver, a gentle, good-humored man, attempts to help people and for his efforts receives only abuse; his cart is confiscated by the police, and he returns home in despair. With quiet dignity his wife, standing in the doorway to the family courtyard, declares that she will get food—presumably by prostitution—and disappears into the street. The understated tragedy of this moment of quiet desperation makes the didactic bombast of the ending of *Mandabi* all the more offensive artistically. Except for their different endings, *Borom Sarret* and *Mandabi* resemble each other in much the same manner that a rough sketch resembles a finished painting. The rapidity with which Sembene has matured as a film-maker is noteworthy.

One of the special ironies of *Mandabi* is the fact that the screenplay was adapted by Sembene from a short story written by the president of Senegal, Leopold S. Senghor. What we have is an original story written by an older social reformer who has in the eyes of the young men who followed him become a symbol of the oppressive "establishment." The pattern is familiar. As a poet and intellectual Senghor was involved in the Negritude movement which was influential in the eventual achievement of independence from the European colonial powers. In 1960 Senghor became the first president of the Republic of Senegal. This political pioneer is now viewed with the same sort of distrust that American black radicals feel toward black integrationists. *Mandabi,* probably the first film in Wolof (the native language of Senegal) was initially banned in Senegal—although it now appears that it will be seen. The film was made with French financial support.

Sembene, who was once a dock worker in Marseilles and is now recognized as an important novelist, has turned the original story into a criticism of conditions in Senegal under Senghor's government. In *Mandabi* Sembene levels his most potent attacks to date against the black bureaucracy that has created a stratified society as insidious as anything imposed by the French. The real villains of *Mandabi* are Dieng's nephews, who are seen as the cynical parasites most responsible for a moribund state of affairs. In contrast to their grasping, opportunistic ways Sembene shows us a grass-roots culture that is instinctively humane and generous. It is the cynicism bred by the neocolonialist class society that leads one of the characters in *Mandabi* to declare, "Try to help nine poor people and you will be the tenth."

In protest against these conditions Sembene seems to be advocating a return to traditional ways. His sympathy for the working classes, his celebration of old manners and a social contract of mutual help, suggest that he finds more hope in returning to African tradition than in revolution. Sembene sees clearly that dignity, individual freedom, and a chance to make an honest living are part of our basic human needs. At the same time he has the humility to realize that there may be no single social program for the achievement of these goals. He is an artist who can see what is whole and good in his country and who has found the means to communicate this knowledge with humor and compassion.

—JOHN FRAZER

DAVID HOLZMAN'S DIARY

A film by James McBride. Photography: Michael Waddley.

Cinema is truth 24 times a second: so says Jean-Luc Godard. With this pronouncement as his key, David Holzman, a young New York film-maker awaiting induction, decides to film and tape-record a diary of his life. Once he has put that life down on material he can handle, cut up, and rearrange, Holzman feels

the honest old people must work to improve society. This is followed by a dated Soviet-style agitprop reprise that not only fails to suggest how change can occur but conflicts badly with the style of the rest of the film. Not all questions asked by a social problem film have to be answered, but this tub-thumping recapitulation of woes only serves to dampen the compassion that has been so carefully developed.

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that he'll be able to get at what it means. Never mind the distinctions between reality and art; his Eclair and Nagra will give him what he wants if he knows how to get it, if he asks the right questions.

Near the end of *David Holzman's Diary,* however, we see Holzman angrily demanding of the very machines that were his tools: "What do you want? What the fuck do you want?" The roles have changed: the machines are no longer performing for him; he is performing for the machines. For them Holzman must lead a certain kind of life, must give certain answers, must perform in a certain way. But his life, his answers, and his performance are all judged inadequate. How can he satisfy these inexorable mechanical objects?

Although he does not know it, by the time Holzman puts this question to his Eclair and Nagra, he has already answered it. His answer is the film, for it shows us what moves him, the people and things he cares about; and more importantly it shows us how he is moved and how he expresses that caring.

Take the first time he films his girl friend, Penny, for example. She gets annoyed; she is not properly dressed and does not have her make-up on. Holzman protests that he doesn't want to film her as she appears in TV advertisements or fashion magazines. He wants to film her as she appears in his life—as she goes to the corner store to buy something that he especially likes for breakfast, or as she is sleeping.

In the scene of her asleep, in fact, he gives us the most powerful moment of the film. Lying nude and openly childlike amid swirls of bedsheets, Penny shows us without pose or mask what we all are like when sleep slips us out of our personalities. What Holzman sees in Penny at these moments is what draws him to her: she is uniquely herself and, as Holzman says, she touches him. Yet it seems that he is also somewhat afraid of being touched, for when he is so moved by the beauty of the scene that he tries to tell us what he feels, he says that the entire bedroom should be in a museum behind glass. Like his life on film, it would be a dead imitation of reality. Moreover, in the other scene in which he speaks of Penny "touching" him, he only describes to us what she does for him; she is not in the scene. Finally, because she so vehemently objects to being filmed, and because Holzman cannot resist filming her, she leaves him, becoming for most of the last half of the film just a telephone voice, disembodied and untouchable.

Holzman has, nonetheless, made Penny live for us. In a similar way he captures the uniqueness of a neighbor, Miss Schwartz. What he shows us is a young woman throwing a piece of paper into a trash can as she leaves her apartment. A simple act—but in replacing the lid of the can she does a little dance with her hand that says: "I am S. Schwartz, David Holzman's neighbor; there is no one in the world quite like me." And this is what Holzman wants to show us.

That the vital meaning of Holzman's life is revealed to us in these scenes and how he has filmed them, and that he finds their beauty and meaning somehow inadequate, is made clear in two other scenes. In one, a painter friend stands in front of one of his wall paintings and talks about the diary. To him the idea is ridiculous: Holzman's life is a "bad script," neither interesting nor valuable enough to be filmed. Later, after Penny has left him, Holzman offhandedly says that she put on an act when they made love, faking her passionate responses to him. In both instances what is questioned is the value and validity of Holzman's presence. What value does his life, his uniqueness have for other people? Although Holzman does not let his friend's criticism or Penny's departure interrupt his filming, the way they respond to his diary reveals something about his relationship to them and also to film. Ironically, though, he does not seem to understand that it is not the artist, or Penny, or the Eclair and Nagra that question him: the inquisitor is inside him. And that voice is silenced only when you no longer need to be seeking "an answer" to know that you exist.

The conflict of both needing and hating this imprisoning voice erupts in Holzman when the

camera and recorder do not give him what he wants—although he sees it the other way around. At the height of his anger, however, he walks out of the frame. In other words, just when Holzman is as maskless and vulnerable as the sleeping Penny, he leaves our view and the view of the demanding Eclair. Is he afraid to show us his fear and anger? Is he afraid to admit that he does not know all the answers? After an instant or two of black screen, Holzman reappears, slumped in a chair in the midst of his equipment. He apologizes to the Eclair and Nagra for his outburst and resumes his monologue in a more calm and proper fashion. At this moment in the film, it seems, he resigns himself to his need for the questioning voice and to his fear of not giving a damn whether his performance is satisfying to anyone but himself. Like David Hemmings in *Blow-Up*, he needs the camera to verify his existence, even if to gain that verification he must live in a kind of emotional prison. In the end, that prison is represented by the Take-Your-Own-Photo snapshots that Holzman uses to conclude the film (his camera and recorder having been stolen) accompanied by the scratchy Record-Your-Own-Voice recording on which Holzman finishes the film's narration. You almost expect to see numbers along the bottom of the photographs, identifying Holzman as a fugitive, convict, or anonymous worker in an enormous office. He is at last fixed and unmoving, his voice a thin, static rasp.

David Holzman's Diary was directed by James McBride, photographed by Michael Waddley, and stars "Kit" Carson. Since the credits do not appear until the end of the film, viewers usually accept the diary actually as Holzman's and often feel duped when the titles come on the screen. If such a deception is disturbing, McBride has made his point, for one thing that he is trying to do in this film is to show us how strong is our need for and attraction to illusion—and how we will often prefer it to reality if reality is too harsh. Penny asleep behind glass in a museum would never awaken to run at Holzman in anger and eventually leave him. She would be fixed in place and time, a lifeless imitation of reality. Like what Holzman has captured of his life on film, she could be observed from all angles. "Touching" she might be, but she would not be able to really touch us or be touched by us. Art, after all, is not life, only a part of it. The beauty and pointedness of *David Holzman's Diary* is that Holzman shows us that what matters to him is the flow of feelings that pass between him and the people and things of his world, yet, because of fears and anxieties about those things and people, he tries to stop that flow. While he shows us what is vital and alive to him, he is at the same time trying to kill it. —SIDNEY HOLLISTER

THE ARRANGEMENT

Director: Elia Kazan. Script: Kazan, from his novel. Photography: Robert Surtees. Music: David Amram. Warner Brothers-Seven Arts.

The Arrangement is an unnerving experience. If it's hard to figure out the hero, it's even harder at times to figure out the author. Does Kazan realize how crazy Eddie Anderson is? In a movie like *Easy Rider* we needn't trouble ourselves with the question, because it's evident that the director is crazy too, even though he points a finger at "society." Kazan points a finger, but he points it mostly at the hero. Aside from a few unconvincing jibes at ad agencies and California life-styles, Kazan doesn't even attempt to explain Eddie until the second hour of the movie. He lets us stew in Eddie's juices until we're good and sick of him.

It's a dangerous, daring, and mostly unsuccessful way to begin a movie. It's not calculated to win friends either for Eddie or for the author's insight; we may just shake our heads. And the obscurity at the core of the movie is heightened further by the lucidity around the edges —Robert Surtees's sober, cool photography, Deborah Kerr's compassionate intelligence, Faye Dunaway's cut-the-crap smile.

If we remember *America America*, though, we may be able to keep in focus. What may seem like a slam at contemporary America—the

camera and recorder do not give him what he wants—although he sees it the other way around. At the height of his anger, however, he walks out of the frame. In other words, just when Holzman is as maskless and vulnerable as the sleeping Penny, he leaves our view and the view of the demanding Eclair. Is he afraid to show us his fear and anger? Is he afraid to admit that he does not know all the answers? After an instant or two of black screen, Holzman reappears, slumped in a chair in the midst of his equipment. He apologizes to the Eclair and Nagra for his outburst and resumes his monologue in a more calm and proper fashion. At this moment in the film, it seems, he resigns himself to his need for the questioning voice and to his fear of not giving a damn whether his performance is satisfying to anyone but himself. Like David Hemmings in *Blow-Up*, he needs the camera to verify his existence, even if to gain that verification he must live in a kind of emotional prison. In the end, that prison is represented by the Take-Your-Own-Photo snapshots that Holzman uses to conclude the film (his camera and recorder having been stolen) accompanied by the scratchy Record-Your-Own-Voice recording on which Holzman finishes the film's narration. You almost expect to see numbers along the bottom of the photographs, identifying Holzman as a fugitive, convict, or anonymous worker in an enormous office. He is at last fixed and unmoving, his voice a thin, static rasp.

David Holzman's Diary was directed by James McBride, photographed by Michael Waddley, and stars "Kit" Carson. Since the credits do not appear until the end of the film, viewers usually accept the diary actually as Holzman's and often feel duped when the titles come on the screen. If such a deception is disturbing, McBride has made his point, for one thing that he is trying to do in this film is to show us how strong is our need for and attraction to illusion—and how we will often prefer it to reality if reality is too harsh. Penny asleep behind glass in a museum would never awaken to run at Holzman in anger and eventually leave him. She would be fixed in place and time, a lifeless imitation of reality. Like what Holzman has captured of his life on film, she could be observed from all angles. "Touching" she might be, but she would not be able to really touch us or be touched by us. Art, after all, is not life, only a part of it. The beauty and pointedness of *David Holzman's Diary* is that Holzman shows us that what matters to him is the flow of feelings that pass between him and the people and things of his world, yet, because of fears and anxieties about those things and people, he tries to stop that flow. While he shows us what is vital and alive to him, he is at the same time trying to kill it. —SIDNEY HOLLISTER

THE ARRANGEMENT

Director: Elia Kazan. Script: Kazan, from his novel. Photography: Robert Surtees. Music: David Amram. Warner Brothers-Seven Arts.

The Arrangement is an unnerving experience. If it's hard to figure out the hero, it's even harder at times to figure out the author. Does Kazan realize how crazy Eddie Anderson is? In a movie like *Easy Rider* we needn't trouble ourselves with the question, because it's evident that the director is crazy too, even though he points a finger at "society." Kazan points a finger, but he points it mostly at the hero. Aside from a few unconvincing jibes at ad agencies and California life-styles, Kazan doesn't even attempt to explain Eddie until the second hour of the movie. He lets us stew in Eddie's juices until we're good and sick of him.

It's a dangerous, daring, and mostly unsuccessful way to begin a movie. It's not calculated to win friends either for Eddie or for the author's insight; we may just shake our heads. And the obscurity at the core of the movie is heightened further by the lucidity around the edges —Robert Surtees's sober, cool photography, Deborah Kerr's compassionate intelligence, Faye Dunaway's cut-the-crap smile.

If we remember *America America*, though, we may be able to keep in focus. What may seem like a slam at contemporary America—the

nightmare highways, gadget houses, and so on —is nothing more to Kazan than the logical extension of the immigrant's impossible dream. To Eddie and his family, the *status quo* is an heroic achievement. And his struggle against it is for Kazan a true struggle, not a mere "hang-up." The youth-cultists who dominate today's audience can't comprehend any of this, of course, and they may dismiss Kazan's obsessions as *passé*. The movie draws its strength from Eddie's father. As the novel puts it, "There's where the secret is, in that terrible old man smiling privately as the nurse spread the cool alcohol over his body. His character was my fate. What he himself was. What he had caused me to be."

When Sam appears, we suddenly witness the death agonies of the forces that have formed Eddie. As in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, the dreams are finally being exposed, the dues are being paid, the selfish are being turned away from themselves. But after this blessedly moving, almost serene interlude of companionship, Eddie and his father are split again and Eddie goes away, as he says, "into myself." He systematically destroys all the traces of his old life and becalms himself in a mental institution. The movie ends with Eddie's smile over his father's grave—much as at the end of *America America*, when Stavros (Eddie's uncle) burst into a smile on entering America and burying his old life. Full cycle.

Turning back to the novel after seeing the film explains some of the problems. As a whole the book is undoubtedly more lucid, perhaps more satisfying, than the movie, but it never rises to the film's best moments. Kazan's forte is emotion; he thinks with his guts. His heroes are quite like Arthur Penn's, but we can never for a second misunderstand Penn because he provides a reasonable context for his hero's insanity. Kazan is too excited to pause for a breather. The "explanations" he offers are almost identical to the hero's explanations, and he seems to be destroying himself along with the hero.

Eddie is comprehensible at all points in the book, because even his most dangerous actions have the dignity of forethought and recollection.

Eddie's father: Richard Boone

His self-disgust is more articulate, largely because he is a writer and "tells" the story first-person in order to sort out his feelings. Perhaps inevitably, we have no feeling of Eddie's writing talent in the movie, and his failure is less an issue than an inevitability.

The movie makes a nod toward a "first-person" style, but inadequately; Kazan is not very clever as a visual tactician. He shows us two Eddies talking to each other, poking fun at each other, strangling each other. To "place" Eddie's business associates, Kazan intercuts them with lions chewing up a gazelle. But the clumsy shorthand with which Kazan attempts to approximate some of the novel's incessant ruminations can easily be overlooked. It is the fire that counts, not the smoke.

When played by Marlon Brando, James Dean, or even Warren Beatty, the Kazan hero is a larger-than-life, almost mythical figure of tortured simplicity. Society is cruel, but the cruelty makes sense—there is something about the hero that calls for it. Kazan has always been weakest when he has extended the hero's weakness into an accusation of society, as he sometimes does when the hero slips from masochism into self-pity.

With Brando playing Eddie as Kazan had intended (Brando is as inscrutable as Eddie himself these days, however, and backed out), the film would have been given some equilibrium. But with Kirk Douglas in the role—all drive,

aggression, and nerves—Eddie's self-destructiveness slips into something close to psychosis. Douglas is excellent, and many of his scenes with Faye Dunaway, Deborah Kerr, and Richard Boone are perfect in themselves. But Eddie's *power* unhinges the movie. Kazan has been justly criticized for "directing every scene as if it were the climax," and his Eddie compounds the agony by acting like a dynamo turned against itself. It's like watching a man smash his head against a wall. What to make of it?

Eddie is not merely pitiful, however. In his last moments with his father, he reaches an *entente* that lays the ghosts to rest. Boone is marvellous as Sam Arness, and the melancholic warmth of his scenes with Eddie is what we finally take away with us. We seem to hear Jamie Tyrone crying "I love you more than I hate you!" throughout the last part of *The Arrangement*. We shouldn't belabor Kazan's idiosyncrasies, any more than we would ask a self-portrait to be a photograph. The man is the sum of his contradictions. And what James Baldwin said of the book is also true of the film: "It really does not depend on anything that we think of as a literary tradition, but on something older than that: the tale being told by a member of the tribe to the tribe." —JOSEPH MCBRIDE.

UNE FEMME DOUCE

Parc Films/ Marianne. Producer: Mag Bodard. Director: Robert Bresson, Screenplay: Bresson, Photography: Ghislain Cloquet (Eastmancolor) Cast: Dominique Sanda, Guy Franklin, Jane Lobre.

As a cinematic stylist Robert Bresson occupies a unique position: he is a neoclassic modernist pursuing a spiritual asceticism that is so rare and shorn of pictorial excess, so refined and emotionally restrained, that he has produced, since 1943, only 9 works—and this in a medium that exacts, from a commercial investment, at least a marginal profit. Bresson, unlike Godard or Antonioni, has never attracted a cult following in this country, though he is usually mentioned and his films cited with a tone of sobriety in film histories. One can hardly imagine an audience queuing for *Balthazar* or *Mouchette*, even if they *were* promptly available from American distributors; and the assiduous film buff, if he manages to catch a Bresson at the New York Film Festival, is lucky indeed. For the fact of the matter is that Bresson's films have received pitifully scant exposure in this country, and only one American critic has risen to the task of evaluating the *oeuvre* with intelligence and perspicacity—Susan Sontag on "Spiritual Style in the Films of Robert Bresson."

It may seem incongruous, then, that Bresson's latest film, *Une Femme Douce*, has been acquired for American distribution by none other than Paramount Pictures. As with the earlier films, the miniscule cast is composed of non-professionals, and although there is some love (and even erotic) interest, it is treated in Bresson's usual detached, stylized manner, unlikely to have much effect on American audiences, now becoming adaptive to a display of liberated sexuality in the arts. The film *is* in color, and Bresson's first use of color stock (recall that he was originally a painter) does add a new dimension of warmth and texture to his normally neutral surface. Perhaps someone at Paramount, attending a recent film festival, learned that Bresson was considered an "important" artist and decided that it was worth a try on the art-circuits. Whatever the unaccountable reasoning behind this "cultural acquisition," *Une Femme Douce* provides a striking introduction to Bresson, if, as his admirers will attest, it is not an altogether typical sample of the Bressonian universe.

The narrative is a modernized adaptation of Dostoevsky's "The Gentle Woman," and though the original theme of an ill-fated love has been retained, what Bresson has made of it is a study of emotions, reduced to their pristine essentials, while suppressing any theatrical exhibition of these feelings and states of being. A young girl commits suicide by leaping from a balcony. This highly charged opening is expressed in an oblique and highly abstract fashion by eliminating the subject of the action and focusing on detail: a hand opens a door onto a terrace, a falling table and flower pot shatter, a white

aggression, and nerves—Eddie's self-destructiveness slips into something close to psychosis. Douglas is excellent, and many of his scenes with Faye Dunaway, Deborah Kerr, and Richard Boone are perfect in themselves. But Eddie's *power* unhinges the movie. Kazan has been justly criticized for "directing every scene as if it were the climax," and his Eddie compounds the agony by acting like a dynamo turned against itself. It's like watching a man smash his head against a wall. What to make of it?

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shawl floats from the balcony, while a deadening thud offscreen suggests the body's impact on the street below. As with the suicide of Mouchette, Bresson's discretion of means invokes a deeper impression than a direct, literal description, entailing all sorts of emotional distortions.

The husband, a young pawnbroker, reflects on the past, trying to understand why his wife has killed herself; and the film consists largely of recurring episodes from their first meeting in his shop, their married life, the gradual realization of their incompatible personalities and life-views, and finally her decision to kill herself as the only solution to the impasse. In clarifying these events to himself and to Anna, their maid, he seeks to understand the nature of their relationship and the reason for its failure. Alternately, Bresson cuts back to his contemplation of the body, stretched out on a bed, recalling the tomb scene from *Romeo and Juliet.*

Dominique Sanda's portrait of the young wife is one of the most full-blooded characters in Bresson's world. Not only is she warm and sensuous but is also endowed with a spiritual innocence and openness to the world, embracing many interests and compulsive enthusiasms, contrasted with her husband's bourgeois materialism and insensitivity—that develop into a consuming jealousy and possessiveness. She alternately listens to fragments of classical and rock music, reads insatiably on a variety of subjects, and is fascinated by ornithology, paleontology, theater, and modern sculpture, while he is preeminently concerned with making money and, on opportune occasions, with making love. Following their brief and formal courtship and marriage, they begin to quarrel as she makes her own judgments on the value of articles offered them, particularly a gold-inlaid crucifix, and ultimately her gentleness turns into willful rebellion. She leaves him, then returns unexpectedly and begins to openly cultivate the attentions of other young men. The husband recalls his violent jealousy in carrying a revolver with him to search for her one night, but after finding her with a young man in a sports car, he manages to console himself in silence. During the night, assuming he is asleep, she holds the revolver to his head. From that point on, the couple are trapped in an excruciating uncertainty; she becomes seriously ill and refuses to accept his attentions, while he is forced to realize that their separation is the result of his inability to love her. With convalescence she begins to sing in a fashion resembling the demented Ophelia in *Hamlet;* desperate for a sign of hope in their relationship, he begs her forgiveness. They agree to leave Paris and try to begin life anew; but after his departure, she finds it impossible to believe in their future happiness and kills herself.

At first glance, it seems far removed from a Bressonian subject; yet it is essentially a conflict of souls that Bresson has perceived in Dostoevsky. Unwittingly, a free spirit finds itself trapped in a web of loveless devotion that leads to illness and death. In *Balthazar,* Bresson contrasts, in a symbolic interweaving, the fates of a young girl and a donkey; in *Mouchette* he relates the disintegration of a rejected child's ego, culminating in her suicide. *Une Femme Douce* also concerns itself with a young girl's suicide, but the action does not, significantly, revolve around an implicit religious or existential project that results in a final transfiguration or personal liberation. All of Bresson's characters, from the parish priest or Joan of Arc to the resistance leader or Michel, the pickpocket, take part in a kind of spiritual journey that establishes their purpose or meaning in life. But Bresson has eliminated any spiritual or religious context in *Une Femme Douce* and has at the same time, through a particularly unhappy love relationship, given us a similar study in the movements of an anguished spirit, minus the implicit Bressonian metaphysic. For the first time, the main narration is a reflection of the central character as recounted by her husband —a fragmented mosaic of moments in her life; and the image is that of a gentle and lovely creature, but unpredictably human and independent of bourgeois pursuits, a mysterious figure with hidden, often obscure motives. When the source of this inner life is killed off, the only recourse is physical death.

There is a sharp contrast from the drab, gray

provincial setting of *Mouchette*. The glitter of contemporary Paris is the background of the tale and there is a sure awareness of color, emphasizing soft pastels of green, brown, and yellow, punctuated by richer hues of blue and red. The acting is less restrained than is usual with Bresson, but where emotion is openly expressed it is quickly diverted: tears are hidden, and erotic play is hidden by a bedsheet. More typically, the presence of objects is significantly felt, in close-ups of a camera, a cigarette holder, a crucifix, a wedding ring, a revolver, a mobile light sculpture, all holding expressive overtones in the formal pattern of the work.

A variety and richness of visual backgrounds, unusual for this normally austere film-maker, allows Bresson to bring into play, for the first time, excerpts from theater, cinema, and television as counterpoints to the action. Television reports of rioting and violence are played off against the couple's early marital bliss; at a Paris cinema they see Michel Deville's *Benjamin* being audaciously seduced by feminine wiles at a garden party; at a stage performance of *Hamlet*, the young wife is deeply impressed by Hamlet's death scene and later recalls a passage omitted from the presentation. These scenes not only have a formal function suggesting the progression and disparity in the two people's relations, but they equally suggest an interaction of life and art. Hamlet and Benjamin are temperamentally opposed as tragic and romantic heroes; for Bresson's heroine, the tragedy of Hamlet is a deeply moving event, while the remote quality of violence via television seems ironically inconsequential. The level of metaphor in a normally tight and classically spare direction, indicates that Bresson may be moving into a freer, more relaxed style of expression, relating to other contemporary directors, without relinquishing the discipline of his art. There is also an unprecedented degree of lightness and humor in the scenes of early courtship and marriage, particularly the witty proposal scene, set against a visit to the zoo.

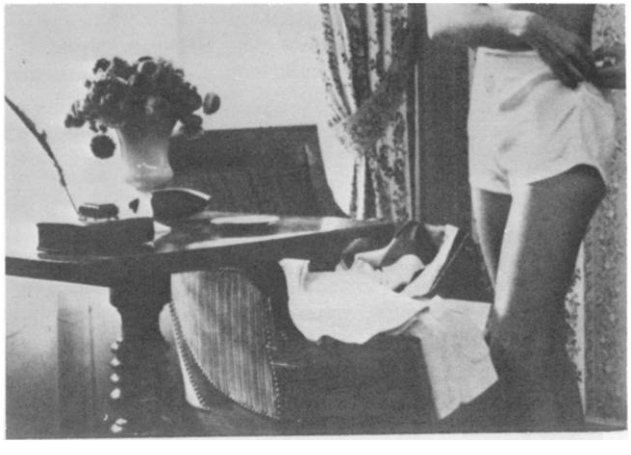
If *Une Femme Douce* marks a shift in Bresson's *oeuvre*, it is not a drastic one: the tragic inability of his young lovers to communicate with each other emerges consistently as the reflection of a precise sensibility that resists vulgar and immediate satisfactions in favor of more enduring methods and values. What Bresson has omitted is, in a sense, still there in his style; thus, one feels that the heroine's leap to her death is not simply an irrational romantic action, but an inexorable movement in the spiritual destiny of an individual soul. Although it is inspired by a literary text, the film remains essentially a new creation, written, image by image, by an artist whose style approximates the words of Anaxagoras: "That which reveals itself is a vision of the invisible."

—Lee Atwell

LA FEMME INFIDELE

Direction: Claude Chabrol. Screenplay: Chabrol. Editing: Jacques Gaillard. Music: Pierre Jansen. Photography: Jean Rabier. Art Direction: Guy Littaye. Produced by Films La Boetie and Cinegay, released here by Allied Artists.

With the success of his last two films, Chabrol has again become fashionable—and perhaps it is natural that a director so involved with nuances of style should, like St. Laurent or Chanel, depend for acceptance upon the sensibility of the moment. Ever since *Leda*, which gleefully dissected a claustrophobic bourgeois household, Chabrol has found a rich mine of material in what he calls the "little themes," and here again he is working within a very narrow



Still life: La Femme Infidele

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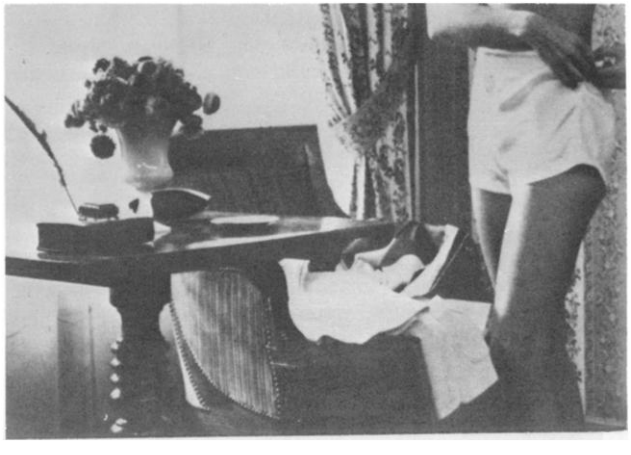

Still life: La Femme Infidele

range, both visually and emotionally. However, within these limits, few directors are more skillful at using a sensuous cinematic style to suggest a world of minimal feelings and reified relationships.

Chabrol's characters are, as in *Leda,* opaque bourgeois types. Charles, a prosperous insurance man, Hélène, his beautiful bored wife, and Victor, her rich dilettantish lover, live in a world of elegant cars, lush gardens, chic nightclubs, and Empire furniture. In this milieu, violence seems more plausible than sex; and things, like teapots, knives, cars, and cigarette lighters, convey emotions that their owners are not able to express.

Chabrol establishes his characters as ambulatory objets d'art in luxurious settings. Everything is pretty; and Pierre Jansen's muted score for cello, violin, and piano quickly establishes a mood of restrained "good taste". Stephane Audran (Hélène) harmonizes so well with the decor of her drawing room—her pale grey eyeshadow echoing the soft tones of the carved wood paneling, her earrings catching the light and sparkling like the television commercials her husband (Michel Bouquet) is so fond of watching—that we see her primarily as an object in a perfectly arranged background.

In fact, the idea of *nature morte* seems to inform the imagery throughout the film. Objects are arranged in patterns that convey a sense of still life and suspended animation. In an early scene in the dining room when Hélène and Charles eat pears with a knife and fork and discuss some forged paintings which he had inadvertently bought, the image is dominated by a beautiful Renoir-esque arrangement of fruit in an elegant porcelain basket. Even the murder is shown as a series of formal acts composed within a frame, and the scene where Charles disposes of the body of his victim becomes imprinted on our mind because of the patterns the bubbles make on the blank green surface of the pond.

Rabier's modulated Eastmancolor photography uses back lighting and diffusion filters to suggest a shimmering aura around people and things. The spectrum of the film is limited there are very few bright colors. Shallow-focus lenses are often used to give the effect of isolating one character from another within the frame, as in the scene where Charles is watching Hélène return to the house shortly after the murder. He is seen in clear focus, close-up, and the woods outside are nebulous and out-of-focus. We see Hélène coming toward the camera and Charles. Her outline is distorted and indistinct, but before she comes close enough to be in focus the image fades out into darkness.

Chabrol's characters contact their environment as it reflects them—or sometimes as it encloses them—and mirrors and reflecting surfaces invest his films with a pervasive sense of the narcissism of his subjects. In the climactic murder scene in *Les Biches,* "Why" merges her identity with Frédérique when she stabs her in front of a mirror. Sometimes Chabrol's characters are confined like specimens under glass, as in the scene where Charles enters the Neuilly apartment house where he will subsequently kill Victor, and we see him gliding along behind a frosted glass wall like the overgrown denizen of a monstrous aquarium.

Chabrol's preoccupation with surfaces serves to establish his characters' isolation from each other and formal composition within the frame tends to define these characters as objects. And to sharpen our perception of this, from time to time Chabrol introduces characters who are gross or grotesque in their action—like the two hangers-on in *Les Biches,* and in *Leda,* Belmondo's Laszlo triumphantly ripping out Madeleine Robinson's knitting. In comparison to the bland exteriors of the main characters, these jackanapes people provide a bizarre inverted mirror of behavior, almost as if they were in fact venting and miming the panic feelings that the main characters are unable to express.

In this context of narcissism and manipulation, sex becomes a ploy and a means of domination—and this is the way we see the relationships between Hélène, Victor, and Charles. We are never shown anything really erotic happening between either husband and wife or wife and lover. Hélène prepares for bed with her husband and walks seductively around in

her nightgown but he puts Mozart on the phonograph and stares up at the ceiling. Another time he makes amorous overtures but she fends him off, complaining that their child will hear them. And the only time we see Hélène in bed with her lover has them drinking afternoon tea and chatting about their respective children —a picture of G-rating respectability.

When Charles finally does kill his rival we sense that it is only because a prize possession has been taken away from him. In fact, it is the sight of a cigarette lighter in Victor's bedroom which he had earlier given Helene for an anniversary present that seems to trigger the act. The murder becomes a gesture of reclaiming objects that another had snatched away, and the murder weapon is an Egyptian stone head that looks remarkably like Hélène.

Because Chabrol defines his characters by means of the spaces and things that surround them, our understanding of them is ultimately limited. His lavish and seductive physical style does not function as mere ornament—in his films style *is* the subject matter. Warhol is another example of a film-maker who uses this kind of style-content fusion. And as with Warhol, when resonance and nuance replace energy and force we have trouble becoming emotionally involved. On the other hand, there is something beautifully entertaining about a film which shows people as arrangements of light-reflecting surfaces, especially since other directors often make these same types into messengers for serious thoughts about the destructive bourgeoisie. Chabrol makes murder into a "little theme" by using a style which shows nothing more than meets the eye. Decor vincit omnia. —MARGOT S. KERNAN

FIVE PHILOSOPHICAL FABLES

Script, direction, editing: Donald Richie. Photography: Makoto Yamaguchi. Music: Felix Mendelssohn. With members of the Nihon Mime Kenyukai. 50 min.

The imagination of the critic-film-maker seems to be attracted toward symbolic material, if one thinks of such writers as Susan Sontag, and in this case, Donald Richie, the American who has been immersed in Japanese culture for almost thirty years. Since 1960, Richie has been making experimental films on 16mm, and his major work on 35mm (*A Couple*—1963) has yet to be distributed here. These short films are extremely provocative "fables" of modern Japan, rather barbaric in their eroticism, but peculiarly admirable: one is touched by them with alternate feelings of horrified surprise and amusement, and it is reasonable to assume that the director's point of view is basically satirical; he seems to carry the Japanese penchant for covertly hostile humor to its ultimate.

(I) The first section (dedicated to Buster Keaton) is set in one of those desolate areas near the sea, and describes the slapstick struggle of two youths over a rather impassive girl in a flowered hat. One of the boys hides in a large sack; a passing motorist later sees him struggling in vain to extricate himself. Strangely enough, the motorist ties the sack-opening with rope and drives away, leaving the wriggling object on the shore. The entire style of this preamble is Keystone, complete with fast tempo music and action, and exaggerated gestures.

(II) In a littered courtyard, a youth hammers and chisels on a girl's inert body, especially her limbs. When he applies electricity to this kimonoed Frankenstein, she comes alive and he immediately rapes her. As time passes, their relationship seems to be one of love-slave and master, and the youth's sexual capacities seem indefatigable. Often, he seems unable to control his pelvic movements, even while waiting in line at the bus stop. When, in desperation, he tries to hang himself, his involuntary sex drives cause him to fall from the noose, and finally he and his monster-girl disrobe each other and thrash about on the refuse-strewn ground, embattled in lust.

(III) Three men and a girl enter a beautiful park, and spread a white cloth on the grass. It appears that they are about to play some game. One youth is very undecided, but after some coaxing, he lies upon his back on the cloth. The girl unbuttons his shirt, baring the chest, while one of the others, a bespectacled, dark-suited fellow, takes a large knife and slices into the youth's body. Quite slowly, this dreadful opera-

her nightgown but he puts Mozart on the phonograph and stares up at the ceiling. Another time he makes amorous overtures but she fends him off, complaining that their child will hear them. And the only time we see Hélène in bed with her lover has them drinking afternoon tea and chatting about their respective children —a picture of G-rating respectability.

When Charles finally does kill his rival we sense that it is only because a prize possession has been taken away from him. In fact, it is the sight of a cigarette lighter in Victor's bedroom which he had earlier given Helene for an anniversary present that seems to trigger the act. The murder becomes a gesture of reclaiming objects that another had snatched away, and the murder weapon is an Egyptian stone head that looks remarkably like Hélène.

Because Chabrol defines his characters by means of the spaces and things that surround them, our understanding of them is ultimately limited. His lavish and seductive physical style does not function as mere ornament—in his films style *is* the subject matter. Warhol is another example of a film-maker who uses this kind of style-content fusion. And as with Warhol, when resonance and nuance replace energy and force we have trouble becoming emotionally involved. On the other hand, there is something beautifully entertaining about a film which shows people as arrangements of light-reflecting surfaces, especially since other directors often make these same types into messengers for serious thoughts about the destructive bourgeoisie. Chabrol makes murder into a "little theme" by using a style which shows nothing more than meets the eye. Decor vincit omnia. —MARGOT S. KERNAN

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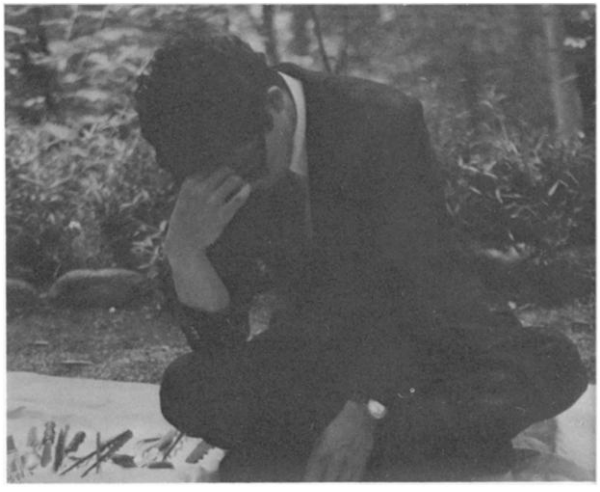

tion continues; when the carving is completed, the three begin to eat parts of the youth's entrails with enormous relish; the bespectacled one finds the meat rather tough. A thick substance falls from the mutilated youth's mouth (meanwhile, Mendelssohn's piano music tinkles along) as the macabre picnic continues. The blue-serged butcher slices off an arm, and by this time, a jet of blood has sprung across the picnic cloth: the girl daintily eats a hand, while the other boy sucks, then bites into a toe. The gruesomeness of the entire affair concludes only when bones and "leftovers" lie in front of the sated banqueters. The girl reminds the chief butcher of the late hour, they bundle the remains of their victim in the cloth, and stroll out of the park; only a pair of shoes is left.

(IV) In Tokyo's Ginza district, a man walks along the street on his hands. Nobody seems to mind at all, and with the man's arms and torso in camera frame most of the time, a strange, human freak is created. He puts on a pair of white gloves while balanced on his head, then goes to a roadside stand and asks for a coke. The bottle (with a straw) is placed in his crotch and, propping himself against a tree, he drinks the beverage. He goes to a park where he comfortably rests, upside down, on a bench. When a young "woman" sits next to him (the role is played by a man), the invertible hero removes a glove and touches her hand. Any attempt to reverse him to a normal standing position is a failure; finally she tries to walk on her hands, which pleases him. They go down the street, walking upside down together, though her progress is awkward.

(V) Into an American cocktail party comes a well-dressed Japanese youth. The Americans laugh and talk together, but ignore the young man. He stands with a drink in his hand, apparently a bit sullen and lonely, until a lady notices his tie, and expresses admiration. He immediately removes the tie and gives it to her. Soon, a succession of these ladies and their attention to various bits of his apparel reduce the young man to nakedness. With nothing left to give, the ladies ignore him again, and, putting his socks into his shoes, he strolls out into the streets, quite nude. He rides the subway to the outskirts of the city (no one is dismayed enroute), and by the seashore, he comes across the entrapped youth in the sack and releases him. Some distant, ethereal factories puff against the horizon —the nude wanderer moves toward them, toward railroad tracks, across a countryside, and finally runs slowly and happily toward the mountains.

An astonishing quintet, indeed. As experimental cinema, the fables are successful because the content is exotic and bizarre; it is not a matter of camera trickery, but the cynical overtones of the satire that keep the spectator engrossed in these images. The unpredictability of the Japanese character is inherent in each fable, with a very sardonic strain of humor. Richie makes his points about human indifference, conformity and voraciousness, but to our western eyes, the calm inclusion of nudity jolts the senses, and adds another dimension to the elements of sexual struggle and domination in each of the fables. The free-spirited Japanese youth, shorn of his Western trappings by the seductive American ladies, rescues his fellow man who has been deliberately rendered helpless by the Westernized motorist: the beginning and conclusion are the wellsprings of sexual disillusionment. The anarchic desperation and horror in the second and third fables soon give way to laughter of the most outrageous kind, and it is this quite Oriental balance of incongruities that makes Richie's film a beguiling surprise. It is often more sophisticated than philosophical, but there are mysteries in this film beyond description: it is a film that has to be felt as well as observed.—ALBERT JOHNSON

Short Notices

Bloody Mama. Roger Corman's movies are amoral, trashy and frankly irresponsible. His last major picture, *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre,* had the misfortune of opening in New York in the same week and on the same *block* as *Bonnie and Clyde.* Since it obviously lacked those "redeeming social values" which made Penn's film acceptable to the queasy (and made a few critics wish Penn had not played down the cruelty of his heroes), the reviewers jumped on Corman to justify Penn. But *St. Valentine's Day* was a pretty good movie—a hard, fast, vulgar lampoon of gangster mythology. Corman's gangsters are not touching romantics, and the violence is not lyrical. *Bloody Mama,* a comedy about Kate (Ma) Barker and her incestuous boys, is so crude that it should send Judith Crist and Co. into catatonic shock. From the opening sequence of the young Kate being gang-raped by her father and brothers ("Blood is thicker'n water") to the sublime bad taste of the final shot, Corman takes us straight into *L'il Abner* America, presenting the most incredible grotesquerie with a straight face. He uses social violence for black humor, much as Luis Buñuel did in his documentary about Spain, *Las Hurdes,* with its disinterested pose ("Voici un autre cretin . . ."). Buñuel's humor, though, is a medium for despair, not whimsy. Corman does, surprisingly, come up with a few moving moments—a girl shying away from one of the sons after he hesistantly reveals that he's a dope addict, or Kate watching blearily as her boys are shot to death, one by one, and Herman blows his head off—but these are only interludes in the burlesque. Corman's early movies are amusing mostly for their rough *brio* and their fey attitude toward plot, his later ones for their queer visual and histrionic extravagances. The cast of *Bloody Mama* makes a splendid bunch of yahoos, and the visuals harken back to the slapdash barbarism of the *Attack of the Crab Monsters* period. Shelley Winters is relatively restrained as Ma—God knows what she could have done with the role—and Bruce Dern, Don Stroud, Diane Varsi and Pat Hingle (as a wealthy hostage who wins the boys' respect) are pleasant to watch. The most interesting character, though, is Robert DeNiro's addict, compulsively pulling on Baby Ruth bars and emitting defenselessness. The objection will be made that Corman is as brutal as his subject. Granted. But remember what Henry Miller once said: "I am for obscenity and against pornography." *Bloody Mama* rubs our noses in the obscene joy of violence, and that's almost refreshing in an age of malicious sentimentality. Almost.—JOSEPH MCBRIDE

Hildur and the Magician, by San Francisco film-maker Larry Jordan, is a feature-length fantasy made on 16mm. It concerns woodland fairies, their queen Hildur, and a madcap foolish magician: the sort of subject we'd hardly expect anybody to bring off, except perhaps the author of *Midsummer Night's Dream.* And indeed *Hildur* has fatal *longueurs.* But it remains astonishing because Jordan sustains a delicate and fanciful tale above the razor edge dividing commercial and amateur gossamer. You balk if you pay attention to the story details; they're not quite mythic and not rational either. But Jordan manages to create a fairy world without any fuzzy photography or syrupy music: everything is sharp, clear, yet magical—mostly, I think, because of his exact sense of how little we need be shown to start fantasies going in our own heads. He uses shadowed lighting adroitly; he cuts away lightly from things most would-be fantasy-makers would insist we stare at. Also, perhaps by financial necessity but luckily on artistic grounds, he avoids lip-synch almost entirely. His characters speak, but usually the camera is on their hearers; hence their words hang in the air, atmospherically, unlike the words dribbling from the mouth in synch footage. The trouble is that atmosphere cannot sustain a 95-minute film, and the plot, about Hildur's descent into human form because of a misconcocted potion, doesn't have enough emotional resonance, or enough narrative suspense, to keep us concerned. Jordan argues that the film "grew organically like a plant," without a script, which is a pleasing idea. But I think the analogy must be read otherwise. A plant's development is programmed by its genetic materials, and in the case of a fictional narrative the genetic control must come from a strong script (or its equivalent in the director's mind). To short-film-makers, accustomed to working in briefer lyric forms, structural discipline seems irksome. But no one, in the commercial cinema or outside it, has yet managed to get by without it.—E.C.

Lions Love must be counted among the year's film weirdities. Agnes Varda abandons the sureties of the conventional film (like *Le Bonheur)* for what tries to be new, liberated, and honest and nearly succeeds. Story-telling is out: each scene connects to what has gone before as its significance unfolds

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Patton is a delicious shuck of Middle America and the values it holds most dear. It tickles the fantasies of the Silent Majority, sucks them in via hero-worship, then subtly slips some thought-toxin into their mental bloodstream. Early example: the film opens with the screen completely filled with the red-white-&-blue; Patton emerges to stand dwarfed in front of it while he delivers a blood-curdling militaristic speech to the new recruits (who are unpictured, hence we are they); the very next shot is that of a *vulture* waiting to feed off the flesh of dying soldiers in North Africa! There is so much in the first half of the film that is similarly penetrating that producers Frank McCarthy and Franklin J. Schaffner no doubt felt they had to balance out the ledger: thus the second half of the film, which is mostly a simple chronological recording of the general's downhill slide, sympathetically portrays Patton as the last humanist-warrior (how's that for irony!) in an age increasingly dominated by warfare-technocrats, computers, and ABMs. Schaffner, for the most part, has directed tightly, with a keen eye for visual detail; the script is by Francis Ford Coppola and Edmund H. North, and concentrates on the fascinating complexities of this soldier-madman. The cinematography by Fred Koenekamp, in a new widescreen process called Dimension 150, is an exciting innovation, and reproduces colors and planes accurately. The heart of the film, as everyone must know by now, is George C. Scott, whose depth of characterization is nothing short of marvelous. An over-long, deliberately ambiguous film, but Scott alone makes it worth seeing.—BERNARD WEINER

Woodstock. If you're still doubtful that commercial hip culture is a middleclass phenomenon, the $4 admission for this Warners release should convince you. Since the peacefulness of Woodstock already seems ancient history, *FQ* will wait to comment on the film—as we did with *Cleopatra*—until it can be seen at less outrageous prices. It'll be around for a while.—E.C.

Books

INGMAR BERGMAN

By Robin Wood. (New York: Praeger, 1969. A Movie Paperback. $5.95; paper $2.95)

This is by far Robin Wood's best book, surpassing his earlier Hitchcock and Hawks volumes; it puts him into the front rank of critics writing in English. His method is quiet, persistent, and personal: an inquiry into the human meanings of the films, and their interrelations over the long course of Bergman's development. Wood here never carries sympathy to a fault; he can be severe on Bergman, but without the curiously savage tone of Jorn Donner's

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in the viewer's mind—no plot guides us. The point is to enjoy what is at hand, as in *Cleo from 5 to 7*. No other choice except nonenjoyment or suicide exists for the three main characters, Viva, Jerome Ragni, and James Rado, who live in a rented house (metaphysical note: as the soul is said to do in the body) in Hollywood and wait for stardom (read "immortality," i.e., death). It should be clear that Varda intends something serious, a philosophy underlying all her films. Unfortunately, she flops. The film mixes contrivance (heavy directional hand) and spontaneity (underground "instant movies") with a result sometimes charming, but more often phony or confusing. For example, a terrible falseness pervades the argument with a Hollywood mogul over rights to the final cut of a film in the making by Shirley Clarke, who has happened into the life of our three lions. Incidentally, her deal falls through, and after an attempted suicide—the best scene in the film—she decides instead to make a movie for a bunch of turned-on kids. Varda's choice of Shirley Clarke for her film has an unmistakeable implication. Clarke admires the work of Andy Warhol. Of course, Viva is the most super Warhol Superstar. Thus *Lions Love* has a strong inclination toward the New York underground film, and the viewer's reaction will be determined largely by either an assumption that the underground deviates from or that it advances toward some desirable cinematic goal. Let's take choice two and give Varda credit despite *faux pas*. An Establishment film maker who recognizes the underground makes history, if not art. This aesthetic failure is a product of the director's confused intentions. The tension between spontaneity (never in full bloom until the last shot) and contrivance never satisfactorily resolves. With great courage and insufficient forethought Agnes Varda throws herself into strange waters where she struggles to appear composed while grasping desperately at the flotsam and jetsam of the wreck of the traditional film she has abandoned.—JONATHAN HOOPS

Patton is a delicious shuck of Middle America and the values it holds most dear. It tickles the fantasies of the Silent Majority, sucks them in via hero-worship, then subtly slips some thought-toxin into their mental bloodstream. Early example: the film opens with the screen completely filled with the red-white-&-blue; Patton emerges to stand dwarfed in front of it while he delivers a blood-curdling militaristic speech to the new recruits (who are unpictured, hence we are they); the very next shot is that of a *vulture* waiting to feed off the flesh of dying soldiers in North Africa! There is so much in the first half of the film that is similarly penetrating that producers Frank McCarthy and Franklin J. Schaffner no doubt felt they had to balance out the ledger: thus the second half of the film, which is mostly a simple chronological recording of the general's downhill slide, sympathetically portrays Patton as the last humanist-warrior (how's that for irony!) in an age increasingly dominated by warfare-technocrats, computers, and ABMs. Schaffner, for the most part, has directed tightly, with a keen eye for visual detail; the script is by Francis Ford Coppola and Edmund H. North, and concentrates on the fascinating complexities of this soldier-madman. The cinematography by Fred Koenekamp, in a new widescreen process called Dimension 150, is an exciting innovation, and reproduces colors and planes accurately. The heart of the film, as everyone must know by now, is George C. Scott, whose depth of characterization is nothing short of marvelous. An over-long, deliberately ambiguous film, but Scott alone makes it worth seeing.—BERNARD WEINER

Woodstock. If you're still doubtful that commercial hip culture is a middleclass phenomenon, the $4 admission for this Warners release should convince you. Since the peacefulness of Woodstock already seems ancient history, *FQ* will wait to comment on the film—as we did with *Cleopatra*—until it can be seen at less outrageous prices. It'll be around for a while.—E.C.

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Jean-Luc Godard. Edited by Toby Mussman. (New York: Dutton, 1968. $2.45.) A collection of articles and interviews; Godard's own talk and writing is amply represented, and especially intriguing.

How It Happened Here. By Kevin Brownlow. (New York: Doubleday, 1968. $2.95. Cinema World series) A charmingly personal account of how Brownlow and Andrew Mollo, working as amateurs against fearful odds, managed to create a fanatically accurate "reconstruction" of a Nazi-occupied Britain—and of what they learned in the process, about filmmaking, about German and British Nazis, about "professionalism" in the films, about distribution, and about themselves.

Alain Resnais, or the Theme of Time. John Ward. (Doubleday, 1968. $2.95. Cinema World series) An intriguing but sometimes maddening book. It contains the best sustained interpretation of *Marienbad* yet written, but followed with a pedantic postscript on memory's possible 'correctness' and the theoretical implications (sic) of the film for "most philosophers today." The question of whether Riva in *Hiroshima* is or is not 'psychotic' is debated at length. Throughout the book an attempt is made to apply Bergson's ideas to Resnais's films, with the result that their interpretation is sometimes unduly stiff. Nonetheless, a thoughtful study.

Antonioni. By Ian Cameron and Robin Wood. (New York: Praeger, 1969. A Movie Paperback. $4.95; paper $2.50) Essentially Cameron's *Film Quarterly* study; Robin Wood adds *Deserto Rosso* and *Blow-Up.*

Fritz Lang in America. By Peter Bogdanovich. (New York: Praeger, 1969. $4.95; paper $2.50) An interview, going through the films one by one. A valuable portrait of Lang's personality even if the information is not always unquestionable.

Animated Film. By Roy Madsen. (New York: Interland, 1969. No price given) A technical guide to the principles and procedures of animation. Large format, illustrated.

The American Movies Reference Book: The Sound Era. Edited by Paul Michael. (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1969. $29.95) A credit list book, chiefly useful for actor research—the coverage of directors is quirkish, of films questionable. The AFI comprehensive American film catalogues, which are soon to begin appearing, will be more complete and accurate, will include synopses, and will fulfill the basic filmographical needs; meanwhile this volume is a passable stopgap.

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